



James Clayton and Shane Edwards, familiar faces on the streets of Weston super Mare, describe a typical week's work

What do you most look forward to when you start work?

We look forward to planning our day and getting out and engaging with the community – whether for a friendly chat or to help resolve an issue.

And what do you most dread?

Not being able to resolve an issue quickly, or not at all.

How long have you been doing your job?

Eleven months.

What's the biggest challenge you face each day?

Educating people about the environmental issues we deal with day to day, but we're getting there.

And what puts a smile on your face?

Knowing we are making a difference to the community and the area.

What's your favourite thing about the area you work in?

Seeing the ever improving community spirit among the residents.

And what would you change if you could?

The attitude of the minority who don't seem to care about the area they live in.

Do you know anyone whose life has been changed by your service?

An elderly person we knew was not well and



James (right) and Shane live locally and the scheme is one of South Ward partnership's biggest successes

had not been out in several weeks, so we decided to call round. When he let us in he did not look well at all, and as we started to chat we found out he had not been able to get upstairs to go to bed, and had been sleeping in a chair for the last couple of months.

Being a war veteran he is a proud man, and it took some convincing for him to let us get him the help he needed. We arranged for a doctor to visit, who did so that day. The man also had a problem with his electricity meter so we contacted EDF, who sent someone round the next day to fix it.

It became clear that his three bedroom house was too much for him and he needed to move to smaller accommodation, so we contacted the estate manager for his area and arranged for her to see him the next day. She helped him fill out the forms to start the process moving.

We made a referral to the local housing association so he could have a floating support worker and we moved his bed downstairs so he could have a good night's sleep.

He is now in a small bungalow, close to his family. He has a floating support worker, contact with the Royal British Legion who have helped him finance a new carpet and cooker, and we helped him find a second hand mobility

scooter so he can get to the shops, the lunch club and the church he was missing so much.

In the space of six weeks, by speaking to the right people and agencies, we were able to help improve the life of an 83 year old man who has gone from looking grey and sullen to someone who looks well and has a spring in their step.

Could you give an example of an issue your service has tackled successfully?

We have been working closely with the local council on the issue of refuse being presented early or late, as this can cause serious litter problems and pest infestation. Because we patrol the area we are able to pick up on this problem early.

If evidence is found we send a warning letter to the address within 24 hours and monitor to see if the problem continues. By keeping on top of this problem we have reduced litter and the chances of infestation.

Has your service introduced any ideas that have been especially successful or innovative?

We ran a dog fouling campaign called 'You've been Tangpoo'd'. We used an orange spray on dog mess to highlight the issue of fouling across the estates. We also put up posters, did a talk in a local school and ran a poster competition.

The winning poster is up in all the local shops. This became a good talking point for residents, who wanted to know why there were all these orange marks around, and in some areas we have seen a decrease in fouling.

What's your dream for the future?

We hope we can keep improving the scheme and continue to make a difference.

FIND OUT MORE

◆ The Connect4 Community Warden scheme covers four estates in Weston super Mare. The scheme is funded jointly by the South Ward Neighbourhood Partnership and NS Housing, the biggest local housing provider. Although the scheme is only funded until December 2009, the two wardens have had a huge impact. It's hoped NS Housing will decide to keep the scheme going as part of its mainstream services. The wardens are supported by two cleansing workers, helping to achieve a 20% increase in satisfaction levels in the neighbourhood since 2006.