

Setting up a holiday club

Setting up a holiday club for the elderly can be challenging, fun and extremely rewarding – for the elderly and the volunteers.

It takes planning and a clear vision of what can realistically be achieved, but something simple that is well done and delivered with love and generosity will be greatly appreciated. St Luke's, Gamston, runs a 'Holiday at Home' scheme for two weeks, with an event every other day. They have some tips for people thinking about launching a similar programme:

1. Don't make anything too early, too long, or too late - a trip to Skegness proved to be a long journey and a long day for some guests who were tired out at the end of it.
2. Money is available – St Luke's has regularly received £500 from local county councillors.

The challenges

Awareness of Holiday at Home has grown through word of mouth, parish magazine, posters and leaflets but attendance has standardised around a core group, with a few new faces added each year. A number of factors come into play here:

Mobile elderly people are reasonably well served in West Bridgford and there are other things for them to do.

People with restricted mobility can lose confidence and are reluctant to leave their homes to visit a place full of strangers, even when transport is provided.

The team is considering whether Holiday at Home should be the focus of a programme that takes events to where the people are, such as nursing homes and sheltered complexes, to build trust and relationships.

Don't be deterred – have a go!

1. Get a core team together – this is vital
2. Resources and ideas are available - Church Army and the Outlook Trust have online resources available. Don't be afraid to copy good ideas from elsewhere.
3. Know your community – where do old people live? What other facilities are available? What events would appeal, and at what times?
4. Build on relationships in the community – people need to trust you.
5. Start simply – try two or three days to start with.

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