

New service set to tackle gap in meals

by Philippa Mingins
philippa.mingins@bullivantmedia.com

A NEW door to door hot meals service is preparing to come to the rescue of hundreds of vulnerable Warwickshire residents.

The former meals on wheels service - run by Apetito and commissioned by Warwickshire County Council - stopped operating at the end of last month, leaving the county's elderly and vulnerable residents without a service which delivered hot meals direct to their door.

WCC had been subsidising meals by £2 a time to some 400 residents before axing it to cut costs, which in turn left Apetito unable to afford to operate the service.

Concerns were raised the decision could leave vulnerable and elderly going hungry, or risk them seriously injuring themselves or even burning down their homes, if left to cook for themselves.

But local charity WRCC, known for its Back&4th community transport minibuses and network of Warm Hubs, has now stepped in by setting up a new Community Food Fleet Service. Its mission is to provide door to door meals to all those who need them throughout Warwickshire.

WRCC's chief executive Kim Slater said: "We know that many people are already affected by lack of access to a cooked meals service, and our charity is committed to meeting this community need."

"Our Community Food Fleet will provide more than plated hot food up to seven days a week - our team of drivers will also make sure people are safe and well in their homes, supporting their wellbeing and providing peace of mind for relatives."

WRCC is already taking enquiries from people looking to subscribe and aims to launch this new service at the beginning of July - a challenging deadline say bosses but one that reflects residents' need.

Premises and vehicles have been secured and all involved are keen to get the service on the road without more delay.

The charity is transparent about the need for a higher prices, as WCC has withdrawn its subsidy and VAT will also apply.

But the charity says this is where other organisations can help to make the service more affordable, with a range of options on the table.

WRCC's chair of trustees Colin Parrott added: "We're calling on other responsible charities, local councils and commercial organisations to step up to the plate at this critical time."

"This is a fantastic opportunity for you to support an essential home meals delivery service which will really make a difference to people who need it most in Warwickshire. If you want to become a potential partner, please get in touch now."

Mary-Anne Taylor, whose 94-year-old mother lives in Kenilworth and is housebound due to various health issues, welcomed news of the new service.

She said: "Many of us have been worried that vulnerable people have been left to fend for themselves. My mother looked forward to seeing the person who used to bring her meals, and hopefully the new service will also be able to employ some of these drivers who were so friendly and helpful."

To find out more about WRCC's Community Food Fleet service, either as a customer or a collaborator, call 01789 842182 or visit www.wrccrural.org.uk/community-food-fleet