

Newsletter for Patients

Spring 2019

Practice News

Staff Notes

In November we welcomed Charlotte and Abbie to our Medical Receptionist team. At the end of December Dr Josie Phillips (one of the doctors attached to the practice for her training as a GP) started maternity leave. We wish her all the very best and look forward to welcoming her back to the practice in due course. In January we said goodbye to Leah, one of our receptionists/Healthcare Assistants who is following her dreams

to become a personal trainer. We wish her every success. We are currently recruiting to this post.

Christmas Greetings were much appreciated

A huge thank you from all of us at Riverside and Tower House to all those patients who sent in cards and gifts over the festive period. We were overwhelmed with your generosity.

We hope you all had a very Merry Christmas and we wish all of you a happy and healthy 2019.

Winter planning

With the likelihood of wintry weather to come, we are reviewing our inclement weather plans to ensure we can continue to support our patients during spells of extreme weather. We are appealing to any 4x4 drivers who are willing to volunteer to help get staff to/from work, GPs to visits or urgent prescriptions to patients.

The Practice would like to keep a register so that we can call on drivers if needed. If you feel you would like to volunteer, please just check with your insurance company first and then get in touch with our Practice Manager, Amanda Coleridge, via email: amanda.coleridge@nhs.net with all your contact details.

Early visiting service

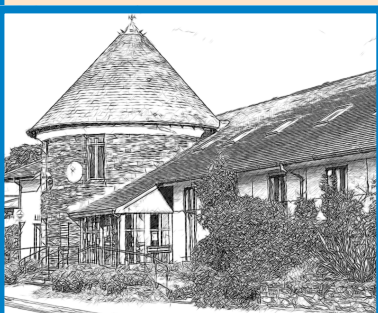
We are pleased to announce that we have secured funding to support an early home visiting service for our housebound patients who require home visits by a GP.

This new service will enable doctors to make visits earlier in the day to enable earlier assessment and/or admission for early diagnostics; reduce hospital admissions; and align the service to secondary care

by getting patients discharged earlier in the day with safer discharges.

To achieve this we ask all patients who require a home visit to telephone the practice as early as they can and before 10 a.m. if at all possible.

The earlier we receive your request the better we can plan our home visits.



Riverside Surgery
Bovey Tracey
01626 832666

Tower House Surgery
Chudleigh
01626 852379



Befrienders — patient transport service

By the end of 2018, the Befrienders had dealt with nearly 1800 requests for patient transport. Due to increased demand, Befrienders are now requesting that:

- ❖ Patients should apply for transport at least three working days before their due appointment, unless they've been given an emergency appointment.

- ❖ Patients should request transport only if their appointment is within the next six weeks. If you have an appointment which is more than six weeks away, please do not ask for a transport booking until the appointment falls within the next six weeks.

Thank you so much for your cooperation, it is much appreciated.

Sponsored leg waxing

Make a note that Dr Tristan Oxenham is having his leg waxing at Tower House on Wednesday, 27th February, during the lunch break. To sponsor him go to his Virgin Money Giving page to donate:

<https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/TristanOxenham>

Devon Health information

Devon Referral Support Service has developed a website to offer information to patients in Devon to help them make healthcare decisions. You can find it at:

<http://www.myhealth-devon.nhs.uk>

Useful guides

There are now a number of publications explaining GP online services and online records.

Your GP record

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/pat-guid-clr-your-gp-record.pdf>

Young people's guide to GP online services

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/pat-guid-clr-young-people-gp-online.pdf>

What you need to know about your GP online services

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/pat-guid-need-to-know.pdf>

Protecting your GP online records: patient guide

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/pat-guid-protecting-your-records.pdf>

Breast cancer awareness day

WOW! Thank you all so much for your support on 13th October last year. We managed to raise a fantastic £329.67. The raffle prizes, cakes and biscuits were all such fantastic donations which enabled us to fundraise even more — so a big, big thank you.

Jeans for genes day

A special thank you to all those patients who helped us donate to this cause. A total of £69 was raised to help the 500,000 children in the UK with genetic disorders.

Poppy appeal 2018

Thank you very much to all our patients who helped us with our collection. Our practice raised £50.17 for the Poppy Appeal last year. Without your help, the Poppy Appeal would be unable to continue their vital welfare and benevolent work.

As a district, we raised £42,722.50

Improving access — survey for patients

South Devon and Torbay Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) are keen to seek the views of local people in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay about how patients' access to GP appointments can be improved.

The new service for evening and weekend appointments to see a GP, practice nurse or health care assistant started in early October last year. You can arrange for an evening or weekend appointment by booking ahead by phoning Riverside or Tower House. The appointments are held at one of several GP practices in our area.

We have prepared a leaflet, available now from Reception, which gives full details of how to make an evening or weekend appointment.

Since the service was launched nationally in October 2018, the CCG now wish to find out people's views on the times available for the appointments and whether they are being held in the most appropriate locations. The CCG has prepared a short and confidential survey which they would be grateful if you could complete.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/66MFMTV>

Use the above link to take part in the survey which will take you no longer than five minutes to complete. The purpose is to give patients the opportunity to tell the CCG about when they would like to be able to access GP appointments and where they would be willing to travel to in order to access them.

Prevention is better than cure

Many people—men and women—would rather not think at all about the topics covered on this page. Even if you're one of such people, please do take the time to read the detailed information given below.

Remember that early detection of problems gives the best chance of a cure. If you're uncertain about any symptoms you might have, do make an appointment to see your GP as soon as you can.

Women's problems

Smear Tests

Many women are worried about having a smear test or are perhaps unaware of the benefits of having the test.

A cervical screening test (previously known as a smear test) is a method of detecting abnormal cells on the cervix (the cervix is the entrance to the womb from the vagina). Detecting and removing abnormal cervical cells can prevent cervical cancer.

Cervical screening isn't a test for cancer, it's a test to check the health of the cells of the cervix. Most women's test results show that everything is normal, but for around 1 in 20 women the test shows some abnormal changes in the cells of the cervix. Most of these changes won't lead to cervical cancer and the cells may go back to normal on their own. But in some cases, the abnormal cells need to be removed so they can't become cancerous.

About 3,000 cases of cervical cancer are diagnosed each year in the UK. It's possible for sexually active women of all ages to develop cervical cancer, although the condition is most common in women aged 30 to 45. The condition is very rare in women under 25.

Screening programme

The aim of the NHS Cervical Screening Programme is to reduce the number of women who develop cervical cancer and reduce the number who die from it. Since the screening programme was introduced in the 1980s, the number of cervical cancer cases has decreased by about 7% each year.

All women who are registered with a GP are invited for cervical screening:

- ❖ aged 25 to 49 – every 3 years
- ❖ aged 50 to 64 – every 5 years
- ❖ aged over 65 – only women who have recently had abnormal tests

You will find much more information on cervical screening at

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cervical-screening/>

Men's problems

Testicular cancer

Testicular cancer is the most common cancer in men between the ages of 15 and 49 and affects about 200 men each year. Fortunately, this cancer is readily treatable if caught early. Men should examine their testicles about once per month, after a hot bath or hot shower. Regular self-examination is important as only then will you notice if something changes.

If you're worried by a swelling or lump or any other signs of change, then do visit your GP as soon as you can.

If the thought of being examined 'down there' worries you, remember that it's much better to be a little bit embarrassed than to leave things as they are and then wish you'd asked for a check-up sooner.

You can find more information and an informative video at:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/testicular-cancer/>

Breast cancer

Breast cancer is often thought of as something that only affects women, but, in rare cases, men can get it too. It develops in the small amount of breast tissue men have behind their nipples. It usually occurs in men over 60, but can very occasionally affect younger men.

Some of the symptoms are a lump in the breast, the nipple turning inwards, a discharge from the nipple, a rash or sore around the nipple, changes in the nipple or surrounding skin, or swollen glands in the armpit.

Breast cancer in men is very rare but does occur. If you're worried about any symptoms you might have, see your GP at once. Don't think that your GP won't take you seriously: you will be examined and either reassured or referred on to see a specialist.

More information is available here

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/breast-cancer-in-men/>

Again, if you're in any way worried, don't put off going to your GP

You can order your repeat medication up to two weeks in advance.

Why not sign up to do it on-line?

Ask Reception for our leaflet on how to set up online access.

Patient Participation Group—Annual General Meeting

The Group held its Annual General Meeting on 22nd January at Riverside Surgery, Bovey Tracey. Michael Benson who has been the Chair for the last three years stepped down. The new Chair, Pamela Tucket was installed. Rod Wallace (Deputy Chair) and Amanda Coleridge (Secretary) agreed to serve for another year.

All is set to continue the PPG's work and projects through 2019. As always, a warm welcome awaits anyone who wants to become more involved in our core group. Details can be found on the practice website:

<https://www.towerhousesurgery.co.uk/SecureForm?FID=95a8e9b8-26a5-406c-9648-aa8f5b776c1d&FT=0&GP=74856f1b-984f-4073-948d-e30af7ed23ed>

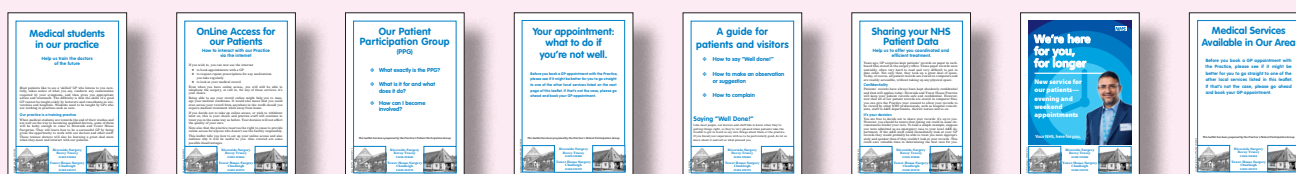
Many of you will have noticed that the doors into the Tower House Surgery in Chudleigh have been automated. This considerably improves access from outside through to the waiting room. Many people contributed to the success of this project: the practice

and NHS England contributed financially and with their expertise and Bovey Tracey League of Friends made a generous donation. It's worth putting on the record how much the help from all parties is appreciated. The new doors have made visits to the Tower House Surgery much easier for many people, especially for anyone with reduced mobility. Many thanks to all involved.

Another PPG longstanding project is at last bearing fruit. A group from the Alzheimer's Society visited both surgeries to conduct a survey of whether any improvements could be made to make visits from people with Alzheimer's easier and less stressful.

The assessors from the Society had a 'walk round', looking at the surgeries from the point of view of someone who might have dementia or Alzheimer's.

The Society produced a report so that the practice can understand what seems to be working well and also see if there are any aspects that can be improved. More on this in a future newsletter.



All of our patient leaflets can be downloaded

All the leaflets we've produced for our practice are not only available for collection from Reception but they can be downloaded from our website. All you have to do is go to the following link and download one or more of them:

<https://www.towerhousesurgery.co.uk/pages/Leaflets>

See also pages 7 and 8 of this Newsletter where you can see a questionnaire and our latest leaflet.

Research into Parkinson's disease

Parkinson's is a progressive neurological condition. This means that it causes problems in the brain and gets worse over time.

There's currently no cure for Parkinson's, but there are lots of different treatments, therapies and support available to help in managing the condition.

There is a great deal of very helpful information on the website of Parkinson's UK (Parkinson's Disease Society of the United Kingdom).

<https://www.parkinsons.org.uk/information-and-support>

Under the name Predict PD, Parkinson's UK is carrying out a long-term research study. The aim of

the research is to understand who within the general population might be more likely to be diagnosed with Parkinson's. The more that is known about what the early stages of Parkinson's are, the closer we will be to finding better treatments and a cure.

Joining the study

The study is looking for the help of 10,000 people aged 60-80 years who DO NOT have Parkinson's. If you would be interested in taking part in this important research project, you can visit

<https://www.parkinsons.org.uk/research/predict-pd> to find out all about it, including how to apply.

If you would like to have a copy of this Newsletter in a different format to make it easier to read, please contact the Practice.



Visit to Tower House by Chudleigh Primary School

A big thank you to all the children in Foundation Stage at Chudleigh Primary School who recently presented Tower House Surgery with some lovely children's story books as part of their fund raising

efforts for Children In Need. The children recently visited the surgery and presented the books to Dr Tristan Oxenham and Audrey, our Reception Team Leader.

Fire hazard from use of paraffin-based skin-care products

Emollient (soothing and moisturising) skin creams, ointments, sprays and liquids are widely used for ailments such as psoriasis and eczema. Many of these items contain lipids such as white soft paraffin which forms a barrier on the skin to trap in moisture. Unfortunately, the paraffin in the creams can form a severe fire risk in some circumstances. With frequent use of such creams, the paraffin will be absorbed by dressings and clothing. If the person using them is bedridden, paraffin can even be absorbed into the bedding and the fabrics of the mattress and bed.

Materials which become impregnated with paraffin can easily catch fire if they're exposed to flame and this will increase the risk to smokers who use paraffin-based creams. The burning material acts as a wick which accelerates the progression of the fire.

Even if clothing which has absorbed paraffin is washed at the highest temperature listed on its care label, not all of the absorbed paraffin will be removed.

The only way to avoid injury from fire is to avoid flames and sources of ignition, including cigarettes and lighters and heat provided by nearby stoves, open fires, and electric radiant heaters.

If you have relatives who are using paraffin-based products regularly, they need to be made aware of the risk of fire. If they are bedridden or inactive, the risk is higher, particularly so if they are smokers.

Injuries or deaths resulting from fires caused by the use of paraffin-based creams are rare, but far from unknown, and there has been a campaign to make users, carers and health-care professionals aware of the risk. West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue has produced a short video to spread the word about the dangers. You can see it at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xt4LE3wmtb0&feature=youtu.be>

The Medicines & Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency has also publicised the risks from emollient products containing paraffin:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/emollient-cream-build-up-in-fabric-can-lead-to-fire-deaths>

Information is also available from the Care Quality Commission

<https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/learning-safety-incidents/issue-3-fire-risk-use-emollient-creams>

New: apps from the NHS

The NHS now has a website for NHS apps. At the time of writing this site is undergoing beta testing (this means that the designers of the site are in the process of optimising the way it works).

<https://apps.beta.nhs.uk/>

If you have any difficulty when you use the above link, try a new search for NHS apps.

Most of the apps on the site are free but a few will require payment. It's well worth having a look at the apps to see which ones will help you keep healthy.

Importance of avoiding falls

Even young and middle-aged people are at risk of doing themselves harm if they fall unexpectedly, but the risks of injury are much higher the older we are. The elderly are particularly at risk and what might seem to be a trivial fall can be life-changing and sometimes fatal.

If you're getting on a bit, it's very much worthwhile to think about how you can reduce your risk of a fall. There are two main aspects involved: health and hazards.

So far as health is concerned, some medications and illnesses can increase the likelihood of falls and you might need some professional advice to reduce your risk from those causes. Your GP will take you very seriously if you ask about how to reduce any susceptibility to falls.

Hazards, however, are something any of us can do something about. For example, look carefully around your home and remove hazards such as frayed or loose floor coverings. Install hand-rails or grab-rails if you have tricky steps on the way to your front door. Make sure there's sufficient lighting everywhere there's a tripping hazard. You might find it helpful to ask another person, perhaps a close relative or friend, to look round your home and spot any tripping hazards that you might not have noticed because you're so used to them.

Other things to do include improving your strength and balance by carrying out as much physical activity as is appropriate for you.

There's a lot more detail about avoiding falls at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/falls/prevention/>

New NHS guidance about certain interventions

Following a public consultation, NHS England has issued new guidance on seventeen interventions which clinicians say are of little or no value to patients.

The list of four

The guidance says that the following four interventions should no longer be routinely commissioned or offered because they do not work or have been superseded by a safer alternative.

- ❖ Snoring surgery (in the absence of obstructive sleep apnoea)
- ❖ Dilatation and curettage for heavy menstrual bleeding in women
- ❖ Knee arthroscopy for patients with osteoarthritis
- ❖ Injections for non-specific low back pain without sciatica

However, in those rare circumstances, where they may be appropriate, the above interventions can be offered, in exceptional circumstances, if accompanied by a successful Individual Funding Request:

The list of thirteen

Guidance has been issued on the following thirteen interventions that should be commissioned or offered only when specific clinical criteria are met (because

the interventions have been shown to be appropriate only in certain circumstances):

- ❖ Breast reduction
- ❖ Removal of benign skin lesions
- ❖ Grommets for glue ear in Children
- ❖ Tonsillectomy for recurrent tonsillitis
- ❖ Haemorrhoid surgery
- ❖ Hysterectomy for heavy menstrual bleeding
- ❖ Chalazia removal
- ❖ Arthroscopic shoulder decompression for subacromial shoulder pain
- ❖ Carpal tunnel syndrome release
- ❖ Dupuytren's contracture release
- ❖ Ganglion excision
- ❖ Trigger finger release
- ❖ Varicose vein surgery

The guidance will free up resources which can be directed elsewhere and reduce risks to patients by eliminating up to 100,000 procedures.

Further clarification is given in this document of frequently asked questions:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/ebi-frequently-asked-questions.pdf>

Devon Carers

You are a carer if you provide unpaid support for family, partners or friends who need help because they are ill, frail or have a disability. Devon Carers can help you, whatever your age, whoever you care for.

There's a helpline, open six days a week, for information, advice, and help with contacting other useful services. There's a regular newsletter with covers local events and support groups. A Carer Alert

Card can be provided to ensure the person you care for gets help if something happens to you.

If you feel you don't have all the help and support you need for your caring role, you might benefit from a Carer's Assessment.

More details are available from www.devoncarers.org.uk

Alternatively, you can phone 03456 434 435

What are cataracts?

As we get older, many of us will develop poorer eyesight. One reason for this is we tend to lose the ability to focus our eyes on near objects — meaning that we have difficulty in reading — because our arms are not long enough for us to be able to hold a book or newspaper far enough away to be able to focus! This problem of long sightedness is called presbyopia and occurs as the little muscles in the eye which perform the focusing cease to work as well as they did. The remedy is to use reading glasses for close work.

Another problem occurs when the focusing lens in the eye deteriorates gradually and becomes cloudy and often a bit yellowish too. The effect of this is to blur your sight as if you're looking through a frosted window. Also, you might find that there are large haloes around lights and this can very much affect night driving as street lamps and oncoming traffic will make it very difficult to see what's happening on the roads. If you have this symptom, you really shouldn't be driving at night.

Cataracts build up very slowly over a long period and often we won't be very aware of the deterioration of our sight until we have an eye test by an optometrist.

This deterioration in the ability to see fine detail is called a reduction in acuity. If the reduction is severe, it will mean that you might be unsafe to drive, even in the daytime, and that would be a risk to you and to others on the roads.

If your cataracts cause you problems, your optometrist might refer you to an ophthalmological

examination (a very detailed eye test) at a local hospital. There, you may be assessed for suitability for having the cloudy lens removed from your eye and a clear plastic one implanted. This 'cataract' operation is the operation most frequently performed in the NHS.

After having one eye done, some patients go on to have the other one done after a month or two, but this will depend upon the state of the other eye and the advice of the ophthalmologist.

The procedure takes about half an hour (per eye) to perform and most people who have had lens implants are astonished at the resulting improvement to their vision — sharper detail, more contrast, with white things such as household white goods looking bright white again instead of having the yellowish tinge they had when they were viewed through a cataract.

If you would like to learn more about cataracts and their treatment, have a look at the excellent guide produced by the RNIB (Royal National Institute for Blind People):

[https://www.rnib.org.uk/sites/default/files/Understanding Cataracts.pdf](https://www.rnib.org.uk/sites/default/files/Understanding%20Cataracts.pdf)

If your optometrist refers you for possible cataract surgery, have a look at a leaflet prepared by the Royal College of Anaesthetists. You can find it at:

<https://www.rcoa.ac.uk/document-store/cataract-surgery>

Getting fitter for your operation

If you're due to have a surgical operation, you might benefit from having a look at an excellent leaflet prepared by the Royal College of Anaesthetists. It's entitled "Fitter Better Sooner" and available at

<https://www.rcoa.ac.uk/document-store/fitterbettersooner>

Gluten-free

The Department of Health and Social Care has changed the prescribing of gluten-free foods, which came into effect in December 2018. Full details of the changes are available in a document which is available on the DHSC website

<http://bit.ly/DHGFPresc>

Friends and family test

We have a survey form which you can complete after seeing a GP. The form asks your views and helps us to identify how we can improve the services we offer. The form is available at Reception but can also be completed on line at:

<https://www.towerhousesurgery.co.uk/FriendsAndFamily/>

More than 95% of our patients let us know if they can't attend for their appointments—and we can then give the appointments to other patients.

You can cancel your appointment easily by phoning us on one of the numbers shown below or by going to our website <http://www.towerhousesurgery.co.uk> and

Riverside: 01626 832666

clicking on the button **Cancel an Appointment** or, if you've registered to use SystmOnline you can cancel your appointment after logging on as usual.

Tower House: 01626 852379

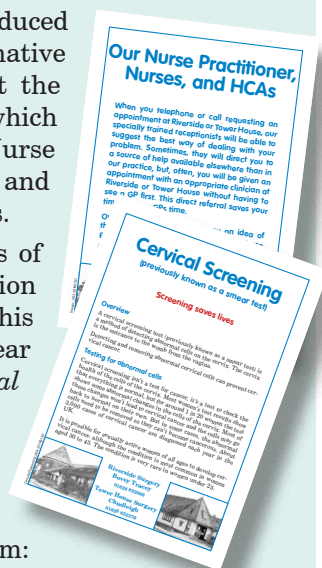
Two more new leaflets

Our PPG has just produced two more very informative leaflets. The first sets out the many health problems which can be dealt with by our Nurse Practitioner, our Nurses and our Health Care Assistants.

The second one has lots of very reassuring information about cervical screening (this was formerly called 'a smear test'). Remember: *cervical screening saves lives*.

Please ask at Reception for your copy of any of our leaflets or download them, for viewing or printing, from:

<https://www.towerhousesurgery.co.uk/pages/Leaflets>



Men's support group

A new support group for men contemplating suicide has been set up in South Devon, meeting in Newton Abbot on Monday evenings, and run by 'Andysmanclub', a national organisation, whose aim is "to halve the number of suicides in men under 45". Full details of the organisation and of the Newton Abbot meetings are available from:

www.andysmanclub.co.uk

Community transport

Since 1991, Newton Abbot Community Transport has been providing accessible, affordable transport and services for the local community, and supporting increased mobility, social contact and independence.

More information may be obtained by email or telephone call:

email transport@newtonabbottcta.org

phone 01626 335775

Learn how to use a computer

If you've never used a computer or other device to access the internet, there are a lot of places where you can quickly learn how to do it. Many short courses are provided by local authorities, colleges and charities. It doesn't matter how old you are or whether or not you've ever used a computer. It's never too late to learn something new.

A good place to start is your local library, but there are many others where you can learn for free, including Learn My Way, a website of free online courses for beginners, helping you develop digital skills to make the most of the online world.

A network of Online Centres uses the Learn My Way online courses to support and teach computer beginners. There more than 5000 such centres across the country, providing friendly, expert guidance. For more information and to find your nearest local venue, please visit or phone your local library.

Age UK helps older people get online. For more information and to find your local Age UK centre please call the Age UK advice line on 0800 169 2081.

If you know someone who uses a computer, get them to show you what comes up if they use the following links:

www.learnmyway.com

www.ageuk.org.uk

Be a volunteer

Teignbridge Community & Voluntary Services have produced a promotional card to point out what volunteers get from their volunteering. They say that volunteering makes a difference, and also:

- ❖ helps combat depression
- ❖ increases self-confidence
- ❖ provides a sense of purpose
- ❖ makes you happier
- ❖ helps you to stay physically healthy

If you're inspired by all these benefits, visit

www.devonva.org/volunteering

or phone 0800 304 7413 to make an appointment.

Revitalised home library service for Chudleigh

Devon Home Libraries service is supported by the RVS and works alongside Devon Libraries to bring books, CDs, talking books and large print to those in the community who are not able to get to their local library.

The service is focused on those in their own homes who are elderly, lonely, isolated or physically unable to reach their library. Many such people also need a friendly face to talk to.

The volunteers are DBS checked and visit every three weeks (more often if required) to deliver the service. Their will be a discussion to identify what

each user requires, and, of course, to ensure that they are safe at all times.

Migs Atkinson, based in Chudleigh, has taken on the role of RVS Volunteer Co-ordinator with specific responsibility for Chudleigh, and is now attempting to build up the user base for this valuable service which has fallen away in recent years.

Migs would be very glad to hear from or meet anyone who would like to learn more.

Contact: atkinsonmigsy@gmail.com

07517 543667