

IN DEPTH: GOOD NEIGHBOURS NETWORK

living in a cold and unhealthy home.

Later, Max Prangnell told delegates that the NHS was the third largest employer in the world, spending £160bn a year. The current government has unveiled plans for a 10-year reform of the NHS which aims to shift the health service from secondary to primary care (ie. from hospitals to more local places such as GP surgeries, clinics and pharmacies), from being reactive to being more preventative, and from analogue to digital.

He asked for reactions to those potential shifts, and delegates were able to comment on the plans as frontline users and patients in the NHS. Max and his colleagues at the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges will take those comments back to Sally Warren, who is leading the 10-year plan from within the Department of Health and Social Care.

Jenny Barrett, co-ordinator of Compassionately Portsmouth, which is based in the city, said: "I'd be interested in the Positive Energy project. Most of what we offer is picking people up for medical appointments. We do ask how people are doing, but we don't probe. But if we can offer information about how to save on fuel bills, that might be helpful."

Bishop Jonathan harked back to the creation of the Good Neighbours Network, back in the 1970s. The founder Bee Kenchington and the then vicar of Swanmore saw there was a need and formed the first care group.

He said: "How wonderful that – 48 years later – people who are nervous about medical appointments have this network of love working alongside them, to support them in this."

"You, and the other 4,000 volunteers who help, are the unsung heroes who make this possible, part of what holds our society together."

Lunches encourage community spirit

ONCE a month, Botley Neighbourcare organises a lunch club for those who might not otherwise get out much.

The regular get-togethers at the Bugle Inn in Botley, help to reduce isolation and loneliness among those who live in the village. Around 40 or 50 people normally come along for home-cooked food and good conversation.

It's just one of the things that volunteers from Botley Neighbourcare organise to help those who may be vulnerable. They also offer transport to medical appointments for those who might otherwise struggle to get there.

And for trustee Pam Hoskins, the chance to touch base with other Good Neighbours groups in



similar situations is really valuable. "It really does help us to meet together as care groups like this," she said. "You go away feeling much more motivated, and you

can also talk to other groups about what they do.

"I hope that we can ask the Positive Energy people to speak at our lunch club, and we can see how



Left: the lunch club run by Botley Neighbourcare at the Bugle Inn; above: volunteers transport people to the lunch club and to medical appointments

they go down. Every winter people have challenges with energy issues.

"Botley Neighbourcare has been running since the early 1990s, and I think the lunch club has been running for 20 years. They do slightly smaller portions than normal for us, as that's usually enough for our clients.

"It's incredibly rewarding to see

people there who perhaps played together as children, but haven't seen each other for years."

The group has around 12-15 volunteers who organise the lunches and drive people to appointments.

But they would love to hear from anyone else in the local area who has the time to volunteer. If you're interested, you can ring Pam Hoskins on 0800-9989132.



Bishop Jonathan speaks as part of the Good Neighbours Network event at Kings Community Church in Hedge End

And Karen Jordan, Good Neighbours Network leader, said: "It is always inspiring to spend time with such kind, thoughtful and giving people. Good Neighbours volunteers are simply the best!"

The Good Neighbours Network is based in our diocesan offices in

Peninsular House in Portsmouth.

Find out more about what it does, and about the 120 groups that are part of the network on www.goodneighbours.org.uk. Discover more about the Home and Well project on www.citahants.org/home-and-well

Energy-saving tips help vulnerable

THE Positive Energy Project run by the Good Neighbours Network offers those who are vulnerable and isolated the chance to save money on energy bills and improve their wellbeing.

NHS advice suggests that when the weather drops below 8 degrees C, some vulnerable people are at increased risk of physical and mental conditions. There is evidence that fuel poverty can impact people's physical and mental health.

The advice includes getting a smart meter to measure energy use, turning off appliances at the plug, blocking draughts, bleeding radiators and installing water-saving options.

The advice also includes details of how to save energy when cooking, washing up and doing laundry.

The project is part of a wider scheme called Home and Well, run in partnership with Citizens'



Energy adviser Siobhan Butt offers advice at the Positive Energy stand at the Good Neighbours Network event

Advice Bureau and Southern Gas Network. It also includes advice about fitting carbon monoxide detectors to ensure homes remain safe.

Energy advisers Siobhan

Butt and Stephen Dominy are available to help with advice on these issues.

Contact them via www.goodneighbours.org.uk/home/goodenergy