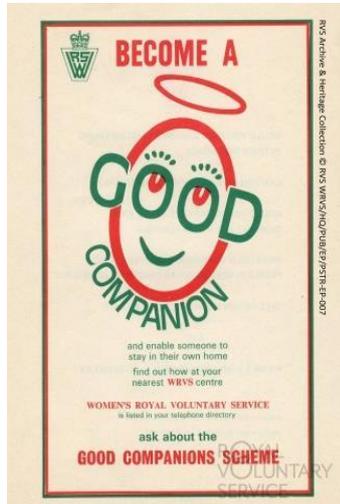


Good Neighbours



From the late 1960s onwards WRVS tried to get a scheme off the ground to help people who were having difficulty with running their home. Good Neighbours was originally called Good Companions and had a number of forerunners and names including: the Home Aid Scheme (in 1967 it was merged with the Home Helps Scheme) and Voluntary Daughters. Pilot schemes were launched in East Sussex in 1971 and by the end of 1972 the 12 regions had at least one scheme each.¹

The aim of the scheme was to alleviate loneliness and encourage people to help others in their local community. Volunteers did not need to sign up as WRVS members but were assigned people to help by the organisation who were usually referred to them by Social Services or Doctors.² Good Companions were drawn from a range of people including men, women with young children, young people (mostly from the WRVS London Evening centre) and even Darby and Joan club members. Those who need them as a Good Neighbour were usually older people, disabled, housebound or anyone in need of help.³

Good neighbours allowed people to stay independent and continue to live in their own homes. Volunteers would often escort people on outings, go shopping, collect pensions, send post, mend clothes, change lightbulbs, cook, and do other odd jobs around the home as well as taking time to talk to the person they were visiting.⁴

From 1977 to 1985 the service also ran campaigns with the Department of Health and Social Security to raise awareness of the needs of older people and the disabled. These campaigns also included work with the police to raise awareness of 'bogus officials' calling on older people.⁵

Today Royal Voluntary Service provides Good Neighbour schemes for older people, which includes practical help, home visits and telephone calls.

¹ RVS A&HC, 59/8, WRVS Good Companions Policy, 1970-1977

² *ibid*

³ RVS A&HC, 824, Good companions undertake to give regular help of a practical nature ... 1974

⁴ RVS A&HC, 824, Good Companions: Two handicapped householders are helped by Good companion, 1973

⁵ RVS A&HC, 77/5, Good Neighbour Campaign 1977-1985