

Progress Report



Let us tell you what
we have been up to in
the last three years!



SPEAK AND BE HEARD

The story so far.....



Background information

In 1997 the post of Network Development Officer was created. It was designed to facilitate the involvement of older people in the development of corporate and interagency strategies for meeting the needs of the ageing population in Wolverhampton. The Network Development Officer established and built links with a wide range of older people's groups and supported older people to participate in the development of policies and services.

As part of this work the Network Development Officer brought together a task force of 12 older people to identify what the key concerns and issues were and to look at developing some mechanisms for older people to participate. The task force then held their first event called "Speak and be heard"; it was a great success and attended by 80 older people. The event enabled the older people who attended to work in small groups and identify the key issues for older people.

The key issues identified were:-

- Transport provision and design
- Provision of leisure and sports activities
- Television licences
- Availability and standard of public toilets
- Access to information about services and opportunities
- Crime and safety issues
- The availability of learning opportunities
- Pensions and benefits
- Process to enable older people's views to be heard
- Access to services and information for ethnic minority groups
- Health and Social Care services
- Telephone answering systems with complex instructions and call queuing systems
- Volunteering
- Ageist policies

This event led to the beginning of a Forum for Older People. The Forum was initially attended informally by 25-30 people on a monthly basis. Their aim was to look at the issues identified at the "Speak and be heard event" and take them forward together with other issues raised. They started to address these issues with service providers and public agencies. In November 1999 this informal Forum adopted a formal constitution and the Wolverhampton Over 50's Forum was born. The Forum elected a management committee and their work began. Membership of the Forum now stands at 65 including groups and the monthly meetings are attended by 30-40 people.



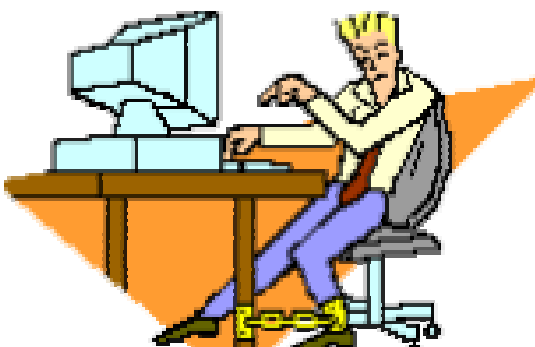
In January 1998 local authorities were invited to bid for pilot status in the new Cabinet Office led Better Government for Older People programme – a unique partnership which brought together central and local government, the voluntary sector, the academic world and, most importantly, older people as equal partners. The stated aim of the BGOP programme was to improve public services for older people by a greater awareness of their needs, listening to their views, encouraging and recognising their contribution. The BGOP programme was to devise new and innovative ways of involving older people in influencing both decision and policy-making and having a much greater involvement in the governance process at a local, regional and national level.

The original partners in the BGOP programme were:

The Cabinet Office
Age Concern England
Anchor Trust
The Carnegie Third Age Programme
Help the Aged
University of Warwick

From over 100 applicants, Wolverhampton Council was selected as one of only 28 successful local authorities to be awarded pilot status in this unique programme which was to run for two years from 1 April 1998. Partnership working was at the heart of all 28 UK-wide pilot projects. The programme developed new ways of working across traditional organisational boundaries created innovative approaches to problem solving.

During the two year BGOP programme many conferences and similar events were held for both older people and local authority officers. At a ground-breaking conference held in Oxford in July 1999 older people representing local authorities from across the UK came together to develop mechanisms that would ensure older people were more influential in the governance process nationally, regionally and locally. As one of the 28 BGOP pilots, Wolverhampton Council was represented by members of the 50+ Forum. At this conference it was agreed to form the UK Older People's Advisory Group (OPAG), the membership of which would be drawn principally from older people representing the 28 BGOP pilots and augmented by older people from other regions of the UK.



OPAG is a doing organisation, engaged and working in partnership with organisations at all levels. It provides the expertise of older people, acting as a sounding board, influencing both decision and policy-making at local, regional and central government level. Since July 1999 OPAG has developed a regional structure, with each region comprised of older people representing every local authority within the region's geographical boundary.

In addition to being a member of the UK OPAG, Brad Purshouse, Chair of the 50+ Forum, also chairs the West Midlands OPAG. The UK OPAG structure, via the West Midlands OPAG, provides a mechanism for the issues affecting older people in Wolverhampton to be discussed with other older people right across the UK. The UK OPAG has regular meetings with central government ministers, thus enabling the voice of older people to be heard directly by government.

In Wolverhampton, the BGOP pilot project coincided with other initiatives, including the Health Action Zone development. This brought with it an integrated, strategic and inter-agency approach in responding to the issues affecting older people in Wolverhampton. This can be read about at length in a report entitled *New Agenda*, written by Anne Bailey, and accessed through Community Care Commissioning Older People's Strategy Team.

Chairman's Remarks

The Wolverhampton Over Fifties Forum, sounds impressive, in our view it is impressive. The Forum is a group of people over the age of fifty living within the City of Wolverhampton, all of whom are keen to see the lot of the older person greatly improved.

The Forum is not a banner waving, protest marching group. There are already many such groups in existence, with many of our members supporting them. Whilst we may add our support to the groups we were set up to work in partnership with the Local Authority, Police, Fire, Ambulance, Hospitals and Businesses around the city. As you will see within this document the Forum has been involved in many aspects of life within Wolverhampton. There are a number of sub groups within the Forum that are dealing with Health, Public Safety, Transport, Public Toilets and Housing. Many of the problems faced by older people in the Wolverhampton area are the same or at least very similar to those faced by older people across the length and breadth of the

country. Many other towns and cities have similar groups to this one and are covering some of the same ground. The information should be, can be and is in many instances shared.

Wolverhampton has two representatives on the West Midlands Older Peoples Advisory Group (WMOPAG) where much of the work done by local forums is brought together. WMOPAG has three elected representatives on the National Older Peoples Advisory Groups which in turn has a good working relationship with many Government departments.

The Forum in Wolverhampton has done much work over the three years or so that it has been operating and there is still a great deal to be done. If you are over fifty and living within the boundaries of the City then there is a place for you within the group. It is working together with other groups to make the City of Wolverhampton an even better place for older people to live in.



Brad Purshouse
Chair Over 50's Forum

Issues raised by the Forum

The Forum members raise issues through the Forum meetings on a monthly basis. In some cases the Forum then raises the issue with the relevant organisation, requesting a response. This is sometimes done by the secretary or through the relevant sub committee's. Responses are fed back to the Forum members through the meeting structure and minutes. Some of the issues that have been addressed are:

Health Issues

Seating in shops

Smoking in public places

Ageism and age related issues

Housing issues

Transport issues

Public Safety issues

Road Safety issues

Fire Safety issues

Crime

Town planning

Other Involvement activities

The Forum members represent the Forum in many other activities ensuring the representation of older people. The members who represent the Forum feed back any relevant information to the Forum meeting for further work/discussion. This is an excellent way of keeping up to date on local issues and members can follow their individual interests. Some of the activities members are involved with:-

Public Information Group

Crime Reduction Panel

Bereavement Steering Group

Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council.

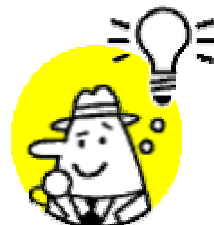
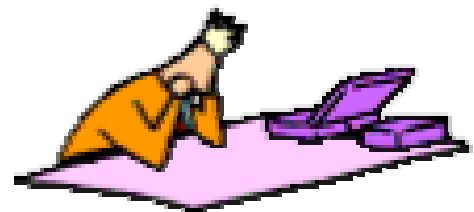
National Service Framework Panels

Patients Forum

West Midlands Older Persons Advisory Group (OPAG)

Monitoring and Development Panels

Local Area Forums



Correspondence

The secretary on behalf of the Forum has set up open channels of communication as follows:-

Graham Edwards – Centre Manager Mander Centre

Derek Anderson – Chief Executive and Policy Co-ordinator

Manager Wolverhampton Railway Station

Mark Hackett - Chief Executive New Cross Hospital

Claire Parr - Advanced Nurse practitioner in Urology

Michelle Minotek - Advanced Nurse practitioner in Urology

Mr Philips – Consultant in Urology

Dr Inglis – Dept. of Urology

Mr Waymont - Dept. of Urology

Mr K. Nye – Cleansing Department.

Mr J. Partridge - Traffic Department

Tony Blair – Prime Minister

Lesley Robson – Age Diversity Team

Miss E. McEwen – Direct Communications Unit

Chief Executive – of Dudley Sandwell and Walsall council

Judith Sunley – Group Manager Bereavement Service

Ken Mackie – Town Centre Manager

Chief Environmental Services Officer

Professor Mel Chevannes

Manager at the Courts

Sir Edward Crewe - Chief Constable West Midlands Police

Home Office Treasury Department

Home Office – Policing and Crime Reduction Group

DFEE – Adult disadvantage policy division

The Home Secretary

W. C.C. Transport Department

R E. Barrett – Transportation services

Ken Purchase – M.P.

Dennis Turner – M.P.

Rob Marris – M.P.

S. Johnson – West Midlands Police Inspector

Ian MCarthy – M.P.

Simon Murphy – European M.P.



Honorary Secretary Roy Russell OBE

Speakers at the Forum

At the monthly Forum meetings we invite a speaker to address us. Some explain their role, function or service and others come to explain new developments. Members listen enthusiastically to anyone who comes and generally ask numerous questions not always easily answered. Speakers who attend comment about how good the dialogue is and how informing it is to listen to members experiences. In the last three years the speakers have included:

Co-ordinator of the Advocacy Scheme – Ken Collins

Rowena Clayton – Health Authority

Ned Williams – Workers' Educational Authority

Maggie McAndrews – Safer Cities

Chief Executive – Wolverhampton City Council

Kate McNish United Family Support Group

Roy Russell – Parkinson's disease Society

Jo Evans - Information Officer for Older People

Superintendent Colston – Police

Ms Chaning - Wolverhampton City Council Housing Department

Community Workers for older people

Sean Ward - Community Health Council

Gerry Walsh - Age Concern Wolverhampton

Mark Hackett – Chief Executive New Cross Hospital

Maggie Rust

Hospital Social Worker

Special Needs Co-ordinator – Catherine Lancaster-Graham

Martin Shreeve – Better Government for Older People

Russ Borrowman – Director of Housing

Anne Bailey – Older People's Strategy Team

Brian Bailey - Director of Finance
Wolverhampton City Council

Mike Finnegan – Asylum Seekers Co-ordinator

Tony Mayher – Volunteer Co-ordinator of Job Search 50+

Sergeant Brian Rye – Birmingham Road Police Station

Police Constable Oakley – Birmingham Road Police Station



Sub Committee's

Loos Sub Committee

In November 1999 the issue of toilets was raised by Charles Sammonds. Charles was concerned about the state of the toilets in the town, their closures and lack of maintenance. The Forum had decided on several themes suitable for them to investigate and the Loos Sub committee was brought to life with Charles Sammonds acting as Chairman of the Sub Committee.

In January 2000 it was decided by seven of the Loo group to investigate the toilet facilities within half a mile or so of the town centre. An agreed pro-forma and criteria approved by the main Forum was used. The list of facilities supplied by the Council was seriously out of date; some toilets listed were closed and others were located out of the town centre.

In March 2000 an approved group of 7 Forum members selected 21 town centre toilets to investigate and grade. Charles drew up a pro-forma whereby each toilet would be assessed using ten criteria.

In April 2000 the results were summarised and a report was presented to the Forum on the 24th April. Contact was made with Pat Byrne, the Councillor responsible for environmental issues. Pat attended a meeting of the group to discuss its findings. A meeting was also held with officers to discuss the report.

On 3rd May a final appraisal grading, with comments was tabled.

During the next few months there little action was taken but in 2001 Charles Sammonds attended three different meetings of the newly formed MPDP's and raised the matter. Each Chairman promised action from the officers. The worst loos, Queen's Building at the Bus Station, were refurbished in 2001/2 and although considerably better are still not up to a standard expected of a City's toilets. The Council established a contract with private enterprise. The first toilet from this is an

automatic in Garrick Street, located outside Littlewoods.

In December 2001 it was agreed that the Loo group would repeat the investigation of the toilets. At this point Charles gave notice he would be resigning from the group and no replacement for him has been found; the group have not met recently. The exercise of repeating the investigation is therefore 'on hold'. It is still the intention of the Forum to urge the Council be to provide City Centre toilets appropriate to its new status. The Forum believes that there should be one *Superloo* in or near to Queen's Square, with adequate facilities for all, including the disabled. It should be manned by a caretaker/maintenance person 24 hours a day to deter vandalism and anti-social behaviour and also to collect any charge that may be necessary.

Housing Sub Committee

The Housing sub group was formed in April 2001 when it was agreed by the Forum that there were numerous issues of a housing nature that could be dealt with effectively through a sub committee.

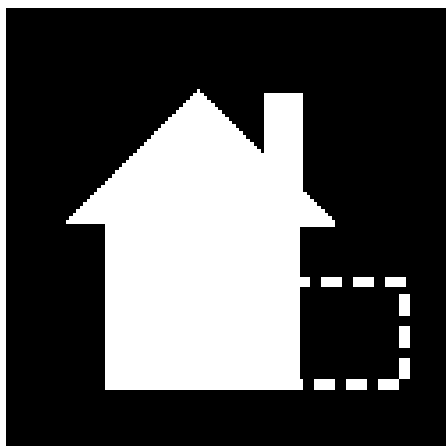
Some of the work carried out by the Housing Sub committee includes being involved in the development of the Housing Strategy for Older People.

Russ Borrowman, the Director of Housing, attended a meeting of the Sub committee to discuss the concerns of the Forum on issues raised in relation to older people's housing.

The Housing Sub committee became involved in the issues around the Tarrant Bungalows and were successful in assisting those tenants affected, to find a satisfactory conclusion.

The Sub committee regularly deals with individual cases for older people across the city who has had problems accessing housing services and repairs, or difficulty with a local office. The sub committee act as an advocate for older people assisting them to deal with the housing department.

Members of the Sub committee have received training in Health and Safety inspections and work with the Anti Social Behaviour unit.



Public Safety Sub Committee

The Public Safety Sub Committee has worked with the Council and other agencies since June 2001. They focus on issues of safety for older people and quite often the public at large.

The Sub committee works closely with the Police and Fire Service to look at issues and find solutions to problems raising issues of concern passed to them from the main Forum.

They work with relevant departments within the City Council and look at issues around Road Safety including evaluating and reporting on pedestrian crossings and traffic problems.

Members of the committee attend the Crime Reduction Panel and information is exchanged between the Panel and the Forum through this mechanism.

Issues raised that have been successfully dealt with through the work of the Sub Committee include the Pedestrianisation of Queen Street. This matter was raised with the Road Safety committee and they have shown an interest in the proposal. The 20 MPH Speed Limit introduced was raised through this Sub Committee and supported by the Forum evaluating pedestrian crossings and passing on the results to the Council for their action.

The Sub Committee is given Safety Information and has a function to feed that back to their peers.

Alcohol related crime and disorder in the city is another issue currently under review by the Sub Committee who are working with the City Council and Magistrates to try and identify a solution to these problems.

The Sub Committee has successfully campaigned with the Police Service to provide a dedicated Older Person's Officer. The Police Service have only recently provided a dedicated Vulnerable Persons officer but the Sub Committee reiterated that by opening discussions with agencies solutions can be found working in partnership.

Jim Speakman
Chair Public Safety Sub Group



Health Sub Committee

The Health Sub Committee was established in 2000 and raises the issues around the health and well being of older people and people in general. The committee has roles on many health organisation user panels to ensure the voice of older people is heard.

The Health Sub Committee works closely with organisations such as the Royal Wolverhampton Hospital Trust through its Patient's Forum; it examines issues raised about the Hospitals and helps to ensure the voices of older people are heard. The Forum is represented through the Health Sub Committee on the Bereavement Service Steering Group to monitor the development of the service. The Bereavement Services was formed as a direct response to concerns raised by the Forum.

The Sub Committee is striving to look at implementing the National Service Standards for older people in conjunction with the Council's Social Services Department and the Health Authority.

In 2000 the Committee undertook very comprehensive research into Prostate Cancer and in 2001 had a successful prostate awareness campaign.

Transport

The Transport Sub Committee is no longer operationable. The work formerly undertaken by the Sub Committee centred on issues regarding transport for older people in the City.

They Committee raised issues with Centro regarding Bus Travel including routes taken by buses in areas not covered by bus services, dangers of standing up on the bus before it stopped, obstructions in the gangway and bus shelters.

The Transport Sub Committee formed working partnerships with Centro and Travel West Midlands raising issues of concern which were then answered by key personnel from Centro and Travel West Midlands.

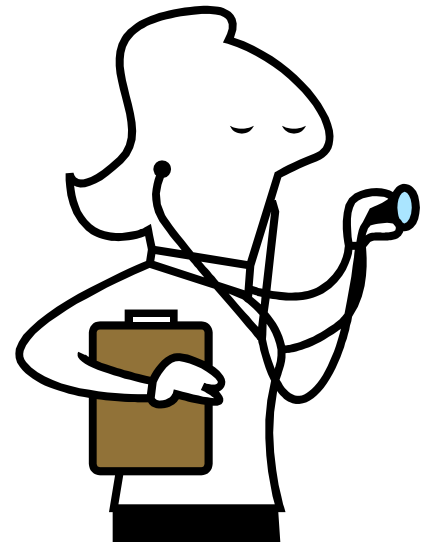
This open channel of communication enabled the Transport Companies to gain insight into the needs of the older traveller and for older people to understand the system and how they could use it to make suggestions for change.

In 2001 the Committee embarked on a large publicity campaign on prostate awareness. A variety of eye catching posters were produced which were circulated to 61 pubs and 42 clubs in Wolverhampton to be displayed in men's toilets.

The Health Sub Committee played a very active role in the Falls Prevention Conference in Wolverhampton.

The Health Sub Committee was more recently involved in the review of older people's Information service. This was implemented through the Older People's Strategy Team meeting on the Information Provision for older people.

The work of the Health Sub Committee is varied with regular involvement in other activities across the City. Members of the Committee will take up any area issues raised brought to the Forum and agreed by Forum members as requiring their attention.



West Park Hospital



Success Stories

Bereavement Centre

The Over 50's Forum drew the Council's attention to the fact that services for bereavement were fragmented. The process of dealing with a death was complex and required people from many agencies and locations to be contacted.

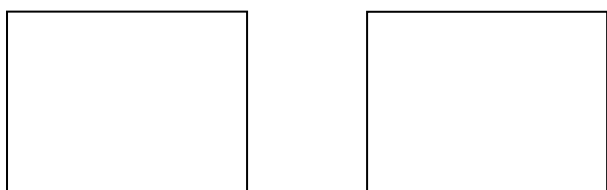
In response an inter-agency group was set up to explore the possibilities for improving bereavement services. This group included-

Registrars Service, Coroners Office, Benefits and Social Services, Health CRUSE, Age Concern and Bereavement Services (Crematoria and Cemeteries). As a result of this the concepts of a one stop centre where all issues could be dealt with and support and advice received was borne.

Resources were accessed through the Government's "Invest to save" funding programme and from the various agencies involved.

The multi-agency steering group was formed and chaired by one of the older people originally raising the issue. The group was set up initially to oversee the development of the Centre which opened in 2001 and is still being monitored by the steering group.

This is an excellent example of older people being involved in the development of services and actively participating in their design and formation. A member of the Forum reports back to members monthly on the developments within the Centre.



Intergenerational Arts Project

The idea of using the performing arts to promote intergenerational relationships came from the over 50's Forum. A series of four activities were produced from across the City

Including schools, youth clubs and older people's groups. A production of all four pieces was done on 30th September at the Arena Theatre. It produced a spin-off of other Intergenerational Work and cross culture activities.

Prostate Awareness Campaign

Two senior nurses from the Prostate Cancer Department at New Cross assisted the Committee in their extensive research and attended meetings to ensure the Committee were fully informed of the treatment and all possible after effects.

Subsequently a variety of eye catching posters were produced and circulated to 61 pubs and 42 clubs in Wolverhampton to be displayed in men's toilets.



20Mph Speed Limit and Pedestrianisation of City Centre

The Forum suggested/supported the Council's decision to restrict speed limits and to make Queen Street part of an ongoing pedestrianisation scheme in the city

Vulnerable Persons Officer

The Forum asked the Police Service to think about the provision of a dedicated officer for older people. The police have only recently responded by providing the post of Vulnerable Person's Officer. The officer now holds surgeries at Age Concern to meet with older people.

Reports

Reports are given by Forum members who attend events to represent it. Some are given verbally during the meetings and others are written for members to receive together with the minutes of the meetings. A typical example is:-

Report by Charles J Sammonds on The Launch of the Community and Public Involvement strategy

The primary aim of the launch was to bring together the widely disparate action groups throughout the city to ensure they were able to link up with each other. Local public agencies and voluntary organisations would continue to involve the public in their endeavours. By this means it was expected that the services they deliver will become more relevantly effective and efficient. (But note the plethora of Council initiatives to obtain greater democracy via Forums and Neighbourhoods).

1. After the formal welcome, there were a couple of “integrating exercises” which appeared to be reasonably successful, raising points of critical interest common to most organisations.
2. A series of senior representatives of organisations ranging from the Primary Care Trust, through the Voluntary Sector Council to the Strategic Partnership spoke about the successes they had individually achieved, but how much more effective they had been in collaboration with other groups. The emphasis all round was how valuable the participation of the public proved, for example in setting up the wheelchair system at New Cross, identifying pockets of good practice in dealing with Social exclusion and Social deprivation, and attempting to modify cultural bias by getting groups to work together.
3. Ian Ellis of the WVSC spoke on the strategy, and particularly emphasised the need for feedback and

communication from and to the action groups within the Partnership. Individuals and groups had to work together and not be blinded by their individual targets from seeing the needs of others.

4. Finally, Paul Booth (City Strategic Partnership) spoke on “what’s next?” mainly on the structure needed behind the sharp end of service delivery.
5. We concluded by filling in a proforma listing the activities and meetings that our organisation may well take further. We ticked those we already are involved with but it looked to us like a search for more volunteers! We made the point that the Council Portfolio MPDP’s are probably the best channel for our comments, complaints and ideas.



Over 50's Forum Development Plan

To summarise:-

- It is intended to Increase advertising through different mediums, have information leaflets and posters printed to send to all areas of the city for display, include regular reminders about the Forum in the local press and other publications.
- We will attempt to Increase contact with members by including reminders about membership renewal and mailing out reports on progress annually and other items of interest.
- We hope to Increase membership by actively recruiting people to join from local area Forums, ask them to join the Forum therefore ensuring Forum are represented on all local area committees.
- We are to produce an Annual Report to coincide with the AGM to show Forum achievements which will be circulated to all Council Officers for information together with other organisations, including the press and Members. This report is the first of these and charts the Forum's progress over the last three years.
- Sub committees are to provide a small verbal summary of their work to members. This will be followed with a written report submitted to the Network Development Officer for inclusion in the minutes of the meeting.
- The format of the minutes will change to allow members to see what is being actively done by them, following meetings. Minutes from meetings will include a section for Action points to be recorded nominating a 'who should do what and when' section.
- It has been noted that members are not easily identified in meetings; it is proposed to look at the provision of name badges for members to enable easy identification.
- The Forum proposes to have it's own Website with preparation on this is already underway. Opportunities for assistance to set up the site are being investigated. More news about this should be available in the New Year.

