**PRESS RELEASE**

27 March 2023

**Friendly Society makes £1,800 lifesaving donation**

A friendly society has provided the potentially life-saving funding necessary to install a defibrillator which will service the Coleford community.

The North Gloucestershire Branch of the Oddfellows has provided £1,800 so that a Public Access Defibrillator (PAD) could be installed on Wednesday, 8 March. It has been placed on the outside entrance to Dora Matthews House, an Extra Care service for older people run by national charity Ambient Support.

Dora Matthews House successfully applied to the Oddfellows to fund the PAD, which has provided the money for several similar pieces of equipment in the past few years in the Gloucestershire area.

The Branch also provides free equipment training and ongoing support to successful applicants.

Alex Walker, Development Officer for North Gloucestershire Oddfellows, said: “We are delighted to have funded this vital piece of equipment that the community can access 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

“As a friendly society at the heart of our community, it is important to us that the people in our local area are safe and secure, whether they are members or not.”

The defibrillator is positioned so it can be clearly seen by people in the community who may need to use it in an emergency. It is also registered on [‘The Circuit’](https://www.defibfinder.uk/) for public use – the British Heart Foundation’s national network of accessible PADs.

Julie Element, Manager at Ambient Support’s Dora Matthews House, who applied to the Oddfellows, said: “We are very conscious that the current crisis in the NHS, including strikes and increasing ambulance response times, could have dire consequences for the elderly people we support. A defibrillator can help us keep a person alive until the emergency services arrive.

“Part of the criteria was that the defibrillator must be in a public place and Dora Matthews House is situated in the heart of our community. We are next to Parkside, an area of approximately 42 flats and bungalows, which has a part time warden, so we are surrounded by an elderly population.

“We were thrilled to win the application and the whole team is incredibly thankful to the Oddfellows as it benefits the people we support, our care team, and the surrounding community. Just knowing it’s there helps peace of mind.”

A defibrillator is an advanced medical tool that delivers a high energy electric shock to the heart through the chest wall. In cardiac arrest, quick intervention using a defibrillator can more than double the chances of a person’s survival.

Ernie Priest, a tenant supported by Ambient at Dora Matthews House, said: “I think it’s a wonderful idea. It makes us feel a little bit safer to know that if one of us suffered a cardiac arrest we would have a better chance of pulling through it with this equipment.

“We’re very grateful to the Oddfellows and to our wonderful care team at Dora Matthews House for making it happen.”

The Oddfellows’ North Gloucester Branch is one of 103 branches nationwide and is part of one of the largest and oldest friendly societies in the UK. Its aim is to help improve the quality of people’s lives through friendship, care and charity.

Alex added: “I would encourage anyone who is interested in learning more about our friendship group’s activities to get in touch and come along to one of our many brilliant social events and see what else the Society has to offer.”

Dora Matthews House is an Extra Care service situated in Coleford which offers housing to over 55-year-olds who wish to live an independent life but may need some assistance with daily living and support. Singles and couples can be accommodated.

**-ENDS-**

**Notes to editors**

Image caption: Garth Morgan (Trustee, Oddfellows North Gloucestershire), Julie Element (Manager, Dora Matthews), Ernie (Tenant supported at Dora Matthews House), Alex Walker (Development Officer, Oddfellows North Gloucestershire)

Oddfellows

* Photos attached:
* Established in 1810, the Oddfellows is one of the largest and oldest friendly societies in the UK, with 39,400 members across 103 branches nationwide. We're a non-profit mutual run by our members for our members, and we do our best to improve the quality of people’s lives through friendship, care and charity. It costs from £25 a year to join us as a member and become part of our friendly society. [www.oddfellows.co.uk](https://www.oddfellows.co.uk/)

Ambient Support

**About Ambient Support:**[www.ambient.org.uk](http://www.ambient.org.uk/)  @ambientsupport

* Ambient Support is one of the Top 20 generic Not-For-Profit Health & Social Care Providers in the UK
* They deliver services that meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable adults in society
* Operating in 110+ locations, they provide over 30 thousand hours of care to people on a weekly basis to support a range of needs due to the ageing process, learning disability or mental illness
* **Ambient is certified as a Great Place to Work**following an in-depth survey of staff in October 2022. Survey findings showed that**84%** said they felt they made a difference and were proud of what they accomplished. Whilst almost **90%** said they are treated fairly, regardless of age, race, or sexual orientation. Similarly, **83%** of employees said that when they joined Ambient, they were made to feel welcome
* Ambient’s range of quality specialist services are delivered by dedicated, professional, and passionate staff and their success is built on supporting people to live a full and meaningful life
* Latest results from Ambient Support’s 2022- People We Support Satisfaction Survey show:  
  **82% believe that Ambient supports them to live their life in the way they want to and 85% say we have helped make their lives better since support them.**​ **A total of 82% of people would tell others that they like Ambient**
* Ambient currently supports around 950+ people across the UK in a number of care settings
* Ambient can also help young adults who are transitioning from Children’s to Adult Learning Disability Services
* **87% of CQC registered locations rated Good or Outstanding**
* Ambient Support partners with EasyFundraising which allows people to turn their everyday online shopping purchases into donation funds for the charity, without costing extra money. Find out more [HERE](https://www.ambient.org.uk/ambient-on-easyfundraising/) and visit Ambient’s EasyFundraising link [HERE](https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/ambient-support/?utm_campaign=raise-more&utm_medium=clipboard&utm_content=rm-cpl)

For further information about the Oddfellows, please contact Naomi Fulwood ([naomi.fulwood@oddfellows.co.uk](mailto:naomi.fulwood@oddfellows.co.uk)) or Lewis Finney ([lewis.finney@oddfellows.co.uk](mailto:lewis.finney@oddfellows.co.uk)) on 0161 832 9361.

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