

Royal Mail's trusted 'feet on the street' network helps tackle loneliness in Liverpool

15-10-2018

Royal Mail's postmen and women in parts of Liverpool are supporting a trial of a new community service to help tackle loneliness, led and funded by the Home Office.

Working with Liverpool City Council, around 100 volunteers aged 65 and over will receive regular wellbeing visits from their local postman or woman. The service aims to help individuals access assistance at the earliest opportunity if necessary. This might include offering support to help them make simple changes to stay healthy or putting them in touch with an activity or group in their area.

Royal Mail's postmen and women are ideally placed to deliver the trial because of the unique role they play in their communities, and the high levels of trust customers have in them. Through its Universal Service network, Royal Mail connects customers companies and communities across the UK. It is the only delivery Company that can visit over 30 million addresses across the UK, six-days-a-week.

How the trial works

The local authority aims to have up to 100 individuals in Liverpool taking part in the trial, which is voluntary and free of charge for participants. The Council will also be responsible for providing any assistance to those individuals if a need is identified. During the trial Royal Mail's postmen and women from Liverpool North Delivery Office will make regular scheduled visits to pre-selected volunteers while they are out delivering the mail. On the doorstep, postal workers will ask five set questions to check on the individual's safety and well-being.

The responses given by participants will be recorded on the hand-held mobile devices that postal workers carry with them every day. This information will be passed immediately to the local authority to organise any further assistance as necessary. No personal data will remain on the devices.

Our Liverpool postmen and women have been given training and support to offer this service. We do not expect there to be any impact on mail deliveries in Liverpool during the trial.

Sue Whalley, CEO, Royal Mail Post and Parcels UK, said: "Our people are the perfect fit for this laudable and worthwhile initiative. Our nationwide "feet on the street" network gives us unparalleled UK reach and local knowledge. In addition, this new community initiative cements the role we already play in tackling loneliness and isolation, providing individuals with a way to access the local services they really need.

"Our postmen and women really are often first on the scene in an emergency and they do all they can to help. This trial, which the Home Office is funding, will help us test whether we could develop this as a new commercial service that we might offer to communities more widely through local authorities or other organisations."

Mark Kempster, Royal Mail Liverpool North

Delivery Office Manager said: “Our postmen and women develop a lot of knowledge about the local area and the people who live there. At Royal Mail, we’re always happy to pitch in in an emergency, but it can be more difficult to know how to help when you feel that people are lonely or isolated. We are really pleased to be doing our bit to help look out for our customers’ well-being and help put them in touch with local support services if they need it.”

The trial is now underway and will run for around six months. Similar visits are being made to participants in Whitby, in conjunction with North Yorkshire County Council, and in New Malden in Surrey, working with Kingston London Borough Council.

The growing problem of loneliness

The UK’s population is aging. In 2016, around

18 per cent of people were 65 or older. The Office of National Statistics’ latest projections¹ show that in 50 years’ time, there are likely to be an additional 8.6 million people aged 65 years and over in the UK – a population roughly the size of London.

The same study states that “Older people are more likely to have difficulties accessing services such as General Practitioners (GPs) and hospitals, particularly if they are reliant on public transport.”

The trial forms part of the Loneliness Strategy announced by Tracy Crouch MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Sport and Civil Society. Call and Check Ltd, the organisation behind a similar service run by Jersey Post in Jersey is also involved in the trial.

Source: [Royal Mail](#)