

870

The average number of excess winter deaths in Essex

£78,000

The amount raised by Surviving Winter Appeal since 2010

60

Grants distributed to worthy groups and individuals

2,000-plus

The number of people helped so far

£10,000

The amount to be given by ECF to kick-start the 2014 appeal

KEEP AN EYE ON ELDERLY NEIGHBOURS



ADVICE: Andrew Gardner, chief executive of Age UK Essex

THE CHIEF executive at Age UK Essex, which received more than £5,000 from the Surviving Winter appeal last year, has urged everyone to keep an eye on their elderly neighbours this winter. "What we normally ask people to do is to watch out, particularly when we're going to have snow, for older neighbours," said Andrew Gardner.

"If they have left their milk out, or not collected their newspaper then go and knock at their door, and make sure

they have provisions – you never know, you could be saving someone's life." Schemes that the charity will be carrying out over the coldest part of the year include distributing warm packs to the elderly, targeted financial help for those in fuel poverty, and advice for those unsure of which benefits they are entitled to via its advice service.

■ To speak to one of the team at Age UK Essex call 01245 346 106. Lines are open Monday to Friday between 9am and 4.30pm.



GET TOGETHER: Sadie Rochester, Fay Stokes, Doreen Whitehead at the Wisdom Group in Langton Avenue, Melbourne



MEETING UP: Lily Lee, Mary Keaveney and Molly Lane at the Age Concern day centre



WHEELS: Lance Gardner, chief fundraiser, Colin Budgey, operations manager, Brian Collings, treasurer, and Brian Skinner, driver, with the Danbury Flyer Bus and passengers

Help support the elderly as they tackle a harsh winter

We launch appeal to help most vulnerable

By Megan Tatum

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AT LEAST 800 people died unnecessarily in Essex last year as a result of the cold winter months.

Now with forecasters predicting a record-breaking cold spell in the coming weeks, the elderly, the ill, the homeless, and the poor are once again at risk.

It is to help protect these, the most vulnerable people in our county, and alleviate some of the hardships they face, that the Essex Chronicle is joining up with the Essex Community Foundation once again, an independent charitable trust, to launch our Surviving Winter appeal 2014.

Since we first joined forces in 2010/11, Chronicle readers have raised more than £78,000 for frontline organisations and at risk individuals – and this year we want to boost that sum further.

Caroline Taylor, deputy chief executive of ECF, said: "As temperatures start to fall and heating costs start to rise, hundreds of elderly and other vulnerable people are in danger of succumbing to life-threatening conditions caused by the cold and thousands more face isolation in their homes.

Risk

"We would urge everyone to come to the rescue of people in our community who are most in need over the harshest months by giving generously to the 2014 Surviving Winter Appeal."

There are currently 250,000 people aged 65 and over in Essex, a group identified as particularly at risk during the winter months, with 90 per cent of deaths at the time belonging to that age group.

Indeed, for many elderly residents they face a stark choice between heating their homes, and buying food.

Sister Moira, from the Community of Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre, said: "We have identified people who were really not putting their heating on because they were afraid, and when you get older you get afraid of bills, so rather than have that

HOW TO DONATE

- Text WINT77 to 70070 to donate £5
- Just Giving Page www.justgiving.com/Winter-Appeal-2014
- Send a cheque to Essex Community Foundation, 121 New London Road, Chelmsford, CM2 0QT – please complete and return the form and remember to tick the Gift Aid box
- For people in the 60-plus age bracket ECF is suggesting that those who do not need their Winter Fuel Payment could consider donating it to the Surviving Winter Appeal

worry you just don't heat your house. Sister Moira set up The Melbourne Project in Chelmsford more than a decade ago, alongside Sister Margaret.

"Now I think the profile of elderly people is the same but I think there are younger families who are struggling more, for most it's the gap which occurs when your benefits change."

It is a trend most keenly felt by frontline services, such as the many food banks across the county which have seen demand surge over recent years, in particular during the winter months.

"It's during the winter that demand for food parcels goes up, and one of the reasons is that people have to make a decision about whether to buy food, or whether to put their heating on – it's a real concern," said Robert Sefton, who organises the weekly food pantry of the Churches Together in Maldon, which distributes 80 per cent more food parcels during the winter.

"If you choose to put your heating on it really eats into your electricity bills, there are definitely quite a few people having to make that decision and run out of money."

"Maldon is generally a more affluent area but you'll always find that people fall on hard times, and it's a misconception that there isn't poverty here, the proof is the number of people that use our food pantry."

TEA TIME: Lenny Brown enjoys a cuppa at the Wisdom Group run by the Holy Canonesses of the Sepulchre who do a lot of community work in Melbourne providing a place for elderly people to meet and chat



As a result of money donated to the Surviving Winter appeal in recent years, vital lunch clubs for the elderly have been able to continue serving up hot meals, at-risk individuals have received financial support to allow them to pay their heating bills, homeless shelters have been able to extend their help to those freezing on the streets, and village agents have been able to continue their work providing company and support to the most isolated in our communities.

Generosity

Senior editor at the Essex Chronicle, Paul Dent-Jones, said: "It's shocking to think that in the 21st century anyone has to make a choice between risking their health in a freezing home, or being left unable to feed themselves, and their families."

"Thanks to the generosity of our readers in the last four years we've managed to help a huge number of these people, and we want to do the same again this year, but we need your help in giving whatever you can."

This year the ECF is kick-starting the 2014 campaign with a fund of £10,000 which it will be using to award grants to organisations in the coming weeks.

■ If you would like to make an application for funding from the appeal please go to www.essexcommunityfoundation.org.uk or call ECF on 01245 356018.

NO MATTER HOW MUCH IT'S ALL FOR THE CAUSE



I/WE would like to support the Surviving Winter Appeal 2014.

Name

Address.....

Postcode E-mail.....

If you are a UK taxpayer, Essex Community Foundation can reclaim Gift Aid, ie 25p on every £1 that you give, at no extra cost to you. Please sign below if you want Essex Community Foundation to reclaim tax on this donation.

Signed Date

■ Please return this slip with your donation to: Essex Community Foundation, 121 New London Road, Chelmsford, CM2 0QT

WHERE YOUR MONEY WILL GO

BENS, the Braintree Emergency Night Shelter, was given a grant of £1,000 to help pay for the extra fuel costs for its hostel in Braintree High Street.

Robert Sefton, (pictured) from BENS, said: "We really appreciated the grant which helped towards the gas and electricity costs of running the shelter."

During the coldest spells BENS linked with Braintree District Council and the Salvation Army Housing Association's New Direction Centre to provide extra emergency accommodation for rough sleepers when the night time temperature dropped below zero degrees for three nights in a row.

"The first floor of our building that is not normally used had to be heated on these nights. BENS not only provided the accommodation but also had to have one paid staff member and



HELPING OUT: Violet and Gordon Knock, of Silver End, with village agent Lydia Howat

a volunteer on duty each night. "This year we will once again be linking with Braintree District Council to provide the same service to rough sleepers during the coldest nights."

The Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) was allocated £2,000 to enable village agents to visit households in Chelmsford, Braintree and Maldon to give support to people in crisis.

Brian Goodwin, village agents manager for the RCCE, said: "The money we received from the Surviving Winter Appeal meant that the village agents were able to give out small grants to people in need to help them get through winter months."



GOOD TIMES: Tom and Peggy Pease enjoy their time at the Bradwell Over 60s Club

"This made a great difference to people in rural parts of Essex who were struggling with problems such as paying their heating bills. We know there is a great need for this type of help and we are expecting an even greater demand this year."

The Bradwell Over 60's Club received £300 early this year to provide hot meals to older vulnerable people in the winter months. The club currently has 30 members and meets fortnightly at Stisted Village Hall.

Violet Knock, who is in her 80s, organises the club with her husband Gordon. She said: "Clubs like ours are needed so much to help combat loneliness which is the real killer."