

Lynda Feeney, Secretary of the Ashlea PPG

Hello, you probably know me from the PPG, AGN or both so firstly I would like to thank Richard for the enormous amount of work and effort he has done in bringing the PPG to the position we are in today. I have worked with him during the past 12 years as Secretary and I will miss his enthusiasm and knowledge. At the same time, of course, pleased that Jayne will be stepping into his shoes to ensure we carry on supporting both our patients and the Practice in the best way possible.

Wearing my AGN hat now, I have been a volunteer since 2015 and 8 of the years as Secretary. I now look after marketing and events and in that capacity I would like to talk about what we do and how volunteers are so vital to our future success.

For over 20 years now AGN has provided a much needed and appreciated service to enable Ashtead residents to attend all forms of medical appointments – GP's, hospitals, dentist, opticians, pharmacies for covid vaccinations etc when otherwise they would struggle or be unable to attend.

We currently carry out over 1200 jobs per year and to enable us to do that, we need volunteer drivers. We currently have over 115 drivers and around 260 active clients. Today, our aim is to make AGN a household name and if you know of anyone who may wish to become a client, or volunteer, please spread the word.

The plus point is that our volunteers decide what, when and how many jobs they want to do in a month. Most elect to do 2 jobs per month stating what days they can and can't do and places they would prefer not to drive – so no obligation if you only want to drive locally. Other volunteers are happy to drive to, say St Helier or St George's but entirely up to you.

We organize DBS checks and pay expenses.

We are definitely not “a taxi service” – we look after the clients from beginning to end, helping as appropriate. We pick the client up from home, help with their appointment and ensure they are safely home again. Whilst some clients may be able to manage local non urgent appointments, nevertheless for some medical appointments, the journey, parking, finding the right department, make it too stressful for them to do on their own. That is where we step in.

I think it fair to say that our drivers thoroughly enjoy the interaction between them and the clients. Every client has a story to tell and for them, it is lovely having someone to talk to as they are often on their own. Our drivers, without exception, say it is an interesting and rewarding experience.

In addition to driving, we do have volunteers to help on the administrative side and others who are happy to do light shopping with a list supplied by the client.

We also organize Sunday afternoon teas for lonely clients. We have volunteers who host 6 clients and supply sandwiches, cakes and tea/coffee for a couple of hours.

Two volunteer drivers will pick up 3 each and an afternoon of company and chat makes such a difference.

I think from what I have said, you will agree that we are exactly what it says on the bottle – just Good Neighbours.

There are some leaflets here, please do take one and pass the message to anyone you think might be interested.

Thank you