

Wandsworth Older People's Network
Thursday 14th April 11am – 4pm
The Civic Suite, Wandsworth High St, SW18 2PU

Older People Strategy after 2 1/2 years

The Conference was opened by Tony Tuck, chair of the Network, who at the outset reminded those present that, while the prime objective was to discuss progress in developing the Wandsworth Strategy for Older People and the updated Action Plan for 2011 – 2013, nonetheless the context of the strategy had changed dramatically in the past year.

Central and local government nationally seemed focussed on full cost recovery for adult services (and other services), and making all services out-housed and arms length. Old certainties were disappearing and the context of services and conditions were often surprisingly different. He cited four instances, firstly the fact that the major private deliverer of residential care homes was heavily financially overextended and now had an unviable business model requiring urgent action. Secondly, a GP surgery in Tower Hamlets where a contract was handed to a private provider three years ago had now had the contract terminated by the private provider. Thirdly, our local hospital, St George's, was making 500 staff redundant this year and that meant a reduction of services. Finally, significant local charities in Wandsworth were losing funding and losing contracts, for example WVSDA had lost the volunteering contract to an outside body with no local footprint, Age Concern Wandsworth had lost funding and contracts and this was repeated throughout the Borough. He added that it was factors such as these which made him feel "discomfort and disjointedness."

Nonetheless, and working within this unhelpful overall framework, he emphasised that in the Civic Suite today we had the practitioners and mover and shakers of services for the elderly in Wandsworth. Today was an opportunity for us all to learn from each other and listen to each other. The clear objective was to try to understand what services the dependent and semi-dependent elderly themselves wanted, and how service delivery could be managed in the future within the limits of what could be afforded. He also singled out the need to explore the balance between quality and cost in contract awarding, since the approaches of local government and health providers were markedly different.

We all knew it would be a challenge in Wandsworth – but the reason we were all together today was because we were individually and collectively "up for it".

Rob Persey, Assistant Director of Wandsworth Adult Social Services, said the aim of the Older People's Strategy was to maximize Independence and improve quality of life for all older people in Wandsworth. Progress had been made in the two and a half years and he cited particularly the shopping service run by Age Concern which helps a number of older people to choose their shopping and get it delivered. He asked if people had heard of the Wandsworth Challenge and about a third had. He said it was developed by the Leader and Chief Executive of the Council to stimulate ideas and policies to involve all parts of the community in developing the Council's priorities, with partners, over the next four years of financial stringency, with greater involvement in decision-making and modernising service to deliver customer satisfaction and better outcomes.

There would be three tests, achieving distinctively high quality of life, making best use of available resources and enabling individuals to take more responsibility for their own lives.

He stressed the opportunities in that Public Health was coming back into the Council's responsibilities and there will be integrated commissioning of health and social care, including close working with GPs. There would be decreased levels of funding available year on year and demand for services and expectations increase year on year but priorities would be personalization, prevention and safeguarding. If we want things to stay the same we have to change.

The following is a collection of comments made at all the tables, each of which heard five of the speakers.

Dimension 1 Health & Healthy Living

The Community Ward through GP surgeries gives intensive services at home.

There were complaints of long waits for doctors' and hospital appointments. Also cancellations of appointments which have a big impact on older people who may have to make special arrangements to attend.

There were mixed opinions in one group on whether or not to tell people that they have dementia symptoms. Two other groups felt early diagnosis of dementia is needed and there is not enough support for people once diagnosed. Memory assessment scheme and memory clinics were welcomed. It was hoped preventive services would be developed to prevent people going into hospital. It was felt that one community mental health service for older people could make the service more accessible and understandable. It was agreed that "In-reach", assessment at home, was much less threatening. More help for carers of people with "forgetfulness problems". The Poppy and Sunflower cafes should be supported more. Many carers of older people are of a similar age themselves. Respite provided in the home might not give the carer the ability to have a break at home.

Spreading information especially to staff and organisations working with older people.

It was felt that many people who did not need help from Social Services could benefit from Falls Prevention, Chiropody and/or hearing services but did not know how to access.

Somalis feel they do not have access to health services. They would like women- only language classes and sessions at leisure centres. Do health visitors do any work with older people, eg on falls prevention? Also raised in connection with Somalis.

Integration of intermediate care and reablement was seen to be a helpful move.

People enquired how GPs know about all the services which had been described. It was said the Community Matrons were the link. It was felt that older people should have more information.

Dimension 2 Housing & the Home

People need to know more about Watchline and it is not necessarily only for the very frail. There was a measure of resistance to this as "Big Brother". Discussion about Telecare and adaptations; any adaptations or installations should be simple and appropriate for use. Was there a waiting list for adaptations? Is there a method of prioritisation? Is there any difference between council tenants and owner-occupiers? The answer to this was no. There is printed material as well as on-line information on Sheltered Housing.

Mention was made of the newly established Older People Provider meeting?

Questions were asked about council policy on TV licences in communal areas and about Community clubroom space on Doddington. *Chris Jones, or other officer, promised to find the answers.*

Reablement team are very good; 6 weeks help is good.

Extra care welcomed as alternative to residential but question about number of units available. Closure of Sherwood Lodge questioned, especially as motivation sounded entirely financial. People welcomed the

(two?) weeks care after hospital available at Chestnut Lodge and elsewhere. Adequacy of number of nursing home beds also questioned. It was reported many people in care homes miss having contact with their friends. Is this because they have been moved to a home at a distance from where they lived previously?

There was a complaint that London Care were not very good and the person was recommended to contact the manager at London Care. Monitoring of quality of home care service deemed essential as well as just monitoring time spent. Electronic monitoring was welcomed. Many older people dissatisfied with service from agency staff but do not know what to do about this.

In response 3,000 people receive home care and resources are not available to monitor more frequently than we do already. (Reviews are once a year).

It was reported that staff were trained to watch for signs of abuse in older people and how to respond

A comment was made about Homecare/WBC suggestions for elaborate inappropriate adaptations and the couple felt unsure of how to disagree. Luckily a family friend was able to argue for them and the outcome was one the couple agreed with. If this had not been available would they have been given an Independent Advocate? There are nine advocates in place at present under an organisation called Voiceability. Advocates should be available for any older person or couple who do not have an available friend or relative to support them in any big decisions.

Difficulties for Somali speakers in accessing services.

Dimension 3 Neighbourhood

Presentation about awareness raising and reassurance re safety. WBC Community Safety works very closely with police/Safer Neighbourhood Teams and Fire Brigade. FLASH is a joint project which has some funding issues but is at present free although donations are welcome. Groups welcomed the awareness raising work undertaken and the Community Safety Officers are helpful. However, certain crimes in certain areas, e.g pickpocketing in Tooting & burglary in Furzedown, do not seem to be being reduced.

Information sessions at supermarkets and at groups often with Fire Brigade. Provision of fish and chip lunches as an offer to get the serious message across (in sheltered housing?). Request for some in Battersea. Equipment available for victims of rogue traders or distraction burglaries (on show at Community Safety stall). Provision of shredders in Sheltered Housing.

Efforts in sheltered housing to establish residents' neighbourhood watch. There had been a recent increase in Neighbourhood Watch, now 500 in Borough.

Pavements in Tooting were very bad.

In Roehampton Vale older people have difficulty accessing the rubbish chutes. One suggestion was for smaller bin bags. (*Chris and Liz will look into this*). Many have lived there for over 50 years. The absence of lifts is a problem which needs addressing.

To whom should vandalism and intimidation on estates be reported?

Dimension 4 Social Activities, Social Networks and Keeping Busy

Putney Vale Estate feels very neglected by the Council. Support from Family Care Trust has been obtained and residents plan to establish a mini-nursery and a homework club. The local library is now closed 4 days per week. A survey of the older people on the estate showed approx 80 over 60. There is a need for a community centre.

Presenters asked how much people knew about Library activities. People thought the home library service particularly useful for frail people unable to carry books home. People asked if a check could be kept on

people who stopped visiting the libraries to have them referred to the home library. The Library would already have their telephone number.

In discussion of York Gardens proposal there was concern about whether it could work with volunteers. There were already 100 volunteers in the Library service. There was concern about the loss of the IT tutor from York Gardens. This does not fit in with the policy for better information and training in an IT poor area. Viridian worker said local isolated people are invited into their sheltered housing community activities. Only three libraries open on Sunday. This could be a resource for isolated people who often find the weekends hard.

In Roehampton a ramp is necessary for access to the library (Lisa took e-mail contact and will look into this). People were looking forward to the forthcoming Arts Festival.

Leisure and sports activities were highlighted at St John's Centre. It was suggested these should be linked in with Active Days. Charging policy was an issue and it was thought it prevented many older people from joining in.

Dimension 5 Getting Out and About

David Tidley provided notes

Technical Services and transport have focused on improving infrastructure to make it easier for older people to get out and about:-

- new buses have lower floors;
- bus stops have been made more accessible; the recently decluttered area near Asda, Clapham Junction needs a shelter.
- better time-tables
- walking paths and pavements have been improved;
- lifts at stations
- Clapham Junction Station is getting a new entrance (opening on 19 May).

In tougher economic times this type of work gets squeezed as it is often considered more important to fill potholes and resurface roads.

A question was asked about reducing the gaps between the trains and the platforms. It could not be done without rebuilding the platforms to straighten them

Who does what? The Council is responsible for roads and pavements, bus shelters, walkways, Freedom Passes, Taxi-card, Dial-a-Ride. Stations are jointly operated with transport for London. Railways are operated by a range of providers. Freedom Pass is the best thing. Accepted that money could be saved by not issuing it to people who are still employed. It was said not to be under threat for the foreseeable future. Taxicard highly valued and concern was expressed about them being restricted. You are only eligible if you cannot use public transport. (It is possible to have a Taxi-card for a reduced number of journeys while still having a Freedom Pass). Both Dial-a-Ride and Taxicard have improved. There was one complaint that Dial-a-Ride form could not be completed online. The Mobility Forum in the spring is good. Silver Trailblazers was praised and its disappearance this year regretted. Buses good although no bus or other public transport from Balham or Furzedown to Wandsworth. Lifts at stations needed because older people prevented from train travel because of steps e.g Clapham Junction. Information was sought about hiring a van: did not know how to contact Wandsworth Community Transport. It was suggested that WCT should run Dial-a-Ride and it was considered they would be more efficient. WCT much valued.

Concerns expressed about mini-cabs not having a ramp. Bus stops often busy, especially the one at Roehampton Vale into Putney often crowded with students and this stop is on a slope which makes it difficult for older people to manage.

Why are there a lot of falls among older people in Wandsworth? Most falls take place on private land/property. The Council is trying to improve any areas it controls. On buses instructions are issued to drivers and passengers regarding safety and precautions when getting on and off. Falls prevention should include assessment of the need for other services or other improvements. There were complaints about too much street clutter and uneven pavements.

Will there be more displays at bus stops with information of when the next bus is coming? No more are planned but existing ones are being updated. There will also be iBus that enables people with mobile phones to type in bus stop number and get information about when the next bus is coming to their stop.

How do road and other improvements get prioritised for repair and renewal? The Council draws up a list every year of roads due for resurfacing. Work takes place according to the order of places on the list.

High satisfaction with provision of range of healthy and fun activities and excellent library services, including outreach. Disappointment that libraries have to work reduced hours and that York Gardens will lose Council funding. Concern that current Falls prevention is a 'short course' and although people are signposted to 'other activities' felt that falls prevention should be ongoing for frail people.

Dimension 6 Income (Peter Forde)

The aim of the Benefits Service is to improve access to benefits for older people. A key way of achieving this has been through the work of the Joint Visiting Team which will make home visits. The team work jointly with Age Concern, although this seems to be under threat. When somebody applies for one type of benefit they can be assessed for a range of benefits that they may be eligible for but were not aware of. The service works with other agencies such as Cold Busters to help people over-70 who are on benefits access grants to improve their (privately-owned) homes and insulate them, replace boilers, etc. The service is focussed on shortening processing time for benefits, now 13-14 days. There was a Council Benefit Service e-mail newsletter: *will it only go to officers if it is e-mail? Said to be going to 70 groups: who are they?* It was aimed at advice-giving organisations. Support can be given to Sheltered Housing Officers (also from RSLs) and others re benefits. There will be changes from 1 April, as there are each year.

How do you get assessed? It was felt that this session would have been more helpful with someone present who was familiar with personal budgets. Some complex benefit questions were raised about people sharing a property and people with incapacity to work due to mental health problems. Recommended to visit DASCASS for help. DASCASS was preferred to the Council/Pensions Service and warden-run information sessions: thought to be less of conflict of interest

What is happening about pensions? There will be a new pension level of £140 but it will only be for new pensioners not existing ones. The team will know about current levels when they are carrying out an assessment. The proposed increases in charges for services would drive people away from vital support services. Was it planned to monitor this?

Length of forms very daunting for older people. Good that it is possible to have a visit and help to complete. Waiting time of one week seemed reasonable as did 13 days to process. However, older people often don't know they are eligible and can be worried about someone coming and asking about personal circumstances. *Could training be made available for people working in day centres, care homes, etc? This has now been arranged by WVSDA for 15 May.*

Dimension 7 Information

The information service provided by the Council is moving toward a universal offer catering for anyone who might need information about any service available from Council or Health. It will have all the information which Careline had and is available online and on the telephone.

People complained it was not the same as CareLine, which had a wide range of information not just on organisations and services linked to the Council. The staff would find out when they did not know the answer and would phone back. CareLine updated its information annually with forms to complete for all organisations on their database. There were complaints that the website was difficult to use and information was out-of-date. People had appreciated Careline and new system not so familiar to them. One example of information service not knowing where Heathside day centre had moved to & not offering to find out and call back.

Older people prefer to go to somewhere like Age Concern for information so regret that service reduced. It was suggested that certain organisations could lead on information provision such as Age Concern. It was hoped that information can be widely dispersed and advertised so that people know where to go in a crisis. It was suggested that better information should be available from staff at GP surgeries. See comments under Health & Healthy Living where there were several comments about lack of knowledge of health services which are available.

How will people know about the new charges? How will they be assessed and get crucial services as vulnerable adults if they are below the bar for personal budgets? Many people below the bar for help will not be able to afford services like Watch alarm, home care, meals on wheels, etc?

Training in using the internet is available at South Thames College at its different sites and for over-60s through Active Days. Many older people do not want to use the internet. They can find out face-to-face at Adult Social Services at 90 Putney Bridge Rd 9am – 5 pm. It is hoped to work with GPs so that they can offer information in a more holistic way.

What is the Resource Directory for Personalised Care? It is a big catalogue of different services, currently being created and hopefully ready by the end of the summer.

Are Libraries being closed? No libraries are closing but York Gardens will be piloted under a new model of management and volunteer involvement.

Advocacy welcomed and needs of older people to have help with personal budgets highlighted. It was felt greater use should be made of Brightside to provide information to older people. It was felt that Housing Managers must have knowledge of who live on estates and who is elderly and perhaps vulnerable.

Summary

Health & Healthy Living

There were complaints about delays in getting hospital appointments and about cancellations.

There is a lack of information, points mentioned were access to falls prevention, hearing services, chiropody and dementia services, such as memory assessment. Do we need a number of little leaflets of information? Are there Health visitors working with older people? Need for women only services, language classes and exercise.

Housing and the Home

Intermediate care, reablement and extra care all welcomed. Are there enough places in extra care and in nursing homes?

Monitoring of home care welcomed especially on length of time spent in the house.. Some people with complaints did not know what to do about it. Are there regular reviews?

Difficulties for Somalis accessing services.

Neighbourhood

Still concern about crime in spite of all reassurance work. Pickpockets in Tooting and burglary in Furzedown mentioned. Welcome for the increase in Neighbourhood Watch, and especially in sheltered housing.

Pavements in Tooting were said to be bad.

Social Activities, Social Networks and Keeping Busy

Putney Vale problems of isolation. Concern about library services. Continuation of IT classes at York Gardens requested and in other libraries.

Activities at St John' s: does it link with Active Days? Charges are an issue and becoming more so.

Getting Out and About

Why are there a lot of falls in older people in Wandsworth? Are there more than in other London Boroughs?

Street clutter and uneven pavements were mentioned.

Concern about new information system for buses. Does it need more than a phone call? Is it texting or internet access?

Can we have ongoing exercise/falls prevention for frail older people?

Income

There were questions about new pension proposals. New proposal of £140 for all is only a proposal and will be for new pensioners only.

How are people on low income going to pay the new charges for services if they are assessed as low or moderate?

Information

There needs to be better information on rights for financial help and on rights to have an assessment.

Everyone is entitled to an assessment and that is not generally known. Will records be kept of those on low income needing help at a low level (Watchalarm or some help at home) and not able to afford it?

Can there be better information at GP surgeries? Will the new Resource Directory be much help?

The lack of understanding of the systems was demonstrated from every group. Could Brightside be used to give more information? More simple posters and short leaflets on different topics in GP surgeries where most older people will turn up at least once a year.

Lilias Gillies
4 May 2011

