

AGNES (THE ALDEBURGH GOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD SCHEME)

The Chairman of AGNES, Ian Henderson is unable to be with us this evening and has asked me to speak in his place. I'm Heather Russell and am on AGNES's Committee.

The Aldeburgh Good Neighbours Scheme known as AGNES came into existence in 2010 in response to the fact that many Aldeburgh residents were elderly, and facing challenges of health issues and limited mobility, often without the benefit of local family support. 14 years on, this is still very much the case.

AGNES is an organisation manned totally by volunteers. We currently have 60 volunteers, each of whom have been DBS checked and all of them have been busy this year which proves that we are still very much needed.

AGNES is not a 24-hour 7 day a week emergency service or a care agency, BUT our dedicated phone line is manned Monday to Friday - 9.00am to 5.00pm by one of our Duty Coordinators. The Duty Coordinator having picked up the call, will then find one of our volunteers who's able and willing to provide the necessary help to the caller. Normally we ask for at least 24 hours' notice of when a job needs to be done.

Anyone within the IP15 postal area can call on us for help and this help can be anything - filling in forms, changing a lightbulb, dog walking when someone is ill, help with shopping, or collecting prescriptions, and for local transport to either clubs in the Fairfield Centre, Church Hall or here - or to dentists, doctors and even hospitals in Ipswich.

We do not charge for our services with the exception of the provision of transport where we ensure that our volunteers are reimbursed by the client for their motoring costs at a rate of 45 pence per mile.

Another vital part of AGNES services is directing clients towards the support and organisations out there who specialize in the help that they require to help them remain independent for as long as possible, such as Ali Cherry the parish nurse and Age UK and Citizens Advice etc.

We believe that AGNES offers Aldeburgh residents a valuable source of practical help and information. We are here to serve our community, so please, do spread the word so we can lend a helping hand to those in need of our support.

The AGNES phone number is 07773 031064.