



NEWS RELEASE

Issued 2 March 2009

NHS Cumbria inspired by Crosthwaite Exchange

The success of a village-run enterprise in Crosthwaite has prompted NHS Cumbria and Action with Communities in Cumbria (ACT) to pilot a scheme to set up more 'community exchanges' in Eden and South Lakeland.

In 2005, Crosthwaite's shop and Post Office closed and the villagers realised that they no longer had a central point where local people could meet to exchange news, views and concerns, and learn of others who may need help and support. The Crosthwaite Exchange, 'run for the community, in the community, by the community' was set up to meet this need.

Since its formation, the Crosthwaite Exchange has gone from strength to strength. Originally based on a coffee shop, running once a week in the village hall, it now offers a range of services and facilities including chiropody, presentations from public agencies, activities with the primary school, sales of local produce, Fairtrade and other goods, etc. Working with ACT, they have also written a guide to setting up a community exchange based on their experiences.

Funded by NHS Cumbria, ACT are offering support for the development of 6 new community exchanges with rural communities in South Lakeland and Eden.

ACT Chief Executive Roger Roberts said of the project "The community exchange approach helps to reduce isolation, by creating opportunities for members of the community of all ages to socialise. It also provides a vehicle for the delivery of other services such as information on healthy living, council services, basic healthcare provision and a chance to buy a range of food for those communities without shops."

"Although the loss of a key rural service acted as a catalyst to the development of both the Crosthwaite and Bolton Exchanges, there is no reason why similar projects should not be considered appropriate for any community seeking to reduce social isolation and improve access to local services."

The success of the Crosthwaite Exchange has already led to a similar volunteer-driven project being set up at Bolton, near Appleby. Future plans for the Bolton Exchange include the development of lunch clubs and regular exercise sessions for older people.

Carole Wood, Associate Director of Public Health for South Cumbria, says community gatherings like this are a great opportunity for people to keep themselves healthy. "We

want to help people help themselves. Once they're at the village hall, they can take part in exercise classes, quit smoking groups, learn how to cook healthier meals, even do a bit of ballroom dancing.

"The Exchanges are for people of all ages; however, there are particular benefits for older members of the community who tend to be more isolated for a variety of reasons."

Penny Much from the Crosthwaite Exchange said "We've just celebrated our third birthday and are as enthusiastic now as we were at the start, including the 30 or more local volunteers without whom it would not be possible.

"We hope that other communities will feel encouraged to start similar exchanges and would of course be delighted to welcome anyone contemplating starting one to visit us. You will find us at the Argles Memorial Hall, Crosthwaite, any Wednesday afternoon, between 2 and 4, or 1 to 4 on the first Wednesday of the month, for lunch."

ACT is currently looking for communities who are interested in setting up a community exchange in South Lakeland and Eden districts. If you would like to know more, please contact Nicola Kirby, ACT Development Manager on Tel: 01768 869528 or email: nicolakirby@cumbriaaction.org.uk

- Ends -

Photo:



Denise Park, volunteer at the Crosthwaite Exchange

Further press information available from:

Nicola Kirby, Action with Communities in Cumbria (ACT) - Development Manager
Tel: 01768 869528 or Email: nicolakirby@cumbriaaction.org.uk

Carole Wood, NHS Cumbria - Associate Director of Public Health for South Cumbria
Tel: 01229 833004 or 01539 797897 Mobile: 07917270227
Email: Carole.Wood@cumbriaPCT.nhs.uk

Notes to Editors:

Action with Communities in Cumbria

(Previously known as Voluntary Action Cumbria)

- ACT is Cumbria's Rural Community Council and a registered charity.
- ACT is working with people and communities to improve the quality of life in rural Cumbria.
- ACT is an independent organisation able to work with a wide range of partners on an open and equitable basis.
- Established in 1948, for 60 years ACT has been supporting communities that are socially, economically and environmentally vibrant where the needs of all are considered.
- To find out more information, please visit ACT's website: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk

NHS Cumbria

NHS Cumbria is the county's lead organisation for health, serving a population of around 498,000 people. It is responsible for providing primary and community health services, together with commissioning a full range of hospital services for local people. For more information visit www.cumbria.nhs.uk/pct

Crosthwaite Exchange

For more information visit www.crosthwaiteandlyth.co.uk