

# assisting ageing

**I&DeA**  
improvement and development agency



  
The  
Beacon  
Scheme



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## ASSISTING AGEING

One of the great challenges that we face in the 21st century is adapting to an ageing society.

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Falling birth rates and increasing life expectancy are leading to huge demographic changes. There are now almost 20 million people over the age of 50 in the UK. They outnumber children under 16 by two to one and account for 42 per cent of the adult population. By 2020, the proportion will probably be around 48 per cent and there will be more people over 80 than there are children under five.

During the 20th century, the state gradually assumed an increasing share of the responsibility for older people, on the patronising assumption that age equalled dependence. That is now inappropriate because the over-50s form such a significant proportion of the population and society increasingly depends on the contribution they make as workers, consumers and carers.

This guide has been compiled in partnership with the IDeA by the Beacon authorities for the *Services for Older People* theme (2004-05).

They are:  
Cotswold District Council  
Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service  
Nottinghamshire County Council  
Shropshire County Council  
Stroud District Council.

It addresses some of the challenges posed by this changing society and provides practical examples, experiences and advice for developing strategies and services to meet the diverse needs of so many citizens, using examples drawn not only from the Beacons, but also from other local authorities, including Brighton & Hove City Council, the London Borough of Camden, the London Borough of Enfield, Gloucestershire County Council, the London Borough of Haringey, Liverpool City Council and Nottingham City Council.

To be effective and appropriate, services for older people must:

- respond to the whole range of needs and opportunities presented by and for older people. This means looking beyond health and social care services for the frail and elderly and towards a range of interrelated services, from housing to transport and leisure to employment, that older people need or want to use
- treat older people as individuals and as a valued part of the community – citizens who can influence their own holistic agenda, rather than mere users of individual services
- be pro-active and provide practical help, guidance and facilities or equipment which will assist older people to live independently at home for as long as they choose.

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## ASSISTING AGEING

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### Using this guide

The advice and information contained here are designed for a wide range of people interested and involved in developing joined-up services for older people, not least older people themselves.

As individuals or as a group, older people have a wide variety of different needs and circumstances, not simply health and social care. These involve a number of national, local and regional organisations, groups and different levels of strategic and operational staff.

This guide is therefore aimed at a range of people who are developing services and agendas for older people. They include but are not limited to:

- local authorities, especially chief executives, human resources managers, social services staff, older people strategy leads, officers and councillors
- elected members
- emergency services
- government and national bodies
- Local Government Association
- NHS agencies
- older people's groups, such as senior citizens' forums and community groups
- Primary Care Trusts
- voluntary sector agencies, such as Age Concern and Help the Aged.

### Spreading the message

The Beacon authorities have been working with other local authorities and their partners to share what they have learned, encouraging others to improve their services while continuing to learn themselves. Almost 80 per cent of those who have worked with a Beacon authority have since implemented changes to their own practices. This guide, therefore, does not restrict itself to examples drawn from the Beacons but also covers what they have learned from others.

The Beacons have also worked on the development of national policy for older people in close co-operation with the IDeA, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and other national organisations and government departments.

Among them are:

- Audit Commission
- Department of Health
- Healthcare Commission
- Local Government Association
- Department for Communities and Local Government
- Better Government for Older People
- Association of Directors of Social Services.

The varied ways in which the Beacon authorities and others are taking up the challenge are addressed in the following chapters under four themes:

- *planning for an ageing society* – lead contributor Nottinghamshire County Council
- *improving multi-agency working* – lead contributors Cotswold District Council and Stroud District Council
- *harnessing the energy, enthusiasm and skills of older people* – lead contributor Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service
- *engaging with and involving older people* – lead contributor Shropshire County Council

### Acknowledgments

On behalf of the five Beacon Authorities, the IDeA and the DWP we would like to thank all the people and organisations that have contributed to the production of this guide.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This guide gives examples from Beacon authorities and others of current best practice in providing services for older people. It outlines the major demographic and social trends and policy considerations that underpin the work of local authorities in this area before going on to discuss and present examples of different initiatives under four themes.

Key factors for success that run throughout each theme are the active involvement of older people and the willingness of authorities and agencies to adopt innovative approaches to the provision of services.

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### **Planning together for an ageing society**

All relevant local organisations – public, private, voluntary and community – and, critically, older people themselves, need to plan together. A whole system, strategic approach requires a shared vision and objectives. Boundaries between organisations must also be removed, to enable seamless service delivery.

Essential components of successful strategic planning include:

- accurate, relevant and easily-understood information
- imagination, in terms of a shared vision of what the various partners aim to achieve and a willingness to develop new approaches
- inclusion of all interested parties in the planning process
- integration of policies and actions to meet national and local needs and avoid unnecessary duplication of effort
- clear guidelines and responsibilities for implementation.

The effective development of strategy is possible where there is strong political and managerial leadership, an inclusive decision-making partnership of all interested parties, and appropriate financial resources to implement initiatives.

Strategy is a continuous process requiring effective review and monitoring processes, including direct consultation with older people. Although a strategy may aim to last five years, change should be expected and welcomed when feedback from older citizens or shifts in expected demand require a re-think.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### **Improving multi-agency working**

We need to find new ways of delivering joined-up services that are based on need rather than age alone. Effective delivery requires partnership working between the various agencies – and this should eventually lead to a fully integrated approach.

Critical success factors for multi-agency working include:

- support for staff so they can dedicate themselves to partnership working
- the development of networking skills at all levels
- explicit shared links with local community and council corporate priorities
- inclusive decision-making, with older people and the key partners
- recognition that it takes time to build trust and commitment
- managing partnerships within changing structures.

Approaches towards multi-agency working that have enabled significant improvement in the delivery of services include, creating virtual teams that bring together workers from various agencies and disciplines; Neighbourhood wardens, who provide an essential link between the community and partner agencies; establishing one-stop shops that provide the full range of advice and provide access to different services for older people; new schemes, such as the trained volunteers in the Cotswolds who visit older people to talk through their needs and offer advice and information.

### **Engaging with and involving older people**

Older people want to play an active part in improving their lives. Their effective participation in a council's planning and implementation of services is now required for good performance in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

There are many ways that older people can be involved, including elected, appointed or volunteer forums and assemblies. Officers and elected members of an authority need to devote time and effort to communicating with older people. Older persons' champions within authorities can play an essential role in keeping the spotlight on older people's issues.

For older people to be involved successfully, a number of factors need to be present – among them, support, publicity, funding without political strings attached and convenient meeting places. Critically, older people need to set the agenda themselves and be confident that authorities are not simply paying lip-service to their views.

### **Harnessing the energy, skills and enthusiasm of older people**

With an ageing population and upcoming legislation to outlaw age-based discrimination, the employment of older people will become an increasingly important element of the economy.

There are enormous benefits for both older people and employers in organisations with 'Age Positive' employment policies. These include the commitment and experience of older employees, who tend to stay calm in unfamiliar situations and take responsibility readily. Older employees help to transfer skills and knowledge to younger workers, while their continued employment keeps valuable expertise, know-how and contacts within the company or organisation.

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service (MFRS) believes that older people are not hard to reach but may be hard to influence. The service's innovative appointment of advocates, including bi-lingual and older people's advocates, has been instrumental in improving service delivery. Critical to the success of MFRS initiatives is wide-ranging consultation with older people to identify their needs and ideas for a better service.

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## CHAPTER 1: THE CHALLENGES OF AGEING

This chapter sketches in very broad terms the national context for the initiatives by the Beacon authorities and others presented in this guide. It includes a brief review of the demographic and social trends behind the shift towards an older population, as well as an overview of the key legislation and policies that provide the framework for locally based actions.

A more comprehensive listing of relevant discussion papers and policy documents and sources of help and advice is given in an appendix at the end of this guide.

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### Ageing is a priority issue

Worldwide awareness of the implications of an ageing population is not new. The first United Nations World Assembly on Ageing took place in Vienna in 1982, followed 20 years later by a second assembly in Madrid. In the UK, the highly respected Centre for Policy on Ageing dates back to 1947.

But the profile of the agenda for older people in this country has never been higher. This has been driven in part by a series of research studies and discussion papers by several organisations including:

- Audit Commission
- Better Government for Older People
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Nuffield Institute for Health
- Association of Directors of Social Services
- Local Government Association.

Critically, 2005 also saw the publication of three major policy documents:

- *Opportunity Age* – a government policy document setting out the first comprehensive UK strategy to address the challenges of an ageing society
- *Independence, Wellbeing and Choice* – a green paper from the Department of Health on the reform of adult social care
- *Excluded Older People* – an interim report from the Social Exclusion Unit that looks especially at how best to provide services for older people living on a low income, living in deprived areas or suffering from longstanding illness.

Two further policy documents published in 2006 will affect the quality of life for older people:

- *A Sure Start to Later Life: Ending Inequalities for Older People* – a report from the Social Exclusion Unit that provides new evidence on exclusion in older age, suggests cross-government action and gives recommendations for all involved in services for older people, as well as best practice case studies. It also sets out a new, responsive service model, Link-Age Plus, a Sure Start approach, as part of a wider plan to address exclusion
- *Our Health, Our Care, Our Say: A New Direction in Community Services* – a White Paper that follows on from *Independence, Wellbeing and Choice*. It outlines the shift of appropriate services from hospitals into the community; a renewed focus on maintenance of wellbeing; giving patients more choice, control and a voice in the way services are planned and delivered; and more support for people with long-term conditions and for their carers.

## CHAPTER 1: THE CHALLENGES OF AGEING

### The reality of an ageing society

European countries where the over 65s will comprise more than 20 per cent of the population by 2020 include Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Italy and Sweden. Here in the UK, we expect almost 19 per cent of the population to be 65 and older by that date.

In 1950, women in the UK could expect on average to live to the age of 72, today their life expectancy is close to 81 years. For men, life expectancy has increased from 67 to 76 years over the same period and they are closing the five-year gap on women at a rate of about three weeks a year.

Older people are arguably more diverse than any other age group, ranging from those who are in mid-life to those who have reached their centenary and beyond. Diversity extends well beyond age to encompass ethnicity, health and wellbeing, income, leisure interests and life experience.

For example, with women choosing to start a family later, many people in their 50s are still the parents of school-age children. Equally, the number of older people who work has increased in recent years: the proportion of men aged 50 to 64 in work increased from 65 to 72 per cent between 1993 and 2003-4, while the employment rate among women in their 50s increased even more dramatically, up from 59 per cent to 67 per cent over the same period.

Older people are defying stereotypes. They are healthier, and more of them are working and continuing to make a financial contribution to the economy. The traditional notion that old age and poverty are synonymous no longer holds true. Pensioners are now no more likely to live in poverty than young people.

Although many older people lead active, healthy and relatively prosperous lives, an ageing population is still likely to create increased pressure on health and social services in particular. For example, health care spending on people over 65 is three times that of spending on those below that age; people aged between 50 and state pension age make up half those who claim incapacity benefits; and, as recently as 2001, 45 per cent of pensioners aged over 85 lived in homes that failed the decent homes standard.

The challenge is to find a way of balancing these positives and negatives, to construct a new kind of service model that supports independence rather than enforcing dependence, and responds to need rather than chronological age.

Clearly, employment, healthcare and wider social policy need to take into account the wide range of different needs and aspirations of our increasingly ageing population. To ensure that they do so, the active consultation of older people and their participation in decision-making about the types of service and amenity to be made available through local authorities, other agencies and the voluntary sector are essential.

### A national strategy

The Government's recently published comprehensive strategy for meeting the challenge of an ageing society, *Opportunity Age*, has two main objectives:

- to prepare effectively for the demographic shift that will gather pace between now and the middle of the century
- to help meet everyone's aspirations for better later lives for themselves and their families.

Practically, this means that services for older people should increasingly be:

- focused on the promotion of wellbeing and independence
- easy to access
- customer focused
- aimed at tackling social exclusion.

This approach is consistent with the World Health Organisation's policy framework for active ageing, developed between the late 1990s and 2002, and adopted at the Madrid Second World Assembly on Ageing. This urges a shift away from the traditional needs-based approach, where older people are passive recipients of services, to one that is rights-based and promotes equality and opportunity for all.

## CHAPTER 1: THE CHALLENGES OF AGEING

### Strategy in action

*Opportunity Age* builds on a range of existing initiatives and regulatory requirements that have been launched in recent years.

These include:

*The Human Rights Act* (October 2000) – which requires that everyone should have access to rights regardless of age, race or status.

*The EU* (European Union) *Employment Directive on Equal Treatment* – the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam gave the EU the power to legislate on age discrimination. In 2000, the member states of the EU agreed the directive, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of age or disability, and this new legislation will be implemented in the UK by October 2006. The provisions of the draft regulations to implement the directive include:

- a ban on forced retirement before the age of 65 and on age discrimination in recruitment, promotion and training
- a requirement that employers will have to consider requests from their employees to work after the age of 65
- people over 65 to get the same rights to unfair dismissal and redundancy payments as younger workers.

*The National Service Framework for Older People* – which seeks to ensure fair, high-quality, integrated health and social care services for older people. It is a ten-year programme of action launched by the Department of Health in 2001 and is aimed at linking services to support independence, promoting good health and ensuring that older people and their carers are always treated with respect, dignity and fairness. It seeks to root out age discrimination and remove barriers that may prevent or discourage older people from accessing care in the NHS and social care services. The framework is currently (2006) under review.

*Link-Age* – which brings local authorities, the Pension Service and, in some cases, the voluntary sector into strategic and operational partnerships to deliver joined-up services locally.

*Age Positive* – the Government's campaign to promote the business benefits of an age diverse workforce to employers.

*Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)* – which was introduced by the Audit Commission in 2002 as a means of assessing the performance of local authorities and identifying how well they are improving their delivery of public services. The CPA for 2005 includes a section devoted specifically to services for older people and local authorities will be assessed in the following key areas:

- development of a strategic approach to older people as citizens, that goes beyond health and social care and covers the areas that older people say are most important
- meaningful engagement with older people and their representative groups on all aspects of the strategic approach to older people and service provision
- the extent to which they have achieved a comprehensive, coordinated range of services to older people.

*Better Government for Older People (BGOP)* – a UK-wide partnership between older people (Older People's Advisory Group) and a broad range of organisations across the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. It seeks to change attitudes and services to achieve an improved society for older people.

The experiences of the Beacon authorities described in the rest of this guide show how these various initiatives have been put into practice to improve the services offered to older people. Some authorities' projects will appear in more than one chapter, where relevant.

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## CHAPTER 2: PLANNING FOR AN AGEING SOCIETY

Developing joined-up services for older people requires exceptional levels of co-operation and communication, both between the different agencies and organisations involved and with the users of those services – and that means joint strategic planning by all the parties involved.

1. *Preparing Older People's Strategies: Linking Housing to Health, Social Care and other Local Strategies*, BGOP, 2003

Strategic planning is not the nitty-gritty of operational management. Strategies are concerned with broad context, main principles and objectives, and the changes that may be needed to achieve those objectives. Detailed planning is then needed for those operations that will ensure the success of the strategy.

Better Government for Older People (BGOP) identifies three key stages to developing strategies for older people<sup>1</sup>.

### Preparing:

- engaging the right partners, including older people, from the start, so that they feel ownership of the strategy
- preparing and agreeing a brief that covers the full agenda of all the partners
- creating the capacity to undertake the work.

### Developing:

- working with a steering group, including older people
- ensuring that the work relates to wider strategic agendas.

### Implementing:

- building an implementation plan and making clear the responsibilities for implementation in the strategy itself
- building in time to take the strategy forward.

This chapter explores some of the issues involved in developing an older people's strategy. These include the process of planning; who should be involved and how; and the requirements for success both in terms of creating the strategy and putting that strategy into practice.

### Why we need to plan together

Planning together across the public, private, voluntary and community sectors and with older people is essential if we are to:

- deliver services that older people want
- add value and coherence to service planning
- maximise resources across agencies
- improve quality of life.

Shropshire County Council's *Older Persons' Overarching Strategy* (2004) identifies four key advantages of proper planning:

- people affected can comment on and help to improve the plans
- those responsible for bringing about change understand what is required
- the full implications of change can be explored
- resource implications can be understood.

National policy also requires that strategies are developed at local level.

## CHAPTER 2: PLANNING FOR AN AGEING SOCIETY

*The Local Government Act 2000* includes wide-ranging powers for local authorities to work in partnership with other organisations to promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their areas. The creation of community plans is one key way of enabling local people ‘to develop a long-term vision for their area and help set out how their aspirations will be delivered,’ according to former local government minister Hilary Armstrong. Community plans allow councils to develop overarching strategies for improving quality of life in their areas.

A further impetus is the need to meet the requirements of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment by the Audit Commission. The need to integrate health and social care services under the National Service Framework and the Link-Age partnerships between local authorities and the Pension Service are also significant factors.

### Who needs to plan?

Public sector organisations such as local authorities, Primary Care Trusts and Acute Hospital Trusts, police authorities and fire and rescue services have to interpret national policies at a local level.

They must bear in mind that older people living and working in different areas may have quite different concerns and needs, influenced not only by their own state of health and wellbeing, but also by whether they live in relatively isolated rural communities or in more densely populated towns and cities.

Partnerships at a local level across the public, private, voluntary and community sectors working with older people are vital to the success of the planning and delivery of local services. Local Strategic Partnerships, for example, enable organisations to work together to improve the quality of life in small localities or communities.

Crucially, the voice of older people themselves – the people whose quality of life is directly affected by the plans and service developments of organisations across the public, private, voluntary and community sectors – needs to be heard and acted on during the planning process, so that the overall goal of promoting citizenship, independence and positive views of ageing can be reached.

Older people themselves argue strongly for a change in attitudes to ageing, highlighting the need to challenge ageism and involve them in the life of the community in new ways, according to the Audit Commission/BGOP’s *Older People – Independence and Wellbeing*.

### The whole system approach

A whole system strategic approach can inform and add value to the development and implementation of local policies that arise from many different agreements and partnerships, including:

- community strategies
- local area agreements
- local public service agreements
- local delivery plans for health
- crime and disorder strategies
- strategic plans for individual organisations.

The Audit Commission says<sup>2</sup> that whole system working happens when:

- services are organised around the user – in this case, older people
- all of the players recognise that they are interdependent and understand that action in one part of the system has an impact elsewhere
- all parties share:
  - vision
  - objectives
  - action, including redesigning services
  - resources
  - risk
- users experience services as seamless and the boundaries between organisations are not apparent to them.

### Building a strategy

Nottinghamshire County Council, along with older people and partner organisations, has developed a whole system strategic approach across the departments of the county council.

It has focused attention specifically on the needs and aspirations of older people in the county area and it seeks to add coherence to existing service planning and delivery and avoid duplicating current arrangements.

2. *Integrated services for older people*, Audit Commission

## CHAPTER 2: PLANNING FOR AN AGEING SOCIETY

Its experience – and that of other bodies adopting a similar approach – suggests there are five essential components to successful planning. These are known as the five I's:

Information, Imagination, Inclusion, Integration and Implementation.<sup>3</sup>

### The five I's strategy:

- Information – to understand older people's views, needs and priorities
- Imagination – to create a vision and translate it into an action plan
- Inclusion – to involve all stakeholders, organisations and older people
- Integration – to ensure links to all services and cross-cutting policies
- Implementation – to make it happen in practice.

### Information

Some local authorities and their partners have developed broad strategies, which establish the principles on which service provision should be based and the actions necessary to address issues of concern to older people, without setting detailed targets for specific services.

Nottinghamshire's Opportunity Age Strategy and Shropshire's Overarching Older Persons' Strategy are examples of this approach – and so the information on which they are based is largely qualitative and the result of widespread consultation with older people.

Other strategies, such as Haringey's *Experience Counts*, focus not only on broad principles but also on more specific targets. Haringey uses a range of current and projected population distribution data, housing statistics, health and social care information, access to transport and crime data to set the context for its strategy. It also recognises the need for more statistical information related to many of the initiatives it sets out.

Camden Council and Camden PCT have drawn up a strategy to help with planning health, social and housing services – *Serving Older People* – that highlights the need for accurate data: 'We recognise the importance of getting the demographic information right in order to inform the design of new services.'

Gloucestershire developed its MAIDeN database specifically to help local planners at every level. Key public sector agencies in the county contribute social, economic and service data to help create a better picture of the communities of Gloucestershire.

MAIDeN analyses and presents the data so that it is readily available, can be shared without loss of confidentiality and is easily understood. The organisation acts as a single point of contact for service planning data. It also has funding from the *Invest to Save* programme to develop planning toolkits for each of Gloucestershire's strategic partnerships from a common set of data. (*For more information on MAIDeN, see Chapter 3: Improving multi-agency working.*)

For Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service (MFRS), accurate collection and cross-referencing of information are instrumental in planning its prevention activities, many of which focus on helping older people to make their homes safer from fire and accidents.

MFRS uses data to pinpoint hotspots that often need its resources and to identify areas that are likely to be at most risk of fire. It uses a number of software packages to build up risk profiles. These include a system called Northgate Blue8, which emergency services use to plot the locations of vulnerable people. The service also uses ACTIVE, a GIS (Geographical Information System) based on Experian's Mosaic, a digital database that profiles every postcode in the UK.

The service's own data is supplemented by information from other agencies, including the police, social services and the Health & Safety Executive.

'By using this data correctly we are able to target the most vulnerable in our communities with more accuracy,' says Charlie Hollywood, a co-ordinator in the MFRS community safety team. 'That's why we disagree with many organisations that claim older people are hard to reach.'

3. *Making a Difference, the BGOP Programme Evaluation report – May 2000*, Local Government Centre, University of Warwick

## CHAPTER 2: PLANNING FOR AN AGEING SOCIETY

### Imagination

This has been described as ‘the vision thing’. Local authorities, in partnership with older people and stakeholders, need to think creatively about what they are trying to achieve through the development and implementation of their strategy for older people, developing a vision for services and opportunities for older people, both today and in the future.

Nottinghamshire County Council and the London Boroughs of Camden and Haringey serve very different populations but share a common purpose – to improve the quality of life of older people in their area.

Each authority sets out its take on this vision in its strategy for older people.

Nottinghamshire’s draft *Opportunity Age* (2005) says: ‘This strategy seeks to maintain and improve the quality of life for older citizens in Nottinghamshire, promoting a positive view of ageing and supporting independence for the older population.’

Haringey, which published *Experience Counts* in September 2005, shares a similar view: ‘Older people are enabled to be as informed, active, healthy and independent as possible, and empowered citizens at the heart of the community.’

Camden’s *Quality of Life* was produced in 2002, three years before the government’s *Opportunity Age* document – but its vision holds true: ‘To improve and maintain the quality of life of Camden’s older citizens by demonstrating how agencies will work together, and with older people, to promote and provide healthy living activities, sustain people’s independence and promote a positive view of ageing.’

These examples show that there is widespread consensus about what improving the quality of life for older people means but each council’s vision should embody its own particular approach, philosophy and priorities.

### Inclusion

A strategy for older people has to consider the needs of all older people, including those who historically have been excluded from the decision-making process. Authorities need to find a way to reach those who live in isolated areas, or are confined to residential or institutional care of some kind, as well as engaging with those who come forward voluntarily to advise on strategy through such bodies as older people’s forums. Strategy planning also needs to cut across all the relevant agencies and organisations that are involved in providing services for older people.

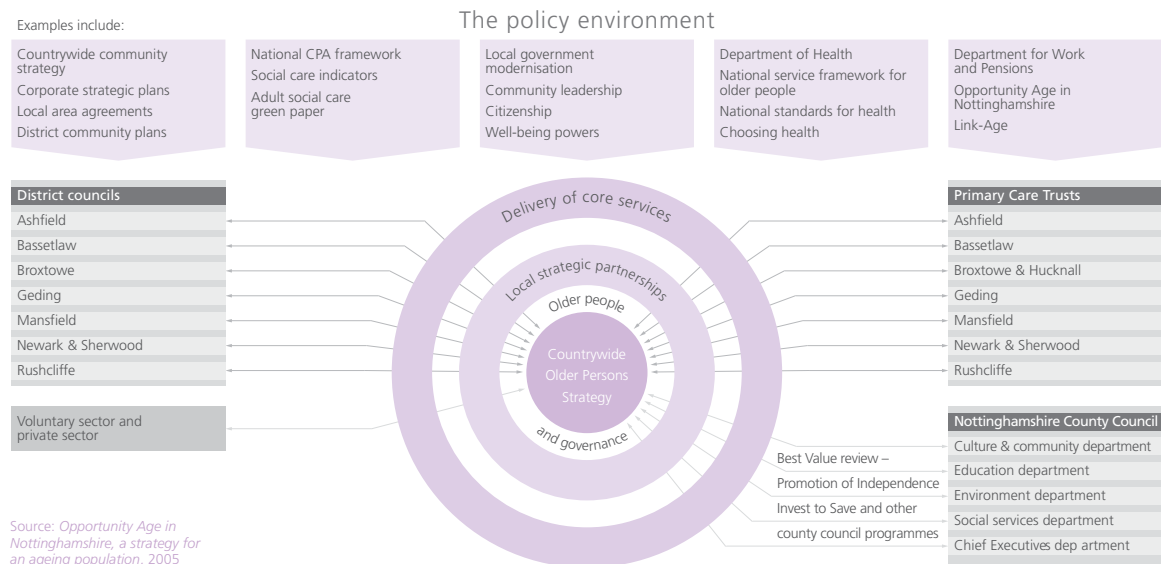
The partners in its Countywide Older People’s Strategic Partnership have developed Nottinghamshire’s strategy. These include nearly 30 different groups, ranging from voluntary organisations and charities such as Age Concern and Help the Aged to the district and borough councils, elected members and the emergency and health services. Older people themselves have been central to the development of the Nottinghamshire strategy and are represented through the Nottinghamshire Older People’s Advisory Group.

To make sure that the views of older people, whose voices are not always heard, were properly reflected in the strategy, Nottinghamshire used an external facilitator to run seven focus groups, comprising a representative mix of older people in terms of age, gender, disability, residential status, location and ethnicity.

In Haringey, The Older People’s Reference Group was set up to help develop the strategy. It consists of 33 older people. Wide-ranging consultation on the first draft of the strategy invited comment from voluntary organisations and Haringey Teaching Primary Care Trust, as well as Haringey Forum for Older People, while the final consultation draft went out to an even wider audience, including 300 older people who attended a *Better Living for Older People* event. There were responses from 103 individuals and organisations, which were taken into consideration when the final strategy was produced.

## CHAPTER 2: PLANNING FOR AN AGEING SOCIETY

### Opportunity Age in Nottinghamshire Working across a complex, two tier local authority



Stroud and Cotswold District Councils have been developing their strategy throughout 2005, with the aim of launching it during 2006. Gloucestershire Older Persons' Assembly (GOPA) is a key consultation group, holding events that have enabled more than 100 older people to raise concerns.

Both councils have run three national consultations for the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), the Social Exclusion Unit, the Central Office of Information and the Healthcare Commission. The group of older people invited to these events now forms a regular focus group for the councils to test planning and policies, such as the community strategy.

There is no doubt that older people want to get involved in these consultations. An invitation to a launch lunch for Camden's *Quality of Life* strategy attracted 345 older people, instead of the 60 or so who were expected.

#### Integration

A strategy for older people needs to tie in with community strategy, local strategic partnership plans, neighbourhood renewal policies and many others.

The figure above shows the inter-relationship of strategies, policies and organisations in Nottinghamshire.

It takes time to create a strategy when so many individuals, groups, public bodies and other agencies are involved – and when the result must be consistent with and integrated into other, related policies.

Considerable effort is needed to ensure the joint development and agreement of both policy and practice. This is not necessarily easy. As one local authority official explains: 'The whole systems approach is fine in theory but, in practice, agencies have different timescales and priorities in policy planning and operational pressures.'

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Camden's *Quality of Life* strategy, which was triggered by the unnoticed death of one lonely older woman in 1994, was eight years in the making. The woman's death led to the establishment of the council's *Tackling Vulnerability Together* initiative, followed by the *Vulnerable Old People's Project* in 1996. Publication of the health-driven *National Service Framework for Older People* in 2001 provided a key focus for the strategy, which aims to promote healthy and active lives for older people.

Camden's stakeholder reference group, which steered the development of its *Quality of Life* strategy, met every two months from May 2001 while smaller working groups met on average three times over four months to progress specific aspects of the strategy. Some 21 organisations and representative bodies were directly involved in the consultation process and a further seven external agencies contributed to the discussions.

### Implementation

Effective ways to monitor and measure progress must be put in place while plans define what services are needed and where. The need for transparent methods of monitoring implementation is particularly important because of the scale of citizen involvement in the development of the strategy. Older people will take a keen interest in how well the strategy is being carried out and the progress that is made. Accordingly, they can and should be involved in assessing implementation.

Partners in any strategy need to work together to develop an action plan for monitoring and reviewing the strategy.

It may not be easy to reach agreement among the various partners. Important questions, such as which agency is the lead for any particular initiative and how progress should be measured, are likely to take time to resolve. After its draft strategy had been prepared, Nottinghamshire held an event specifically to address these governance issues, using facilitators to guide the discussions.

Camden's implementation plan has six different work streams on which its implementation group has to report back to the council. The group, chaired by an assistant director, meets quarterly to monitor progress.

Haringey has adopted SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timed) indicators to measure success in reaching goals and the strategy will be monitored through the Haringey Strategic Partnership. The Older People's Partnership Board, which includes older people, will meet to monitor implementation.

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service's consultation document for its *Integrated Risk Management Plan 2006-7* includes an action plan that sets out proposals to monitor and measure the effectiveness of the services it offers. The plan shows clearly what will be done, who is responsible, the timeframe for any actions, expected outcomes and financial impact, as well as any relevant legislative and regulatory requirements that govern the actions to be taken. The action plan itself builds on established and regular monitoring of services, which means that there is ready access to an accurate database of relevant information.

Several councils make the point that determining how to measure performance is difficult in areas such as prevention of vulnerability, where there is no statutory requirement for such work and, therefore, no official performance indicators.

### Comprehensive performance assessment

The inclusion by the Audit Commission of services for older people in its assessment of local authorities' performance provides extra impetus for authorities to develop and implement a strategic approach to planning these services.

The key aspects of good performance in this area identified by the commission include:

- involvement of older people
- availability of information about the local older population
- a strategic approach, based on the principle of older people as citizens and explicitly linked to the community strategy and the local strategic partnership
- commitment and leadership
- partnership/whole system working
- communication and information, including making sure older people are aware of what services and opportunities are available in their community
- evaluation and measurement of the impact of the strategy.

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### The insider's guide

Nottinghamshire believes that there have been three key factors in developing its strategy:

1. **Political and managerial leadership** and support across the local authority, including champions for older people.
2. **An inclusive, decision-making partnership** in which older people are the key partners.
3. **Financial resources** to manage change – the council has made a clear budget commitment to support its whole system approach, which is helping to bring partners together to join up service delivery.

### 1. Leadership

Buy-in from the chief executive and senior management is crucial.

Shropshire County Council is publicly committed to promoting the wellbeing of older people.

‘During our Beacon year, the highlight was getting corporate commitment to the delivery of services for older people,’ the council’s Beacon co-ordinator, Jenny Burgess, points out. ‘When the steer comes from the top, other directorates less immediately involved in older people’s services are more likely to commit funds and time to improving aspects of their services that affect older people.’

Dilys Warren, health and wellbeing partnership officer at Stroud District Council, agrees that leadership from the top is essential. ‘Membership of older people’s strategic groups is important,’ she says. ‘The status and decision-making ability of the senior officers is crucial to the speed and level of progress. It is also vital to get corporate and chief executive level support at the earliest stage of planning, so that issues can be aired at full council and cabinet levels.’

Champions for older people are also important in ensuring that older people are a high priority.

In Nottinghamshire, senior councillors perform this function. The Local Government Association National Champion for older people is a Nottinghamshire county councillor. Camden’s older people’s champion is not a member of the council executive. This was a deliberate decision to ensure that the champion councillor would feel freer to speak up about issues that affect older people.

BGOP undertook a research study in 2004 in partnership with King’s College, London. The research report outlines the experiences, skills, successes and needs of a range of champions. It found that older people’s champions appointed across a range of agencies in the aftermath of the *National Service Framework for Older People* are highly committed to improving services for older people.

As local champions, they find it helpful to talk with other champions, to draw on local networks and work across various organisations. Most are very enthusiastic, seeing their role as a way of raising the profile of older people’s services and maintaining the momentum of the framework.

### 2. Inclusive decision-making

Some councils acknowledge that one of the biggest challenges is how to ensure that older people are truly involved in decision-making.

The main method of involving older people in decision-making in Shropshire is through their older people’s forums. To ensure that their views are taken into account throughout the planning process, representatives from the forums also take part in Shropshire’s Local Strategic Partnership, which includes officers from the different directorates involved in providing services.

Many councils have consultation processes but, unless the chief executive and elected members are fully behind a particular approach, it stands little chance of securing essential funding. In Shropshire, an established culture means that the chief executive cannot refuse to meet stakeholder representatives. This open-door policy ensures that older people can discuss issues of concern first-hand with the chief executive and the senior management team.

Haringey states that it consults older people through no fewer than 11 different groups or types of group, as well as using surveys and one-off events to get feedback from service users.

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### 3. Finance

Strategies relating to older people are likely to cover a wide range of services, from health to transport and from education to housing, so there will be various sources of finance. Many of the initiatives supported in a strategy will already be established and, therefore, funded. Finding the resources for new services may be more problematic, particularly if there is no statutory obligation to provide the services. Partnerships between public, private and voluntary groups can help to make the most of limited budgets.

The DWP guidance on its *Services for Older People* theme makes the point that partnership working usually involves some cost-sharing and that delays in getting services off the ground may arise where there are uncertainties about the availability or use of funds.

Shropshire's strategy for older people focuses strongly on preventing older people from experiencing problems with isolation, alienation and lack of access to services. The preventative approach received backing and funding from the council some years ago, enabling rehabilitation services to be introduced, but a creative approach to providing some services has been needed.

One example of this is the *Help at Home* scheme provided by Age Concern but funded by the council. This service is targeted at older people who fall outside the council's eligibility criteria. It offers help with maintaining the home and garden and with practical tasks such as laundry, shopping and meal preparation, pet care, bills and paperwork. The service gives users the confidence to remain independent, because they know they can get help and support when they need it.

'We are obliged to pay for services for those with assessed needs but preventative care is not a statutory obligation and, in the past, performance indices did not reward effort put into preventative services,' says Jenny Burgess. 'So there are risks attached to pursuing a prevention strategy. We have a service level agreement with Age Concern and we see partnerships as key to improving preventative services in the future.'

Nottinghamshire's strategy makes clear that implementation will rely on collaboration between all the relevant public, private, voluntary and community sectors in the county. The county council has committed resources to the Countywide Old People's Strategic Partnership and Older People's Advisory Group: for the implementation of the Best Value Review on the promotion of older people in the county; and to support 26 prevention schemes. HM Treasury funding is also available for the *Invest to Save* project mentioned in the strategy.

Camden's *Serving Older People* strategy recognises that difficult decisions will be needed if they are to make the best use of limited resources. Options that will be considered include the decommissioning and recommissioning of services to tailor them more closely to the strategy's aims.

### Strategy as a continuous process

Publishing a strategy is a starting-point, not an end in itself.

Mechanisms for the regular review of strategy and for monitoring its impact on the lives of older people need to be in place so that partners can adapt and modify the strategy over time to meet the challenge of changing circumstances – or if it becomes clear that aspects of the strategy are not having the desired impact.

Many councils have well-established mechanisms for consulting older people through forums and assemblies. Camden also decided to consult older people directly through surveys and qualitative discussion groups. In collaboration with academics from City University, it has completed two surveys and is embarking on in-depth interviews to supplement the findings.

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Preparation of the first survey in 2004 included a pre-pilot stage involving focus groups of older people, who helped to develop the questionnaire, a pilot involving 100 people from the Older People Reference Group, and then the full first survey involving 1,500 people from the Accessible Transport database. This was supplemented by a sample taken from the mobile library scheme to ensure that the housebound were included.

The survey looked at the quality of life for older people, what impact services have over time and their perceptions of the effect of Camden's strategy. It achieved a 40 per cent response rate, way above the level that direct marketers would expect from mailings. The Direct Marketing Agency, for example, quotes an average response rate of 2.61 per cent, with the most successful sector – non-profit fundraising – getting a rate of 5.35 per cent.

The second survey in 2005, which is being supplemented by a series of in-depth qualitative interviews with a representative sample of older people, is still being analysed.

Other councils have recognised the value of going directly to end-users – Stroud has compiled a questionnaire, based on Camden's, which is being sent to about 300 older people through one-to-one contact via the Neighbourhood Warden Scheme.

Strategies typically cover a five-year timeframe. A lot can happen in a year, let alone five. Partners need, therefore, to build into their strategy a clear process for regular evaluation of its impact and a willingness to adapt and modify the strategy when necessary.

This checklist may be helpful as a summary of the key factors involved in planning, developing and delivering joined-up services that meet the priorities of both individual organisations and older people:

- Opportunity Age and associated central government strategies
- Local Area Agreements
- agreed, explicit shared values
- shared partnership goals
- agreed, shared priorities
- political managerial leadership and support
- links with local community and corporate priorities
- having an inclusive decision-making partnership
- building on previous successful joint working
- trust between partners
- signed-up commitment to work together
- partnership agreements
- good personal working relationships
- robust governance arrangements
- alignment and pooling of resources where appropriate
- individual agency contribution to cross-cutting agendas
- financial resources to manage change
- accountability in partnerships.

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## CHAPTER 3: IMPROVING MULTI-AGENCY WORKING FOR OLDER PEOPLE

An ageing population throws up new opportunities as well as problems, with the over-50s accounting for a growing proportion of the population and making an increasing contribution to the economy as workers, consumers and carers.

The government has acknowledged that attitudes across the board will have to change if the UK is to respond effectively to both the positive and negative impacts of this huge demographic shift.

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An effective response means finding new ways of delivering services – based on need rather than chronological age – that allows individuals a much greater level of independence and choice.

Local government has already seen the benefit of greater partnership working, with great improvements being made to people's lives at grass roots level.

A good example of this is in Stockton, where the Parkfield/ Mill Lane neighbourhood management pathfinder unit has given community engagement a high priority since it started operating in 2002. Its first priorities were to address high crime rates and street litter in direct response to residents' concerns. Allocating extra police officers meant burglary fell by 27 per cent in the first year, while class A drug offence arrests rose by 118 per cent. A one-off rubbish removal blitz saw several tons removed in three days and the area physically transformed.

The importance of partnership working is now recognised at the most fundamental level, through the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), where it is specifically assessed through the Capacity section of the investigation.

In its framework for the 2005 assessment process, the Audit Commission says: 'Corporate assessment measures the council's ability to... deliver community priorities in partnership with others.'

It would now be unthinkable for a local authority to attempt to provide services for older people without working in partnership with, among others, the NHS, the police, voluntary and private sectors. Multi-agency working has permeated all areas of local government, from education and housing to street cleaning and legal regulation. The time has come to take the next step – a fully-integrated approach to services for older people.

Early and low-key intervention projects are needed to support older people successfully in the community. Good multi-agency working can support the identification of wider needs through a central assessment point (the Single Assessment Process). This enables a clearing-house method that matches responses to needs.

This chapter contains a series of case studies that show how Beacon authorities are working with their partners to provide services for older people.

### **Multi-agency working in rural areas**

For Stroud and Cotswold District Councils, the challenge is to deliver successful services to older people living in largely rural locations.

For rural services to be successful, it is essential to work closely with agencies at a local level, while involving them in the wider planning process and establishing a range of funding streams for long-term sustainability.

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District	Stroud	Cotswold
Area	453 sq km	1,185 sq km
Retired persons to 74	12,785	8,047
Retired persons and over 75	8,768	8,008
Total retired persons	21,553	16,055

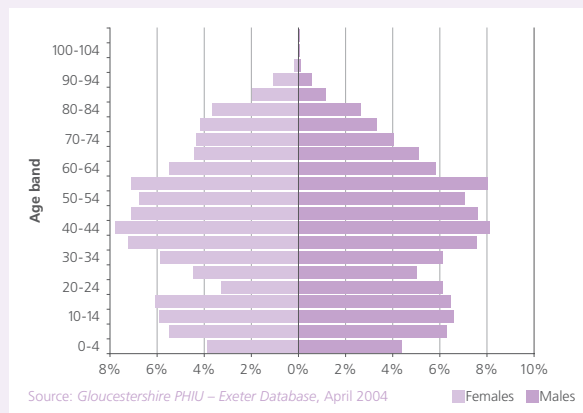
Councillor Chas Fellows, Leader of Stroud, says: 'It would be fair to say that without the active involvement and support of our partners, it would be nigh-on impossible for us as a district council to deliver community services to our people.'

The table above demonstrates the rural nature of Stroud and Cotswold districts.

There are also specific challenges to be surmounted when delivering services to a rural and ageing population.

These include:

- poverty – people tend to be property-rich but cash-poor
- unemployment – there are fewer job opportunities in rural areas
- lack of transport – affordable public transport is especially limited
- isolation – compounded by low population density in rural areas
- access to services – limited because these tend to be scattered across a number of market towns.



The chart above demonstrates the rising older population in both districts, set against the decline in younger people.

### Knowing your local population

Before you can offer the most appropriate services and support to a scattered population of older people, you need to understand who they are, where they live and what they need.

In Gloucestershire, this information is gathered by MAIDeN (Multi Agency Information Database for Neighbourhoods), which collates social and economic statistics for the whole of the county.

These statistics focus activity on the region's isolated and hidden pockets of deprivation.

As well as electoral wards, MAIDeN can also provide profiles of real communities: villages, housing estates and catchment areas, providing advice, data analysis, interpretation, mapping and information consultancy to contributing agencies.

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The following project cycle outlines the process used to set up MAIDeN as a countywide database and is used as a standard format for some of the other projects outlined in this chapter.

**Need** – To access meaningful local information across all agencies operating within the six districts of the county.

**Respond** – Develop a common format of data and a process of funding the emerging service. The first data banks were shared with health and social services, followed by police.

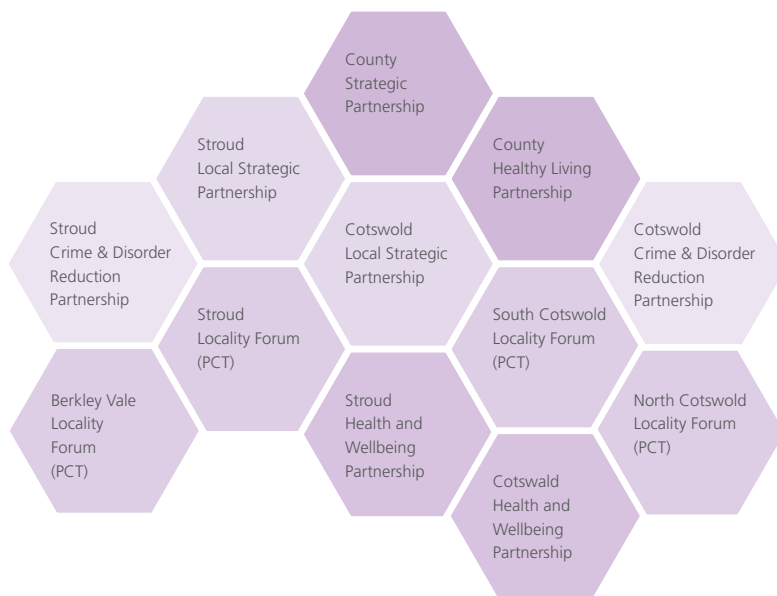
**Pilot** – Multi-agency funding agreed through a county stakeholder group. Includes public and voluntary sector organisations and can be used for integrated service planning, bidding for challenge funds and partnership development.

**Evaluate** – Set up a user and stakeholder group to monitor progress.

**Modify** – Create wider access through password-protected websites.

**Share** – Invited independent evaluation of the partnerships processes through meetings.

### A family of partnerships: a typical network used to deliver older people's services



#### Top tips for setting up partnerships

Cotswold and Stroud have identified the five most important factors that will ensure that your team works:

- ensure appointed staff are given support to allow dedicated working in partnerships across all sectors
- networking events and opportunities to build networking skills at all levels are vital to success
- have explicit shared links with the local community's and the council's corporate priorities. It can be a challenge to bring together the interests of older people with the priorities of partner agencies in districts
- have an inclusive, decision-making partnership in which older people are the key partners
- partnership working takes time. It takes a while to gain trust and commitment and to build long-term relationships.

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### Applying the project cycle to partnership formation

**Need** – To form an effective partnership for an identified subject area.

**Respond** – Identify a champion who can put together a partnership team, including the right people with the right authority, attitude and organisation.

**Pilot** – Make sure you start with short, focused meetings and can facilitate all member input through round-table reporting.

**Evaluate** – Agree monitoring process and evaluate effectiveness. Aim to develop specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-related (SMART) actions.

**Modify** – Add new members, change meeting frequency or the length of meetings and address continuity issues.

**Share** – Self-evaluate and invite independent evaluation of the partnerships processes through regular meetings.

### The project cycle



### Creating practical partnerships

This section includes some larger partnership schemes, many of them run in Stroud and Cotswold District Councils. In these instances, the project cycle has been applied as an indication of how it can help in project-managing such schemes.

### Virtual teams

Gloucestershire social services department, Cotswold & Vale Primary Care Trust (PCT) and Cotswold and Stroud District Councils are working together to develop the concept of the virtual team as a way of providing comprehensive support to vulnerable older people living in their own homes.

It enables staff from a range of disciplines and organisations to work together using common documentation, principles and standards to deliver a seamless service spanning health promotion, preventative, clinical and social care packages.

A team can include district nurses, community matrons, psychiatric nurses, social care managers, home care workers, neighbourhood wardens, housing and benefits officers, GP practices, day centre managers, voluntary or independent sector providers.

It is linked to the *People for You* service, which offers advice and information on everything from gardening, getting grab rails put into a bathroom or organising social events.

‘For example, any of our virtual team members can report to *People for You* and then our staff will visit them and identify all their needs,’ says Phil Sullivan, Head Of Community Safety at Stroud District Council.

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### **People for You scheme**

Following public consultation with older people and with the Health and Wellbeing Partnership, *People for You* was set up in partnership and is managed by Care and Repair to signpost local services to older people and then makes an assessment. Referrals are made to appropriate services and organisations linked closely to the local GP practice nurses.

**Need** – Individual agency staff visiting older people in their homes were identifying wider needs than their own agency could meet but were restricted by their professional boundaries.

**Respond** – Identify which statutory and voluntary organisations were visiting older people in their own homes and could become a useful link to wider agency access.

**Pilot** – *People for You* is a project run by Care and Repair (Stroud), a home improvement agency. It acts as a signpost to services for older people and is alerted by the first point of contact from, for example, social services, housing officers or neighbourhood wardens.

**Evaluate** – Assessment has shown that the early interventions provided by the scheme can ultimately save professional time and resources.

**Modify** – There is a regular and continuous monitoring process but, so far, no modifications have been required.

**Share** – This is being done through local presentations.

### **Gloucestershire Warm and Well scheme**

This partnership scheme aims to improve home energy efficiency and reduce the levels of health problems associated with a lack or mismanagement of heating. Targeted at everyone on a low income, it reaches all sections of the older population and not just pensioners. It involves multi-agency working between six district councils, Severn Wye Energy Agency (SWEA) and three PCTs as well as installation and utility companies.

**Need** – First, to co-ordinate promotion and marketing of home energy efficiency measures and reach people most in need. Second, to establish a long-term scheme to develop a referral network of people working with vulnerable and older people.

**Respond** – The scheme was developed by SWEA in partnership with Gloucestershire councils and PCTs. It was also set up to help with implementation of the countywide *Affordable Warmth Strategy* and to enable other organisations to increase their take-up of government grant schemes.

**Pilot** – Phase one ran from October 2001 to March 2003. Councils provided grant funding through a pilot, countywide grant scheme. Referral packs and training programmes were developed.

**Evaluate** – Full evaluation of phase one, including customer satisfaction and technical monitoring, has been completed and £1.2 million worth of measures have been provided.

**Modify** – Councils increased the grant fund and the contract was re-tendered. Referral fees paid by scheme contractors now finance the management of the scheme. Scottish Power also contributes funds.

**Share** – In 2003, SWEA helped to replicate the scheme as *Somerset Warm and Well*, covering Somerset, Bath and North East Somerset and North Somerset. It has also introduced *Active, Warm and Well* and two further projects, *Solar Warm and Well* and *Rent Warm, Rent Well*.

### **Neighbourhood wardens**

This Stroud-led initiative was set up in 2002 to provide a link between the community and partner agencies, such as the police. It provides a reassuring, uniformed presence for older people who are concerned about crime, as well as combating criminal activity at a grassroots level.

Wardens also act as a link between older people and a wider range of services that they may need but may not be receiving. The target is for each warden to meet one new older person every day.

**Need** – Staff visiting older people in their homes were identifying wider needs than their own agency could provide.

**Respond** – One-to-one contact was needed, particularly around crime and fear of crime.

**Pilot** – Initially, two wardens were appointed on two-year contracts in two districts.

**Evaluate** – Public perception surveys are used and wardens report to line managers regularly. The scheme has been so successful that the posts have been made permanent and there are now seven wardens working across the area.

**Modify** – The scheme now provides a larger range of services in a larger geographical area.

**Share** – Training is being developed and will be rolled out to other parts of the district.

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### Joined-up services in Nottinghamshire

Nottinghamshire County Council has approached the government's new *Link-Age* concept – where local councils join pension services, voluntary sector and housing providers to provide a seamless system – from a history of working in partnerships.

The Pension Service, social housing providers, the Legal Services Commission and the council are now working together to provide a one-stop-shop for older people.

Similarly, social services, PCTs and the voluntary sector are working in a single, multi-disciplinary team to provide frontline health and social care assessment services, including:

- rapid response to prevent unnecessary hospital admissions
- an equipment service provided by occupational therapists
- volunteer visiting for older people.

In developing these new services, the council ensures the active engagement of older people themselves through several mechanisms, including:

- a network of older people's advisory groups
- a countywide older people's strategic partnership group
- a local strategic management board that works with the strategic partnership group.

### Smaller partnership projects

#### Hospital transport scheme

This is a project that originated in the Cotswolds and aims to provide more timely transport for mainly elderly rural patients who have to attend general hospitals outside the district.

It was led by the Cotswold Council for Voluntary Service (CCVS) and attracted piloting funds to develop a computer programme from the Department of Transport. The county ambulance service and Cotswold and Vale PCT have worked together to co-ordinate the ambulance and voluntary car service. They are also monitoring the project's success.

The result has been much shorter waits for older people, easier clustering of outpatients from the same area and a 30 per cent reduction in patients missing their appointments.

'CCVS has proved it can provide a professional service to older people going to hospital appointments,' says Jane Winstanley, Manager of Cotswold CCVS. 'We have delivered cost savings of 11 per cent for the ambulance service and much greater local flexibility. The drivers are also handing out themed messages and leaflets, which are being distributed to neighbours and friends.'

#### CCTV in sheltered housing

CCTV has been introduced into sheltered housing schemes to reassure residents, reducing both the fear of crime and offences relating to bogus callers.

Local authority social services and housing staff work in partnership with police to provide and monitor this service, with funding from Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships.

#### Stranger at the door helpline

A free helpline provides support and advice to combat distraction burglars through Crime and Disorder partnerships in Gloucestershire. Viewers, chains and mirrors are installed in all council-owned sheltered accommodation and are available to owner/occupiers through Community Safety Partnerships.

A pilot took place in parts of the county using a CCTV control room as call response. The aim is to roll out the scheme across Gloucestershire, using a private company to provide the response, 24-hours-a-day. The cost of the scheme is shared between six Crime and Disorder partnerships across the county.

#### Call a friend cards

The *call a friend* scheme complements the bogus caller initiative operating throughout the district, primarily in dealing with the crime of distraction burglary. It gives elderly or vulnerable people a card that displays important information, including a number they can call if they are worried about an uninvited visitor.

Stroud District Council, Forest of Dean District Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council run the initiative.

#### Message in a bottle emergency information scheme

A plastic bottle stored in the fridge contains personal information that can be vital to emergency services. Data includes illnesses, allergies and people to contact in the event of an emergency. The scheme now runs across Gloucestershire and has been found to save officer time for the police, fire and ambulance services.

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The *message in a bottle* service was set up as a Crime and Disorder partnership initiative by Stroud DC, Forest of Dean DC and Tewkesbury BC.

Service user Pam Hughes says: 'This system is really important to me because I regularly take complex medication. The normal emergency procedure would be for a paramedic to administer my drugs if they had to come into my home, so this information is really important – too many drugs or the wrong type could kill me.'

### Integrated housing services for older and disabled people

Health, housing and social care strategies are brought together for a more unified approach to the provision of housing services, regardless of tenure. Modelled on a Devon scheme known as *Safe as Houses*, the project was set up as a way of easing the difficulties faced by many older and disabled people in finding suitable accommodation.

The idea is to provide a one-stop-shop that facilitates co-ordination between different agencies and enables residents to maintain their independence at home through repairs, adaptations and home care services.

### Careline service

Vulnerable people can call a 24-hour telephone helpline for advice and support – especially in emergencies. The service now has 1,700 users across Cotswold and Stroud District Councils.

Though originally set up by Stroud, it now involves NHS staff, including district nurses and occupational therapists, who refer their own cases to the *Careline*.

### Volunteer visiting service

Older people, especially in hard to reach parts of the Cotswold district, can now get information and, therefore, better access to the whole range of local services and talk through their social, housing and general health needs in their own home, with a trained volunteer. Volunteers include recently retired nurses and others with professional care experience.

The service was set up because professionals often found that they did not have the time to sit down with their clients and talk through the many linked issues that older people face. Volunteers are fully trained and *Second Homes* funding has enabled pilots to go ahead, with continuing funding expected from local sources such as GP commissioning and hospital Leagues of Friends. Evaluation will take place through the Health and Wellbeing Partnership and Primary care teams.

Bill Wragge, Health Policy Officer at Cotswold District Council, says, 'A call for volunteers has gone well and it is reassuring to have a sustainable core of dedicated people prepared to give time and work alongside our Primary Care Teams and Social Services. The time volunteers spend on visits will be donated to the local Time Bank for use by other older residents for their day-to-day needs.'

### EPIC cards carrying emergency personal information

These are the size of a credit card and hold personal information designed to provide important contact details to help with identification in an emergency admission to hospital or at a scene of an accident. A local business sponsored the first print run of the cards.

The scheme was set up by the Crime and Disorder partnership between Stroud District Council, Forest of Dean District Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council.

### Home safety check scheme

Trained employees provide and install safety equipment, such as stair gates and smoke detectors, at cost price. A new priority for the scheme is to reduce the risk of falls in the home by addressing issues including lighting and floor coverings. The project is managed by the Primary Care Trust and Gloucestershire County Council.

All home visits are recorded, advice is given and rectifications are fully documented. Ten per cent of households visited receive a questionnaire to determine satisfaction with the service. The scheme has now been rolled out to bordering counties.

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### Falls prevention initiative

Cotswold and Stroud District Councils worked closely with Cotswold and Vale PCT to develop services that encourage older people to maintain moderate but healthy levels of activity and to avoid falls.

Second Homes funding in the Cotswolds has enabled the appointment of two Fitness Advisers with appropriate experience to work with the clinical falls groups run by the local PCT, to provide opportunities for activity in the community that complement the PCT work. They are developing longer-term mobility groups, including Tai-Chi, and will give one-to-one advice as necessary. The scheme covers the north and south Cotswolds area.

Patients, especially those who experience rural isolation, are returning to their GPs saying that the combination of activity and socialising has really improved their functional ability as well as their wellbeing. The scheme will be self-funding in the second year.

### Housing – intermediate care

Intermediate care has been supported by the government to provide a less intensive environment for rehabilitation and to help older people achieve independence after an illness and episode of disability.

Two pilots have been created. In Stroud, the council used existing sheltered schemes with empty flats, linked to local community hospitals. Cotswold District Council used a recently remodelled sheltered housing scheme run by Hanover Housing Association, in Cirencester – St Peter's Court.

The process was driven by the Department of Health Capital Fund and initially brought together the local Primary Care Trust, county social services and housing providers with local councils. Lessons were learned about the need for clarity, trust and enthusiasm – but a real positive is how the sheltered housing tenants took on board the occupants of the two flats, welcoming them into the day-to-day activities of the scheme.

### Housing – extra sheltered care

Older people in sheltered housing often need more intensive levels of care, known as extra care or very sheltered housing. These can be ideal for people who are less able to manage on their own but who do not need the very high level of care available in a residential home. Tenants retain their own front door and appropriate care resources can be based onsite, with the ability to provide other outreach services in the neighbourhood.

Building on the experience of running extra care in two sheltered schemes in Stroud, both districts are looking at options for the future – new build, re-modelling existing schemes and providing outreach services for people in their own homes.

The PCT has commissioned a report into the possibility of extending the service and an action plan is being developed locally.

Two schemes are planned in the Cotswolds by 2011 giving older people more choice and the ability to downsize earlier than they might do. Rural districts traditionally do not have the same choice of services that urban areas tend to have.

'We are on quite a big estate here and the project is very open – it's part of the community,' says Judy Trevelyan, sheltered scheme manager for Stroud DC. 'Everybody knows everybody else so it's really nice from that point of view.'

### Events

#### *Savour the flavour*

Gloucestershire Rural Community Council brought pupils from the local school in Fairford together with older people from local day centres. They work together on developing recipes, with the aim of building stronger relationships between the two groups. The project involved multi-agency working between Fairford School, Cotswold District Council and the Cotswold Health and Wellbeing Partnership. The local celebrity chef, Robert Rees, who leads the Gloucestershire Food Vision, gave his time to help with the scheme, which enjoyed excellent publicity.

#### *Theatre projects*

Entertainment can be an important route to vulnerable people. In Cotswolds and Stroud, a drama – *Trickster* – was presented locally to highlight the threat of strangers at the door as part of the Bogus Caller Initiative. It used professional actors and an original script with lyrics and music.

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More than 250 people attended the performance, which was organised by the district council. Free tickets, transport and refreshments were provided. The district council, in partnership with Help the Aged, Age Concern Gloucestershire and the Home Office, funded the show.

A second play, *Who's Helen?*, explored dementia through the story of recently widowed Helen, who re-examines her life and options at the onset of her illness. The show was performed by Pyramid Theatre Company and jointly funded by the local authority and the PCT.

### **Reg and Dolly's story – virtual teams at work**

Reg and Dolly are in their late 70s. He has early Alzheimer's Disease, while she has increasingly bad arthritis, which means that she has trouble bathing her husband and is barely managing to keep things going. They have both their state pension and a small occupational pension but their house is in poor repair. They are anxious about their untidy garden, which was once their pride and joy.

A neighbourhood warden found a distressed Dolly outside the supermarket, where she and Reg had just finished their weekly shopping. She had slipped and dropped her bags and, although she wasn't injured, she was very upset.

The warden helped them both to their bus, then alerted the *People for You* service, contacted *Careline* and the local Home Improvement Agency to deal with the garden and install simple security devices. *People for You* can also set up a benefit check with the local Citizens' Advice Bureau and help with attendance allowance forms and getting council tax benefits.

The couple did not know about *Warm and Well* grants or *CareShare*, who can help Dolly to look after Reg by providing an occasional carer. Now that so many people are aware of their situation, social services also arrange dementia care for Reg two days a week.

Meanwhile, Dolly was referred to the falls clinic, where she was given advice on exercises that will help to prevent future accidents. Care Direct also arranged for grab rails and lever taps, as well as hiring a local company to help with the couple's cleaning and shopping. Finally, Reg and Dolly now use Dial a Ride and have been given travel tokens for bus journeys.

The result is a warm, safe house for a much happier couple, who not only have a bit more money but also feel part of the community again.

The neighbourhood warden is only one of the points of contact who could have referred Reg and Dolly to the many agencies who have provided advice and help – a district nurse or benefits officer could equally well have taken action.

### **Multi-agency work in urban areas**

#### **Crisis care in Liverpool**

A new crisis team in Liverpool gives older people access to both health and social care – seamlessly.

The team consists of NHS and social services staff, who provide crisis care for first time patients, giving them the combined support they need without having to be re-admitted to hospital.

The team has now discarded its previous applicant criteria – which stated that patients must be aged 65 or older – to ensure it is delivering services based on need rather than age.

#### **Reducing fire-related deaths in Merseyside**

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service (MFRS) has tapped into the large numbers of older people in the workforce in an effort to reduce fire-related deaths in the over-60s age group.

It has set up a group called *Advocates for Arson Reduction*, who work alongside the police and Anti Social Behaviour Units. They are based in local authority district offices and liaise directly with the community safety team, environmental protection team, neighbourhood wardens and caretakers. This close partnership working enables them to target trouble hot spots.

Advocates have come from various backgrounds, including local voluntary agencies, with which MFRS worked to find suitable older people. Funding for the project came from Neighbourhood Renewal sources and Crime and Disorder Partnerships, as well as the MFRS.

Advocates are encouraged to bring their own skills and experience to the role and their remit is 'to work for the benefit of vulnerable members of the community and to engage with partner agencies within that community'.

For example, the St Helens *Handy Van* scheme sees the local advocate work in partnership with the local environmental health department's safety co-coordinator.

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Eric, the safety co-ordinator, is ideally placed to assist the MFRS. He visits the homes of older people in the borough to carry out safety checks and risk assessments in connection with accessibility, electrical equipment, lighting, ventilation and security. He will also note any condition that might affect the comfort or safety of the occupier, including fire safety issues or the absence of smoke alarms.

He has a good working relationship with Chris, a fire service advocate, and both being near to 60, feel that they are more accepted by older members of the community than someone younger would be.

To comply with the Data Protection Act, Eric ensures that the occupier is happy for him to disclose information to Chris, who then arranges for firefighters to deliver a home fire safety check.

*Advocates for Arson Reduction* are employed in similar partnerships with a range of volunteers and professionals across the Merseyside area. An external evaluation was carried out after the initiative had been running for a year and found high levels of satisfaction with their work.

### Fire support network

MFRS employs advocates in its fire safety department. It also works in active partnership with a number of local voluntary agencies.

Fire Support Network (FSN) in Merseyside is a registered charity, which plays an active and important role in a number of community-based initiatives designed to promote fire safety, raise fire awareness and reduce fire deaths across Merseyside.

The combined efforts of MFRS staff, advocates and FSN volunteers have contributed to a dramatic reduction in the number of people suffering serious injuries as a result of fire – down from 545 victims in 1999/2000 to 151 in 2004/05.

FSN has approximately 150 active volunteers, of whom more than 60 are aged 60 and over. Their many roles include leafleting, generating HFSC, changing the batteries in smoke alarms, attending and/or organising community events, and After Fire Care.

Merseyside Fire Service in partnership with FSN, the voluntary sector and the British Red Cross has extended its service to the community by developing its own After Fire Care Service.

Resources and procedures are committed immediately after a dwelling house fire. Often older people with no immediate assistance available to them are the victims.

The following example shows how partnership between MFRS, volunteers and the British Red Cross was instrumental in meeting the real needs of an elderly victim of fire.

### • John

Fire crews attended a severe house fire at the home of an 83-year-old man named John. The fire started in a TV in the living room and spread unnoticed throughout the house, which was severely damaged. John had buildings but not contents insurance.

Over his lifetime, John had built up a collection of personal treasures, including photos, wartime mementos and family possessions. The partner agencies worked to help John rebuild his life.

They met with the insurance assessor, welfare benefits, builders, The Royal British Legion and neighbours. The DSS were contacted for a hardship grant. Arrangements were made to take John shopping for new furniture and other household items.

John moved into a local hotel for the duration of the rebuilding work but after a few weeks he called the FSN in a distressed state. He felt alienated in the large hotel, the staff, although kind, did not have time to stop and chat with him. He was lost without his family and friends.

With many people working together, John was placed in a care home for the remaining months. One week before Christmas, he finally went home, where he celebrated the holiday with his family and friends. John said, 'I am very grateful for the help you have all given me. I thought it was the end – too much to do. I did not know where to start. Thank you.'

The After Fire Care Service can be adapted to meet the expected needs of older people in any situation.

### the 60+ Lifesave initiative

Some older people may refuse the direct offer of a home safety check by Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service (MFRS). But the same people are less likely to say no to a check instigated by a relative, particularly a grandchild.

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This is the premise behind a major initiative launched by MFRS in 2002 and involving close collaboration between the fire service and local schools and youth groups. 60+ Lifesave encourages young people to help MFRS influence older people in their own homes by rewarding them for referrals of their grandparents and other older people for home safety checks. The campaign takes the form of a competition offering both individual and group prizes, with young people scoring 10 points for every referral of a person over the age of 60 and two points for any other referral.

The initiative has helped to improve understanding between the generations, educated young people about home safety and led to 6,500 referrals for Home Fire Safety Checks in the first two years. During 2004/5 the campaign involved more than 200 schools and youth groups, leading to some 15,000 referrals.

60+ Lifesave has worked with Everton Football Club's Extra Time Study Support Centre to reach pupils between the ages of 8 and 14 who attend the centre after school. It is one of 89 such centres at sports clubs across the UK developed by the Department of Education and Skills, local education authorities and sports clubs. The fire safety campaign kicked off at Everton in January 2005 and activities have included fire safety talks from firefighters and the opportunity for the youngsters to dress in uniform and practise using fire hoses in the club's grounds, as well as asking for referrals of older people for fire safety checks.

'Working with the fire service has provided expert guidance and real life experience of working with specialist professionals for a good cause. The opportunity for children to participate in a unique project enables them to develop life skills and raise awareness of fire safety,' says Joanne Hatton, Deputy Centre Manager at Everton.

MFRS is keen to spread the word about the 60+ Lifesave initiative and seven other fire services around the country are already implementing similar schemes.

### Getting fit in Nottingham

Nottingham has become one of ten regions to test the country's first-ever *Local Exercise Action* pilots – schemes aimed at encouraging the over-50s to get more exercise.

The initiative was launched last year as a way of reducing heart disease, strokes, hypertension, colon cancer and Type 2 diabetes among the older population.

The council worked with Nottingham City PCT, Age Concern, Nottingham Council for Voluntary Services, VOICE East Midlands and the Afro-Caribbean and Asian Forum to set up and manage the project.

The aim is to increase the number of adults over 50 who take moderate regular exercise by five per cent and to reduce the number of sedentary people in the same group by 10 per cent within the most deprived parts of the city.

It started with a mapping exercise, which highlighted the region's provision for physical activity and any other opportunities that older people could enjoy. This was followed by a consultation project and a publicity campaign.

The project has a network of peer mentors who encourage people from their local communities to become more active and a group of physical activity advisers who provide one-to-one support. Activities range from belly dancing and Tai Chi to gardening and walking.

Meriel Blake, 62, had a hip replacement operation to repair osteoarthritis damage and has found that walking has helped her to recover.

'I find it both an emotional and a physical help,' she says. 'While I was waiting for the operation I was in pain all the time and could only walk with a Zimmer frame. People who knew me then are often amazed when they see me out and about now. I encourage them to come along and we now have quite a few walkers who have had hip replacements.'

Meriel is about to embark on a 12-day sponsored trek in a remote province of Mongolia.

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Central government is now encouraging local authorities to involve older people in the planning and delivery of services that affect them.

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Involvement means much more than simply filling in consultation forms. It means direct participation in such areas as:

- monitoring and evaluation of services
- education and training
- budget-setting
- defining standards
- commissioning and undertaking research
- providing user-led services.

Effective involvement of older people in council services is also required for a good performance in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment. The CPA for 2005 includes under the Older People theme:

5.4.1 What has the council, with its partners and with older people, done to develop a strategic approach to older people as citizens that goes beyond health and social care and covers the areas that older people say are most important?

5.4.2 What has the council, both corporately and with its partners, done to undertake meaningful engagement with older people and their representative groups on all aspects of the strategic approach to older people and service provision?

In recent years, there has been considerable investment by both government and the voluntary sector in projects such as Better Government for Older People (BGOP) and Help the Aged's *Speaking up for Our Age*. As a result, plenty of help and advice is available nationally about meaningful engagement with older people.

It may be clear why local authorities want to engage with older people but why should older people themselves want to get involved?

The answer, generally, is that older people want to improve their lives and the lives of others in similar situations and are often willing to invest their time to achieve this. However, willingness to participate is usually directly proportionate to whether they feel they are being listened to and whether their involvement is making any difference. If people feel ignored or patronised, they will soon vote with their feet.

It is also important that both local authorities and older people look at the costs and benefits of any forms of participation before getting involved. They need to understand what effort each side needs to put in and what they will get out of it. For example, is there a real possibility of plans being amended to reflect strong views expressed during the process – or is it just a rubber stamp exercise?

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### Models of involvement

There are many ways for older people to participate in shaping the services that affect them. Different levels of involvement suit different people at different times in their lives.

Among models of involvement are:

- advocacy and information, for example the Gloucester Older People's Assembly advocacy service
- older people's forums, such as the Shropshire Association of Senior Citizens' Forums
- elected older people's councils, which have regular meetings and whose members sit on local authority forums, committees and panels, such as that operating in Brighton & Hove
- user panels, which involve a representative group of volunteer service users.

Advantages include people knowing one another and being more at ease, provision of intensive support, if necessary, and the opportunity for in-depth discussion and comparison of experiences. Service users are also able to see and monitor the results of their involvement. Many local authorities have some version of user panels. One well-known and well-studied example is the Fife User Panel in Scotland

- one-off consultations on specific themes, such as Stroud's *People for You*
- user/pensioners' groups, for example residents' groups within care homes
- user-led services, such as the University of the Third Age, or the many *Walking for Health* groups set up and run by older people
- direct payments, which can be a very powerful way for older people to be in charge of their own lives. Service users' experience of direct payments is improved where an effective support service exists, for example the *Supporting Independent Living Service (SILS)* in Shropshire
- networks – for example, the Nottinghamshire Older People's Forums – which are closely linked to Local Area Forums and enable people aged 50+ from local communities, many of whom are already representatives of their local voluntary and community groups, to work together
- campaigning and direct action, for example the National Pensioners' Convention.

Some existing organisations are agency-led, including representatives of statutory or voluntary organisations that speak on behalf of older people. Other organisations are user-led, run by and for older people themselves.

Older people's forums and councils are local organisations, usually working with local authorities on local issues.

Both agency-led and user-led groups have been described as forums, which can cause some confusion. Most forums, however, are user-led, as are many other pensioners' groups around the country. Many of these are affiliated to BGOP, and/or the National Pensioners' Convention. There is also a Europe-wide network of older people's organisations, called AGE.

*Age and change: Models of involvement for older people*, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report by Tony Carter and Peter Beresford in 2001, sees strengths and weaknesses in both approaches.

### Strengths of user-led organisations...

- older people can determine their own agenda
- older people are in control
- independence
- user-led initiatives are more likely to have credibility with older people
- user-led initiatives are less likely to be swayed by the interests of the agency.

### ...and some weaknesses

- funding is a problem
- lack of resources can restrict what the group can do and make it insecure.

### Strengths of agency-led initiatives...

- agency-led initiatives are more likely to gain funding and other official support
- they may have direct links with and routes into agencies
- official credibility.

### ...and some weaknesses

- older people's say may be limited
- official agendas tend to predominate
- they may be symbolic of intent, lacking real power or drive.

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Older people's groups of various kinds make valuable contributions to their communities. However, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation points out that older people believe a group initiated and run by themselves will lead to greater possibilities of being involved in decision-making, providing there is a positive response from officials.

It is important to remember that participation is a two-way process.

Local authorities engaging with older people must be prepared to listen to what they have to say and take their views into consideration.

This means that officers, at the relevant level, and elected members of the authority must devote time and effort to the communication process. Whichever model of involvement is chosen, it will need adequate funding.

### Success factors for involving older people

- get support for the involvement initiative from the very top of your authority
- ensure that the initiative is publicised throughout your authority and partner authorities
- ensure that the necessary funding is in place
- ensure that help is offered with matters such as administration and publicity, although older people's organisations may prefer to handle these themselves in order to preserve their independence
- arrange for senior officers and members to be available to listen to the views of older people whenever they are needed
- value the voluntary contribution being made by the older people taking part in your initiative
- let older people set the agenda.

### Funding and support for older people's groups

Older citizens' groups depend upon the voluntary efforts of their members. However, some funding is vital.

As a minimum, funding is needed for publicity, communication with members and meeting room hire.

Where it comes from is a big question. The answer goes a long way to determining whether the group is seen as an independent voice.

A lot of older citizens' forums are funded at least in part by the local authority. However, many, like Shropshire's, emphasise that they do raise funds of their own as well and stress that forums would continue if local authority funding were to stop. This gives them the freedom to disagree with the council if they wish.

Funding must be unconditional. If it is not, you will only hear the things you want to hear, instead of getting people's true views.

### Working projects

The following pages describe different ways of engaging and involving older people, if they are done well and receive the appropriate investment of funds, time and interest.

The projects have already achieved concrete results in terms of service improvements, as well as helping older people to feel more empowered.

For example:

- the Shropshire Association of Senior Citizens' Forums won a battle to retain travel tokens in the county and is now organising Sunday activities for housebound older people at one of the county's day centres
- the Gloucestershire Older Persons' Assembly has set up an advocacy service
- Nottinghamshire Senior Citizens' Forums work with community action groups, bringing together voluntary and statutory organisations to improve the quality of life for older people in local areas
- Brighton & Hove's Older People's Council has taken an active part in numerous debates, including how economic development and regeneration in the city can benefit older people. It has also introduced an older people's medical card

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Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service collects the views of older residents every year and many people who receive a home fire safety check are also questioned and consulted about the service. As a result, it has created paid posts for older persons' advocates to promote fire safety and the value of risk assessments among the older population.

### Starting senior citizens' forums – Shropshire

Shropshire County Council decided in 2001 to start a Senior Citizens' Forum in the county, following the recommendation of the BGP programme.

There were some existing pensioners' groups in Shropshire but these were very locally based. There is also an active branch of Age Concern, with whom the council works closely. However, there was no general interest group representing older people across the county, with whom the council could consult on issues across the board.

The council was moving towards an innovative agenda of preventative services at the time. It believed that older people wanted a new approach and wanted them to help shape the new services themselves.

Shropshire is committed to providing good services for older people across the board, including all council functions, such as libraries, recreation, education and countryside services that do not come within the traditional areas of health or social care. The council found it useful to have a vigorous, well-established, independent group of older people with a breadth of experience across all these functions who are willing to be consulted and act as advisers.

There are seven district senior citizens' forums across Shropshire, which are all members of the Shropshire Association of Senior Citizens' Forums. This county-level group is a limited company and a registered charity, with a small office in Shrewsbury.

The County Association has one paid officer and produces a regular newsletter, as well as carrying out much of the day-to-day administration on behalf of the district forums. It is currently setting up a website.

Each district forum meets monthly or bi-monthly, usually inviting a speaker to its meetings. The County Association, which includes the chairs of all seven district forums, meets monthly.

Members of the district forums sit on many panels and committees locally, including the local strategic partnerships for each district. This is replicated at county level, with the association represented on many countywide partnerships such as the Shropshire Partnership and the National Strategic Framework Implementation Group of the local Primary Care Trust.

Members of the association have regular meetings with county council officers at decision-making level – for example, the director of community services, whose responsibilities include social care; the chief executive; and the director of resources, who runs a series of meetings with the forums in preparation for setting council tax for the year.

'In Shropshire, forums are a valued partner in consultations and the development of services and policies,' says a council spokesperson. 'It is essential that the forums have access to key members and officers if we are to communicate with and involve older people effectively.'

'The authority actively encourages older people to set the agenda. While this may not turn out to be what we expect, it often challenges us to deliver more. We believe that this is the key to effectively involving older people in service delivery.'

### How the forums work

*Mike Seale is a member of the Shrewsbury Senior Citizens' Forum. Here, he explains how the county's forums work and gives advice to other authorities that want to set up similar bodies.*

'The Shropshire forums have about 8,000 members. Every month, we send out 5,000 newsletters, although the readership is higher because some of these go to couples. We don't want to stop there – we would like to have 10,000 members by the end of 2005, which would represent 20 per cent of all pensioners in the county. There is a huge moral authority in having a large number of members.'

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We have three basic types of member. There are about 80 activists and committee members. Then there is a large group who attend regular meetings. Finally, there is a group of members who attend occasional meetings and keep in touch in other ways. We believe that all these members are equally important, because they all lend weight to our voice.

We keep in close touch with the local councils because so many of the things affecting senior citizens' quality of life are provided at a local level.

We are totally independent and will criticise things we don't agree with. However, we have some golden rules – we criticise the council as a whole, not individuals. If we criticise policy, we should always offer sensible alternatives.

There are a number of key factors that must be in place if older people's forums are to fulfil their potential. Independence is crucial. You must have good fund-raising, avoid party politics and communicate well with your members. Finally, you need an awareness of the media. You must understand how you are perceived.'

### **Giving older people a voice – Gloucestershire Older Persons' Assembly**

The need for a single organisation to represent the concerns and aspirations of older people in Gloucestershire originated in a report by Age Concern Gloucestershire in 2000, which followed a series of public debates across the county. Statutory and voluntary agencies, councillors and MPs had taken part, as well as older people themselves.

*The Debate of the Age – The View from Gloucestershire* showed clearly that older people felt they needed a strong collective voice to speak on their behalf. Common concerns they wanted addressed were:

- access to health and social care
- poverty and pension levels
- employment
- lifelong housing or access to appropriate housing when needed
- transport.

The concept of an older persons' assembly to serve these needs and recognise the significant role that older people play in the community received widespread support. A steering committee was set up and Age Concern Gloucestershire responded by obtaining three-year funding to support its initial development.

The Gloucestershire Older Persons' Assembly (GOPA), now funded by Gloucestershire County Council, acts as the voice and sounding board for older people in the county.

It is made up of two older people's representatives from each of the local districts – Cheltenham, Forest of Dean, Gloucester, Tewkesbury, Stroud and the Cotswolds – and representatives from organisations that support older people, including the Pensioners' Forum, the Bream Health Forum, Senior Persons User Group, the Carers Project, U3A and the Hard of Hearing Group. Other members come from the county's social service department, Cotswold District Council, Gloucester Royal Hospital and private care providers Blanchworth Care.

GOPA has also developed its own advocacy service for older people. During their preliminary investigations, the steering group discovered there were many organisations and coalitions fighting for issues of common interest, such as increased pensions, but that there were growing numbers of frail and vulnerable older people who found it difficult to access community services.

The first advocates were recruited and trained in spring 2004. Just over a year later there were 13 advocates across the county, advising people who had not known where to turn for help. In the first nine months of 2005, the advocates carried out 400 hours of consultations, pointing out where to find legal help, care advice and many other one-off or everyday services.

### **Stroud peer educators**

In common with the rest of the country, older people in Stroud sometimes feel intimidated by youths in their community.

To tackle low-level anti-social behaviour and a lack of understanding between different generations in the same neighbourhoods, the local youth service recruited and trained young and older peer educators.

Local meetings were held in trouble spots to encourage a sense of community spirit, at which both young and old participants were able to express their views on the perceived problems.

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### **Churn project**

This scheme, named after the River Churn, is located in two deprived wards in Cirencester. It gives help with health matters, learning skills and crime reduction information and is encouraging local residents to plan local health and wellbeing related services and generate support themselves.

The project has been running for five years. A local shop has been rented to provide a central base and the number of volunteers and group activities have trebled since the start. This scheme has proved that you can adapt neighbourhood project processes to specific areas of a small town such as Cirencester. Rosemary Lynn, Community Health and Housing Manager says: 'Local people have identified their own health needs, leading to the provision of health facilities and learning activities near to home for the over-55s. Volunteers are coming forward to support the project with art and craft and meet and greet sessions, which is giving real sustainability. Statutory and voluntary agencies are working closely together on the Supporters Group'.

### **Stroud People for You**

This series of workshops was a collaborative effort between Stroud District Council and the local Primary Care Trust to ask older people how best the trust should target investment in preventative services. The result was a one-stop shop dispensing advice on health matters, hosted by the local home improvement agency.

The success of the first workshop helped to set the tone for future developments.

Among key factors:

- 100 invitations were issued, with a response of 30-40
- sub-groups met on a regular basis
- a non-council location was used
- transport was available
- the meeting was held in the daytime
- lunch was provided
- the day was given an informal feel
- local people, who were familiar with local issues, were used as facilitators
- prompt feedback was sent out after the event, thanking people for attending
- frontline staff, such as health visitors, were involved
- attendees chose the name *People for You*.

### **Making a change – Nottinghamshire senior citizens forums**

Nottinghamshire has nine senior citizens' forums. They are closely linked to local area forums – community action groups concerned with regeneration and the quality of life in their neighbourhoods. The senior citizens' forums include members of local older people's groups, set up to reflect a wide range of interests, such as those of black and ethnic minority communities.

Setting their own agenda and bringing together voluntary and statutory organisations, the nine forums have worked in partnership on several local projects to improve older people's quality of life in the county. These include:

- recruiting a signposting service adviser, with forum members involved throughout the recruitment process
- creating reading groups in sheltered accommodation, open to residents and non-residents
- setting up a creative writing group, which has published its own books
- introducing shoppers' buses, with volunteers on board – the routes are chosen by older people themselves

- working with a community development worker to create information cards on council services.

Involvement might be worthy, but it does not have to be dull – social events are a good way of catching people's attention. Nottinghamshire has successfully used plays, musical evenings and social occasions. They suggest considering how you could include events aimed at senior citizens within existing local events or festivals.

It's important to remember that getting people along to your events and getting them talking is the first step to involving them in local issues.

Consultation with older people and their forums can also be carried out by post, local radio, during special events concerning developments in the community and at local exhibitions. Nottinghamshire also involves older people in recruitment and selection procedures.

A video, *Celebration of a Generation*, based on an event that brought more than 100 older people together for a common purpose – to create their vision and an action plan for the future – is available as an example of Nottinghamshire's approach.

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### Nottinghamshire Older People's Advisory Group

Each older people's forum in Nottinghamshire elects three representatives who collectively form a Nottinghamshire Older People's Advisory Group. This group has developed over the last three years and has been involved in major policy and practice development alongside a range of partners. The group has been significantly involved in a wide range of initiatives, including:

- the design, research and implementation of a Best Value Review on the promotion of independence for older people
- establishing the key priorities for action from the Best Value Review, with a central role in the monitoring and review of its implementation
- the development of the *Opportunity Age in Nottinghamshire* strategy
- development of the Nottinghamshire Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement
- sharing information, learning and best practice through the BGOP network, locally, regionally and nationally
- the development of Invest to Save Project, studies with the Audit Commission and the Social Exclusion Unit
- key partnership in the development of Link-Age Plus in Nottinghamshire.

### How to get older people involved

- begin by investing in getting people's attention and make your events interesting and fun
- make sure that everything to do with your project is accessible – the venues, provision of transport, the literature, the writing style
- get some momentum behind your project by using local press and radio to stimulate debate
- be willing to let people set their own agenda
- make sure that you are in a position to show that you have taken action as a result of your consultation with older people, so the effort they put in is worth their while
- raise awareness of your local senior citizens' group throughout your organisation and partner organisations – make introductions where necessary
- make sure that key officers and members are willing to give time and credence to your initiative.

### Elected older people's councils – Brighton & Hove

Brighton's Older People's Council (OPC) is a directly elected, independent body supported by Brighton & Hove City Council. It was established to ensure that:

- the contribution of older people to family, community and society is recognised and valued
- older people are able to influence policies and services that affect them.

The OPC was set up by the BGOP Members Task Force, whose terms of reference were developed in consultation with Brighton, Hove and Portslade Age Concern; Brighton, Hove and District Pensioners' Association; Brighton & Hove Pensioners Forum; and the co-ordinator of the Older People's User Panel (now called the 60+ Action Group).

After reviewing models of involvement in this country, members of the task force visited Denmark, where elected senior citizens' councils have a long history and became compulsory in 1995. They were impressed by the difference senior citizens' councils made in influencing the policy makers and the provision and delivery of services for older people.

The OPC closely follows the Danish model in the belief that elected bodies have a legitimacy and credibility that others do not.

A Shadow Older People's Council was established in November 2001 at an event for older people in the Brighton Centre. In June 2003, a council of nine people was elected by an electoral register of 40,000 Brighton & Hove residents aged 60 or over.

To make sure that older people from all parts of the city were represented on the OPC, the city was divided into nine electoral zones, each made up of two or three electoral wards. In the first of what will be four-yearly elections, the turnout was a healthy 47 per cent.

The nine elected members have each been assigned a special area of interest, so that the OPC can keep abreast of policies and make representations if these are thought to have a detrimental effect on older people in the city. Members sit on city forums, committees and panels.

## CHAPTER 4: ENGAGING WITH AND INVOLVING OLDER PEOPLE

The OPC meets at least once every month and discusses and takes action on issues important to older people. Officers of the city council are often invited to attend to:

- explain how their services are designed to help and support older people
- discuss any problem with the service
- highlight gaps in services or policies.

The OPC have considered issues such as:

- community safety
- libraries' charging policy for the loan of CDs
- how economic development and regeneration in the city can benefit older people
- proposals for the development of the brownfield Brighton station site
- charging policies for social care services
- needs of older people in the private housing sector
- lifelong learning for older people
- bus services
- rogue doorstep traders.

In the first year, the OPC worked with the Brighton & Hove City Teaching Primary Care Trust to raise funds to launch a special credit card sized medical card, which carries details of any medication older people are taking and any allergies, together with a contact telephone number. OPC members placed them in every pharmacy and surgery in the city. Today, many thousands are in use and a top-up service is available.

Joan Moorhouse, who chairs the OPC, says: 'We are determined to remove the barriers that prevent older people living healthy, fulfilling and independent lives and committed to prompting wellbeing and social inclusion in later life.'

Brighton & Hove is hosting a major festival, *Celebrating Age*, in July 2006, highlighting the creativity and potential of older people. It will include:

- an international conference bringing together older people with key policy and decision-makers from public services across the UK and abroad
- an innovative cultural festival exploding the negative stereotypes that so often define older people
- a national exhibition showcasing services and opportunities for older people.

### Coalition of older people

The Brighton & Hove Coalition of Older People – The Pensioners' Forum is a membership organisation made up of individual older people and older people's organisations, which reserves a proportion of places on the management group for representatives of minority interests. It exists to campaign on issues of concern to older people, challenge discrimination and promote new educational, social and cultural opportunities.

The Pensioners' Forum and the OPC are independent of each other but work together closely. The OPC is able to ensure that the voice of older people is heard at a strategic policy-making level through its partnership work with the local authority, health trusts and other significant bodies in the city. The Pensioners' Forum is not constrained by the same demands of partnership working as the OPC and therefore is able to pursue a robust campaigning stance, when appropriate. Constitutionally, the OPC is obliged to refer to The Pensioners' Forum, on a regular basis.

These arrangements help ensure that members of the OPC are exposed to and influenced by a broad range of older people living in the city.

The OPC receives regular reports from The Pensioners' Forum and is represented on its management group. The OPC attend the AGM of The Pensioners' Forum and use it as an opportunity to make themselves publicly accountable to older people in the city. The next step for The Pensioners' Forum will be to develop a neighbourhood structure.

### Fire safety – Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service collects the views of older residents every year and many people who receive a home fire safety check are also questioned and consulted about the service.

This information, and the feedback from Merseyside's older people's forums, helps to shape fire safety strategies.

Results from the consultation process suggested that many senior citizens take fire safety messages more seriously when they are delivered by members of their own age group. This led directly to the creation of paid posts for older persons' advocates to promote fire safety and the value of risk assessments among the older population.

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## CHAPTER 5: HARNESSING THE ENERGY, SKILLS AND ENTHUSIASM OF OLDER PEOPLE

Work, paid or unpaid, can play an important role in helping older people to maintain their independence and lead a productive, healthy life.

A million people over the state pension age are in paid employment but official statistics indicate that just fewer than six million people aged between 50 and the state pension age are employed. That leaves almost a third in this age group unemployed. These people are sometimes referred to as the early retired but, as many national organisations regularly point out, retirement is not necessarily voluntary.

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Despite all the evidence that older people are a highly diverse segment of the population and that there are huge differences in the ways they perceive themselves and in their fitness for employment, there is still a tendency to bundle all older people together. In fact, most over-50s want to work – but getting a job is not that easy.

Ageism has been seen as the most acceptable form of discrimination, resulting in its becoming pervasive in our culture. It can also be very damaging to the individual.

Evidence from the Department of Work and Pensions suggests that age discrimination in the workplace and early withdrawal from work have negative effects, such as:

- reduced physical health
- isolation, social exclusion and stigma
- lower confidence and low self-esteem
- poorer mental health and increased levels of depression
- higher levels of poverty, in the short term and after pension age.

Historically, little could be done about age discrimination but that is about to change. In 1999, the Government launched a new code of practice called *Age Diversity in Employment*. A report, *Action on Age*, signalled its opposition to age discrimination and called it ‘wasteful for Britain’.

The introduction of new laws to implement EU anti-discrimination legislation in 2006 is now expected to herald a transformation in long-standing work practices.

In fact, attitudes are already beginning to change. More and more employers are realising that the dramatic changes taking place in the nation’s age profile suggest it’s good sense to make the best of the experience, energy, enthusiasm and skills of older people. They also recognise that a balanced workforce that reflects the local community can be most productive.

At the same time, the ageing of the population is a triumph for advances in medical science and social care that presents service providers with daunting challenges, which older people themselves can help to alleviate.

This chapter addresses all of these themes. It looks at pre and post-retirement employment, such as flexible working and *Age Positive* champions; engaging older people to work as advocates with older members of their community; and voluntary work in the community.

Advice, education and training opportunities can have a positive effect on maintaining people in work and bringing people back into the labour market. Government schemes such as *Pathways to Work* and *New Deal 50+* have helped people off benefits and into work. A number of well-known national companies have also invested in training schemes for older employees, or started actively recruiting older workers.

## CHAPTER 5: HARNESSING THE ENERGY, SKILLS AND ENTHUSIASM OF OLDER PEOPLE

### Employing older people – the business case

The public sector is not exempt from the business imperatives that govern the private sector. It is therefore interesting to note the number of for-profit enterprises that value and make use of the acumen, energy and experience of older people.

More than 140 companies and organisations are *Age Positive* champions, including major supermarket and DIY chains, banks and utility companies. *Age Positive* is the government's campaign to promote the business benefits of an age-diverse workforce to employers. *Age Positive* employer champions are committed to tackling age discrimination in their own workplace and taking practical steps to change their employment practices.

Gloucestershire Housing Association says on the *Age Positive* website: 'There are a number of benefits to older workers: they are more committed, they have a wealth of experience behind them – not just work experience but life experience – that stands them in good stead to adapt to new situations.'

'Older workers have a calmness – they've seen it all before and nothing really bothers them and they can put situations into perspective, they are able to step back from situations and take a more balanced approach. We like to think that our older workers can pass on the knowledge and experience they have gained to our younger workers during the course of their employment with us.'

'Age and experience of life give older workers the confidence to tackle things in a sensible way. It is often better than academic qualifications. Older workers readily take on the responsibility for getting on with their jobs.'

The Institute of Chartered Accountants recently pointed out that employers are turning to older staff in the face of skills shortages among younger candidates.

They cite as main benefits:

- a person who works after retirement genuinely wants to be there and will have chosen to work for you, unlike those who have to be there
- older workers will not be counting down the days until they retire

- many people over retirement age are not planning for advancement in their career and are more likely to stay in the same post for longer, which provides continuity and is particularly useful if the post involves dealing with the public
- older people are more flexible about hours because their family have grown up or their domestic ties are not so onerous
- for the most part, they are not so worried about finances and are able to concentrate on their role
- older people know what they want out of life, are generally more focused on customers' needs and can deliver a good service.

Shropshire County Council and Enfield Borough Council are examples of local authorities that are *Age Positive* champions.

### Cleaner lives – Shropshire County Council

Shropshire's employees range from 16 to 84 years old. More than two per cent of the workforce is over 65. The council requires all new employees to attend a one-day equal opportunities training event, which has been in operation for more than five years.

There is no upper age restriction for applicants for council jobs and an applicant who is appointed aged 65 or over receives the normal contractual terms.

Flexible working policies apply to all employees. Older workers reaching retirement age can request a reduction in hours, allowing them to work part-time.

Shropshire Education Services noticed a difference in their retention figures for school cleaning staff immediately after the abolition of an upper age limit for employees. Promotional stories in local newspapers encouraged older candidates to apply, as well as several ex-employees who had recently left under the compulsory retirement policy.

Benefits include:

- access to a wider labour market to ensure effective service delivery
- retention of valued older workers reduces recruitment and training costs
- employees reflect the demographic profile of the county
- older workers pass on skills and abilities to younger workers
- slower loss of skilled and experienced people.

## CHAPTER 5: HARNESSING THE ENERGY, SKILLS AND ENTHUSIASM OF OLDER PEOPLE

### Carry on working – Enfield Borough Council

Enfield is one of the largest London boroughs, with more than 10,000 employees. 'We are committed to equality of opportunity in all we do. We do not discriminate on the grounds of age in any aspect of our recruitment, retention or employment,' says Tim Strong, Assistant Director, Human Resources.

More than 31 per cent of the workforce is aged over 50 and the council employs more people over the age of 60 than under the age of 21.

The council acknowledges that not everyone wants to stop working – employees can choose to work beyond their scheduled retirement.

As a result, the council says it:

- benefits substantially from employing and retaining older workers who offer high levels of commitment, enthusiasm and dedication
- has excellent staff retention, which helps to minimise recruitment costs, recoup investment in training and development and retain valuable knowledge and experience
- has a low rate of absenteeism, because our older workers have few periods of short-term sickness, which helps the council to provide a better service to the local community.

Local government generally has an ageing workforce, with only six per cent of employees under the age of 25, compared with a national average of 15 per cent. At Enfield, only four per cent are 24 or under, while 48 per cent are 45 or over.

The council believes the effective retention, development and motivation of older workers enable a better transfer of skills and knowledge to younger workers and retains expertise, know-how and contacts.

### Older people at work<sup>4</sup>

- a man aged over 50 who is not working is 50 per cent more likely to die of respiratory disease in the next five years than one who is working
- only one in ten of those not working after 50 are registered unemployed
- someone made redundant after 50 is eight times less likely to return to work than a younger person
- nine out of ten older people believe that employers discriminate against them – a quarter speak from experience
- ten per cent of companies employ no over-50s
- more than 1.5 million jobs are vacant on any given day, while a million people over 50 would like to be working.

### Merseyside answers the call

The benefits that the skills, enthusiasm and experience older employees can bring to local government and private sector organisations are also valuable in the wider community. Delivering advice to other older people, who may be reluctant to approach official bodies or be reluctant to open their doors to younger people, is a notable example.

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service (MFRS), which operates in a part of the country where older people are at particular risk, has discovered that many older people are more likely to take precautions against fire if home safety messages are delivered by others in the same age group. Their decision to appoint older person advocates is now saving lives.

### Fire discriminates

MFRS is often told that older people are hard to reach. They disagree. They can always find out where people live but they believe some older people are hard to influence. Research backs them up – 75 per cent of the fire victims on Merseyside are over 60.

Most victims of fire share five or more of nine major characteristics:

- elderly
- smoker
- use alcohol
- on medication
- live alone
- no smoke alarm
- mobility problems
- have contact with caring agency
- prefer traditional cooking methods.

In a two-year period, 22 people died in house fires on Merseyside and 17 of them were known to a caring agency, while 19 either did not have a working smoke alarm or had no smoke alarm.

Being aware of older people's circumstances may prevent a tragedy. Of the last 33 fatal victims of fire in Merseyside, 26 fell into six or more at risk categories. The more categories a person falls into, the greater the risk of becoming a victim.

This picture clearly shows that fire does have a social dimension. It has a disproportionate effect on vulnerable people in the most deprived areas.

4. From the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Social Exclusion Unit interim report *Excluded Older People*

## CHAPTER 5: HARNESSING THE ENERGY, SKILLS AND ENTHUSIASM OF OLDER PEOPLE

These areas and people share many other characteristics of vulnerable communities, such as higher crime, higher unemployment and poorer access to services.

This map shows the districts that form the geographical area of Merseyside. Also shown, highlighted in black, are the ten most deprived areas, known as Super Output Areas.

The figures indicate:

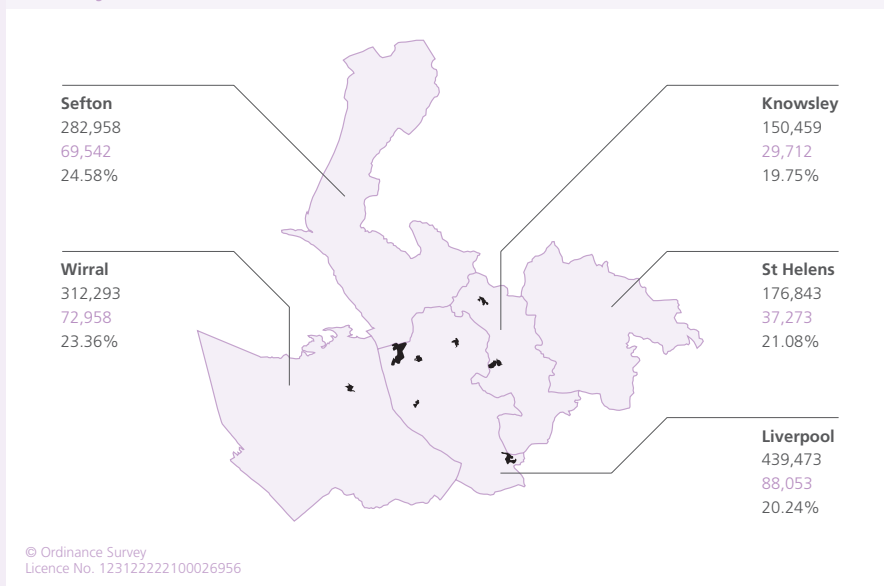
- population totals for the given district
- the number of people aged 60 and over (highlighted in colour)
- the 60+ group as a percentage of the total population.

From these figures we can see that the total population for Merseyside is 1,362,036. Of these, 297,538 people, or 21.85 per cent are aged 60 or over.

### Home safety advocates

Older people offer a huge challenge to all fire authorities, with the over-60s making up more than 75 per cent of all fire fatalities. The most vulnerable are those who live in areas with the highest ratings of social deprivation and Merseyside has 22 of the top 50 most deprived areas in England. This social climate is a continual challenge to MFRS and exposes its firefighters to pressures rarely found anywhere else in the country.

### Merseyside



The MFRS recognises that older people are disproportionately at risk from fire and they are therefore a priority group for fire safety work. Every year, MFRS collects the views of older people in Merseyside and many residents who receive home fire safety checks are questioned and consulted about the service provided.

Through these methods, along with feedback from Merseyside's older people's forums, valuable information is gathered which helps to shape fire safety strategies. However, complacency, apathy and ignorance are often the by-products of long-term

deprivation. Many older people are disinclined to have MFRS personnel – or any official personnel – visiting their homes, regardless of their good intentions.

The consultation process suggested that many senior citizens would take fire safety messages more seriously if they were delivered by members of their own age group. This led directly to the creation of paid posts for older persons' advocates, who promote fire safety and risk assessments targeted at the older population.

### Advocates in the workforce

Since 1999, Merseyside firefighters have visited many homes across the region and have referred residents found to be at very high risk to the Community Fire Safety department (CFS). In April 2004, a 12-month programme of change began, so that the firefighters who had been carrying out the task could be released for full operational duties by replacing them with specialist advocates, ideally representative of the target groups.

## CHAPTER 5: HARNESSING THE ENERGY, SKILLS AND ENTHUSIASM OF OLDER PEOPLE

The MFRS now employs more than 30 advocates who specialise in specific areas in an effort to influence, communicate and work to improve home safety with the most vulnerable members of the community. They work with the deaf or hard of hearing, with those who have a disability, with those who may rely on drugs or alcohol and others with language difficulties. Six of the advocates are specifically for older people.

'Five older person advocates are funded from mainstream firefighter posts and growth money underwritten by the fire authority. One is funded through the Liverpool Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund,' explains Steve Massam, Home Safety Manager, MFRS.

### Advocates for older people

All advocates receive rigorous training in fire awareness in the home and limited awareness training connected to child protection, welfare benefits, home security, bogus callers and many more safety issues. They may occasionally help fire investigators when interviewing the relatives of victims of fire.

Their key areas of responsibility are to:

- deliver home safety advice to older people, provide home safety assessments and generate referrals
- strengthen existing partnerships and help in the development of partnership initiatives, including those with other agencies or groups delivering safety and quality of life programmes to older people
- arrange functions and deliver presentations to older people
- provide regular reports on the development of initiatives and their outcomes.

All fire and rescue services in the UK offer home fire safety checks with advice about matters such as the identification of hazards that need removing or the provision of fire detection equipment, such as smoke alarms or domestic sprinkler systems.

### Recruiting older people

'Applicants are particularly welcome from candidates aged over 60 who are able to relate and have empathy with this section of the community,' says an advertisement placed to recruit the fire safety advocates. Five advocates were appointed, four of them aged close to 60.

**Merseyside FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**  **ONE TEAM MANY PLAYERS** 

## Salary | £16,944 Older Person Home Safety Advocate

**INITIAL 12-MONTH CONTRACT** OPEN TO CANDIDATES WISHING TO WORK ON A JOB SHARE/PART TIME BASIS

For an Application Pack, contact: **Alan Fox**, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service, Fire & Rescue Service HQ, Bridle Road, Bootle, Liverpool, L30 2YD or Call - 0151 296 4347

Alternatively visit - [www.merseyfire.gov.uk](http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk)

Applications are available in Large Print, braille & audiotape formats upon request.

**APPLICATIONS CLOSING DATE:-** 12th December 2003 at 1000 hrs.

Applications are particularly welcomed from candidates aged over 60 who are able to relate and have empathy with this section of the community.

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service have created a new Community Safety initiative and consequently we are seeking a highly motivated individual, who has excellent interpersonal skills, to join our Home Safety Department, to play a vital role in its delivery.

Based within the Liverpool District you will be working in partnership with outside agencies, generating and delivering initiatives that are applicable to older people. You will provide advice and guidance on Home Safety including the provision of Home Fire Risk Assessment, arrange functions and conduct presentations to older people and partners on the importance of Fire Safety.

The successful applicant will have effective verbal and written communication skills, be diplomatic, and have the ability to prioritise and manage time efficiently. Previous experience of working with older people and the understanding of the consequences of fire are essential, whilst experience in conducting presentations and knowledge of the aims and objectives of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service would be seen as an advantage.

WE ARE COMMITTED TO EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY. ALL APPLICATIONS WILL BE CONSIDERED ON THEIR MERITS & SELECTION WILL BE MADE SOLELY ON THE BASIS OF THE SUITABILITY OF APPLICANTS WHEN ASSESSED ON AN INST JOB RELATED CRITERIA.

REF: 03454

Older people are statistically less likely to have a smoke alarm than any other group. Together with possible mobility and sensory difficulties, this makes them particularly vulnerable to fire. The MFRS emphasises that fire does discriminate.

The checking procedure also allows an escape plan to be discussed. If this is not an option, perhaps because of mobility difficulties, the MFRS will provide a fire-resistant door to a suitable room that can be used as a temporary refuge.

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## CHAPTER 5: HARNESSING THE ENERGY, SKILLS AND ENTHUSIASM OF OLDER PEOPLE

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As well as visiting individual homes, the advocates target vulnerable people at older people's groups and day centres and work closely with service providers and voluntary organisations. Advocates have found that successfully influencing just one reluctant resident normally results in that person communicating with other close, but similarly reluctant, neighbours.

The Fire Service Advocates enable the fire service to break down barriers and build trust with a hard to influence group, spark new ideas and act as the authority's ears to make sure that the aspirations of Merseyside's older people are supported.

This scheme has proved very successful, with more than 270,000 risk assessments carried out so far.

Deputy Chief Fire Officer Mike Hagen says: 'We are delighted by the success of our advocates, who are creating important links with particularly vulnerable communities. This type of innovation is essential if we are to keep building on the excellent community fire safety work being carried out by our staff throughout Merseyside.'

### **Being an advocate**

Before working for the MFRS, John Tuft spent 25 years managing local authority services for various user groups and was heavily involved in the registration and inspection of private and voluntary care homes. He spent 11 years managing residential, nursing and sheltered housing services for a local housing association and is qualified to manage establishments for adults with learning difficulties.

As an advocate, John talks to many groups in an effort to reach and influence older people. His main duty is to increase the number of referrals for home safety visits, so he goes to supermarkets, bingo halls, clubs, influenza clinics, exhibitions and events arranged by organisations working with older people. The people who attend these events are generally classed as the fit elderly and can be influential because they are often involved with other organisations and are in regular contact with family members or neighbours.

The more vulnerable older people are likely to be housebound, harder to contact and, in some instances, harder to influence – but they can be reached through other people or organisations who have built up a relationship with them and may be their only contact.

John has found that these contacts have included hospital rehabilitation wards, day clinics, home carers, care and repair schemes, luncheon clubs, residents' associations and community warden services. When he is successful, John gains great satisfaction from helping to protect some of the most vulnerable in society whilst preserving their independence.

### **Dealing with problems**

The stories of three very different people indicate the sort of problems the advocates have to deal with.

#### **• Angela**

Angela is 67 and lives in a large house in an affluent area of Merseyside, which she shared for many years with her husband. They had no children and both had enjoyed active social lives.

When her husband died seven years ago, Angela was well provided for, financially. Since then, however, she had become progressively reclusive.

An advocate from MFRS recently attended her home after a minor fire, when she reported a smell of burning from the television set. During the incident, firefighters found evidence of carelessly discarded cigarettes in the form of numerous burns on furniture, bedding and carpets. She was also reliant on alcohol. The door leading from the kitchen to the garden was barricaded because of her fear of being burgled.

The average passer-by could be forgiven for assuming that the occupier had no problems but this was clearly not true. Angela has the finances to enjoy many activities not available to others but she was, in fact, very vulnerable. One of the advocates persuaded Angela to contact a number of caring organisations. She now has friends and enjoys a reading club.

## CHAPTER 5: HARNESSING THE ENERGY, SKILLS AND ENTHUSIASM OF OLDER PEOPLE

### • Doris

Doris, who is 76, has been a widow for 27 years and lives in a second floor flat in a deprived area. Although she has poor eyesight and a hearing impairment, she continues to be active. Her children all emigrated some years ago and, apart from at Christmas, she has no contact with them or her grandchildren. She was never socially active because of her financial position. Naturally, Doris longs to be reunited with her family.

Doris is a regular churchgoer and visits a local pensioners' club several times each week. She does not complain but she dreads winter, when she becomes confined to her home because she is afraid to be out after dark, fearful of an accident or being mugged.

Following a local fire service initiative in her area, Doris asked for a home fire safety check. Firefighters found a modest but well-maintained home. Working smoke alarms were already fitted and Doris had a good awareness of fire safety in her home.

### • the 90-year-old blind woman

MFRS employs older person advocates to ensure that all older people are given the opportunity to avail themselves of free services that help them stay safer in their homes for as long as they are able and point them to other agencies.

Among their recent success stories is a 90-year-old blind woman who was living in a flat above a shop, accessed by two flights of stone stairs at the rear of the premises.

The Community Fire Safety team referred the woman to Cathy, one of the advocates for older people, who identified several hazards threatening the occupant's safety and security.

Cathy was able to introduce measures to reduce risks in the flat and provide various items of safety equipment. The resident was put in touch with local council support services and Age Concern.

'It's very much partnership based,' says Cathy. 'While we offer fire safety advice and help, we look for areas where they could benefit from support from other agencies. Such agencies also pass referrals to us. I have no doubt about it, partnership working does make a difference to a lot of older people's lives.'

### Volunteer shoppers

Voluntary work can allow older people to participate effectively in the life of their community. For instance, they can help at a charity shop – most high streets contain at least one – to keep it running without excessive overheads.

Southport's volunteer shopping service is another example.

Situated in the Sefton district of Merseyside, Southport has one of the highest populations of retired people in Britain and, consequently, a high level of social isolation.

By May 2004, the Southport office of Sefton Council for Voluntary Service was inundated with requests from older people and statutory and voluntary agencies asking for help with shopping, so *The Shopping Service* was launched as part of the North Sefton social inclusion project.

Shoppers meet each week and are taken by minibus to a local superstore, where they shop for socially isolated older people. The volunteers range from young mums in their 30s to people in their 60s and 70s who have cared for an older relative and continue to enjoy helping older people.

There are three levels of the shopping service. First, it can do a full shop every week. It can also provide short-term help while people are recovering from illness or surgery. Finally, occasional clients who are able to do their own day-to-day shopping will ring every six to eight weeks for help with their heavy shopping.

### Peer mentoring

Nottinghamshire's Senior Peer Mentoring Scheme helps people over 50 to become more active through friendship with an active older person and by providing support and encouragement to take up new activities and interests.

These include walking, gardening, swimming, baking, shopping and trips to local places of interest on a one-to-one or group basis. Projects are running in Ashfield, Mansfield, Bassetlaw and Broxtowe. They supported more than a hundred individuals between April and December 2004.

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## CHAPTER 5: HARNESSING THE ENERGY, SKILLS AND ENTHUSIASM OF OLDER PEOPLE

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### Fair shares

Gloucestershire has pioneered the use of time banks in the UK to engage with local communities. *Fair Shares* was set up in 1998, modelled on the system used widely in the United States and initially funded by the Barnwood House Trust.

Time banks are a way to link people locally to share their time and skills. Everyone's time is equal: one hour of your time earns you one time credit to spend when you need a helping hand.

*Fair Shares'* initial aims were:

- to create informal systems of neighbours helping neighbours which reaffirm the bonds of reciprocity upon which community depends
- to encourage welfare agencies to move away from providing services in ways that focus on needs and deficiencies and may inadvertently reward dependency
- to promote interdependence and equality so that we, including those currently excluded, are all validated and rewarded for the unique contribution we can each make to our communities.

The system is particularly suited to harnessing the energy and enthusiasm of older people as active members of the community. *Fair Shares* participants are providing lifts, gardening, hairdressing, simple home repairs, shopping, childcare, complementary therapy, befriending and many more services. Details of older people's skills or interests are kept in a database and a co-ordinator brings together the needs and resources of the community.

Since 1998, *Fair Shares* has set up and operated many time banks across Gloucestershire. As they developed and evolved some were passed over to local community and neighbourhood projects, which then took responsibility for their running and continual funding. Others were combined to form the first city-wide time bank in Gloucester. The *Fair Shares* model has attracted interest across the UK and many other areas have started their own time banks, many of which still operate according to the same rules and procedures.

More than 600 participants, more than 40 per cent of them older people, work in the three *Fair Shares* projects currently operating in Gloucestershire – in Gloucester City, Newent and the North Cotswolds. Around 70 organisations are involved.

The *Fair Shares Gloucester Time Bank*, which is linked to four neighbourhood projects in the city, now has 250 participants and has exchanged 10,000 hours of work. This does not include work carried out with the families of inmates on remand at Her Majesty's Prison Gloucester.

In North Cotswold, the Countryside Agency provided initial funding to get the first rural *Fair Shares* scheme off the ground with Cotswold District Council.

'One client called Martin lost his farm after an agricultural accident and joined the North Cotswold Time Bank because he liked the philosophy,' says Bill Wragge, Health Policy Officer at Cotswold DC. 'He has been involved with the advisory group and earns credits by giving lifts, doing gardening and odd jobs for older people in the community. He donates most of his credits to other participants.'

'We are delighted that the scheme has been adopted by a largely rural community – we already have 250 participants. The principle has now been accepted by health and social services for future funding.'

Margaret Streater, Executive Director, Social Services, Gloucestershire County Council, adds: 'The social services department has supported these schemes from the start and we have no doubt of their value. Recently, local managers of the schemes gave a presentation at a conference on new ways forward for adult social care and there was a great deal of interest in the contribution that time bank schemes can make.'

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## APPENDIX

### SOURCES OF SUPPORT AND INFORMATION

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- IDeA  
[www.idea.gov.uk](http://www.idea.gov.uk)

#### **selected government websites**

- Audit Commission  
[www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk)
- Department of Health  
[www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)
- Department for Work and Pensions  
[www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)
- Information for over 50s  
[www.direct.gov.uk/Over50s/fs/en](http://www.direct.gov.uk/Over50s/fs/en)

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### local government websites

- Brighton and Hove council  
[www.brighton-hove.gov.uk](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk)
- Brighton's Older People's Council  
[www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=c1000689](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=c1000689)
- Camden council  
[www.camden.gov.uk](http://www.camden.gov.uk)
- Older people information  
[www.camden.gov.uk/ccm/themes/older-people/](http://www.camden.gov.uk/ccm/themes/older-people/)
- Haringey council  
[www.haringey.gov.uk](http://www.haringey.gov.uk)
- Haringey's older people strategy  
[www.haringey.gov.uk/experience\\_counts\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.haringey.gov.uk/experience_counts_strategy.pdf)
- Gloucestershire council  
[www.gloucestershire.gov.uk](http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk)
- MAIDeN database  
[www.maiden.gov.uk](http://www.maiden.gov.uk)
- Manchester council  
[www.manchester.gov.uk](http://www.manchester.gov.uk)
- *Valuing Older People* strategy  
[www.manchester.gov.uk/health/older/strategy/agenda.htm](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/health/older/strategy/agenda.htm)

### Beacon authorities for services for older people theme (2004/5)

- Cotswold District Council  
[www.cotswold.gov.uk](http://www.cotswold.gov.uk)
- Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service  
[www.merseyfire.gov.uk](http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk)
- Nottinghamshire County Council  
[www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk)
- Shropshire County Council  
[www.shropshire.gov.uk](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk)
- Stroud District Council  
[www.stroud.gov.uk](http://www.stroud.gov.uk)

### national voluntary organisations

- Age Concern  
[www.ageconcern.org.uk](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk)
- Help the Aged  
[www.helptheaged.org.uk](http://www.helptheaged.org.uk)
- Time Banks  
[www.timebanks.co.uk](http://www.timebanks.co.uk)

### national older people's networks

- Association of Relatives & Residents (of care homes)  
[www.relres.org](http://www.relres.org)
- Association of Retired and People over 50  
[www.arp050.org.uk](http://www.arp050.org.uk)
- Better Government for Older People  
[www.bgop.org.uk](http://www.bgop.org.uk)
- BME Elders Forum (hosted by Age Concern)  
[www.ageconcern.org.uk/AgeConcern/about\\_bmee.htm](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/AgeConcern/about_bmee.htm)
- National Pensioners' Convention  
[www.natpencon.org.uk](http://www.natpencon.org.uk)
- Seniors' Network  
[www.seniorsnetwork.co.uk](http://www.seniorsnetwork.co.uk)
- Older Women's Network  
[www.own-europe.org](http://www.own-europe.org)
- OPAAL (Older People's Advocacy Alliance UK)  
[www.opaal.org.uk](http://www.opaal.org.uk)

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### funding advice, grant information

- Association of Charitable Foundations  
[www.acf.org.uk](http://www.acf.org.uk)
- Awards for All  
[www.awardsforall.org.uk](http://www.awardsforall.org.uk)
- Charities' Aid Foundation  
[www.cafonline.org](http://www.cafonline.org)
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation  
[www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk)
- Access Funds  
[www.access-funds.co.uk](http://www.access-funds.co.uk)

### useful documents and case studies

#### planning and strategy

- *CPA – The Harder Test* (Audit Commission, October 2005)  
pdf version available from  
[www.audit-commission.gov.uk/cpa/index.asp](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/cpa/index.asp)
- *Independence, Wellbeing & Choice: our vision for the future of social care for adults in England* (green paper, Department of Health, 2005)  
pdf version available from  
[www.dh.gov.uk/PublicationsAndStatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidanceArticle/fs/en?CONTENT\\_ID=4106477&chk=PNyCVm](http://www.dh.gov.uk/PublicationsAndStatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidanceArticle/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4106477&chk=PNyCVm)
- *Modernising Local Government* (Research study for Joseph Rowntree Foundation by Geoffrey Filkin with Lord Bassam, Paul Corrigan, Gerry Stoker and John Tizard, New Local Government Network, 1999)  
Study findings available from  
[www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/government/419.asp](http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/government/419.asp)
- *National Service Framework for Older People* (Department of Health, 2001)  
pdf version available from  
[www.dh.gov.uk/PublicationsAndStatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidanceArticle/fs/en?CONTENT\\_ID=4003066&chk=wg3bg0](http://www.dh.gov.uk/PublicationsAndStatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidanceArticle/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4003066&chk=wg3bg0)
- *Integrated Services for Older People: Building a Whole System Approach in England* (Audit Commission, 2004)  
Online version available from  
[www.audit-commission.gov.uk/reports/AC-REPORT.asp?CatID=ENGLISH%5EHEALTH%5ESUBJECT%5EH-AUDIT&ProdID=0CDF060-E76E-11d6-B1E3-0060085F8572](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/reports/AC-REPORT.asp?CatID=ENGLISH%5EHEALTH%5ESUBJECT%5EH-AUDIT&ProdID=0CDF060-E76E-11d6-B1E3-0060085F8572)

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- *Older People – Independence and Wellbeing* (Audit Commission, 2004)  
Online version available from [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/reports/NATIONAL-REPORT.asp?CategoryID=&ProdID=E7EB90FE-1DE9-4D09-B0E6-897A7E0EE46D](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/reports/NATIONAL-REPORT.asp?CategoryID=&ProdID=E7EB90FE-1DE9-4D09-B0E6-897A7E0EE46D)
  - *Opportunity Age* (Department for Work and Pensions, 2005)  
Online version available from [www.dwp.gov.uk/opportunity\\_age/](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/opportunity_age/)
  - Policy Studies Institute/BGOP (Conducting survey of local authorities as to how they involve older people in decision making)  
[www.psi.org.uk](http://www.psi.org.uk)
  - *Proposals for Comprehensive Performance Assessment 2005* (Audit Commission, 2005)  
Online version available from [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/reports/NATIONAL-REPORT.asp?CategoryID=&ProdID=801B5290-48D3-11d9-A881-0010B5E78136](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/reports/NATIONAL-REPORT.asp?CategoryID=&ProdID=801B5290-48D3-11d9-A881-0010B5E78136)
  - *Quality & Choice for Older People in Housing: a strategic framework* (Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions and Department of Health, 2001)  
Online version available from [www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1153619#P19\\_698](http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1153619#P19_698)
  - *Simplicity, Security & Choice – working and saving for retirement* (green paper, DWP, 2002 – incorporated into *Pensions Act 2004*)
- **improving multi-agency working**
    - *Governing Partnerships: Bridging the Accountability Gap* (Audit Commission, 2005)  
Online version available from [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/reports/NATIONAL-REPORT.asp?CategoryID=&ProdID=1CDA0FEF-E610-463c-B3F3-220F607B1A2C](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/reports/NATIONAL-REPORT.asp?CategoryID=&ProdID=1CDA0FEF-E610-463c-B3F3-220F607B1A2C)
    - Information about workings of Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, Local Strategic Partnerships and role of local authorities  
[www.neighbourhood.gov.uk](http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk)
    - *Link-Age – Developing networks of services for older people* (Department for Work and Pensions with Local Government Association and other government departments, 2004)  
Pdf version available from [www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2004/linkage/link\\_age.pdf](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2004/linkage/link_age.pdf)
    - Partnerships and role of local authorities  
[www.neighbourhood.gov.uk](http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk)
    - *Supporting people*  
National initiative from Office of the Deputy Prime Minister designed to create a working partnership of local government, service users and housing-related support agencies.  
[www.spkweb.org.uk](http://www.spkweb.org.uk)

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### **harnessing the energy, enthusiasm and skills of older people**

- Enfield Borough Council  
[www.enfield.gov.uk](http://www.enfield.gov.uk)
- Fair Shares  
[www.fairshares.org.uk](http://www.fairshares.org.uk)
- Gloucester Time Bank  
e-mail: [glostimebank@btconnect.com](mailto:glostimebank@btconnect.com)
- Gloucestershire Housing Association  
[www.gloscha.co.uk](http://www.gloscha.co.uk)
- Age Positive  
[www.agepositive.gov.uk](http://www.agepositive.gov.uk)
- Nottinghamshire senior peer mentoring  
[www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/independencenletter.pdf](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/independencenletter.pdf).

### **engaging with and involving older people**

- *Age and change: models of involvement for older people* (Carter T & Beresford P, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2000)  
[www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk)
- Age Concern National Consultation Service Pilot  
[www.ageconcern.org.uk](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk)
- The Centre for the Older Person's Agenda  
Queen Mary University College, Edinburgh  
[www.qmuc.ac.uk/opa](http://www.qmuc.ac.uk/opa)
- *Clear Voices: a good practice guide to involving older people in strategic planning and service development* (Personal Social Services Research Unit, University of Manchester, 2004)  
ISBN: 0906107997
- Community Care Needs Assessment Project  
Partnership between local authorities in the North West – examples and guidelines  
[www.ccnap.org.uk](http://www.ccnap.org.uk)
- Gloucestershire Older Person's Assembly  
[www.gopa.org.uk](http://www.gopa.org.uk)  
e-mail [info@gopa.org.uk](mailto:info@gopa.org.uk)
- Inquiry into mental health and well being in later life (Mental Health Foundation/Age Concern)  
[www.mhilli.org/inquiry/](http://www.mhilli.org/inquiry/)
- *Involving Older People in Community Care Planning: A review of initiatives* (Thornton P and Tozer R, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1994)  
Online version available from  
[www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialcare/SC59.asp](http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialcare/SC59.asp)

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- *Involving Older People – Good Practice Guidance* (Age Concern England, 2000)
- *Involving Older People in Health Developments* (King's Fund Briefing Paper 4)  
[www.kingsfund.org.uk](http://www.kingsfund.org.uk)
- *Involving Older People: Lessons in Community Planning* (Belinda Dewar, Chris Jones and Fiona O'May, The Royal Bank of Scotland Centre for the Older Person's Agenda, Queen Margaret University College, 2004)  
pdf version available from  
[www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/society/ioplcp-00.asp](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/society/ioplcp-00.asp)
- *Involving Older People Shaping Policy and Practice* Joseph Rowntree Foundation Older People's Research Programme 2000-2004 (useful guidance on engagement and involvement)  
[www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/foundations/044.asp](http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/foundations/044.asp)
- *Listening to Users of Domiciliary Care Services: Developing and Monitoring Quality Standards* (Nuffield Institute for Health, Leeds, 1997)  
[www.nuffield.leeds.ac.uk](http://www.nuffield.leeds.ac.uk)
- London Older People's Service Development Programme (NHS):  
[www.london.nhs.uk](http://www.london.nhs.uk)
- *A Meeting of Minds: Older people as research advisors* (Thornton P and Tozer R, University of York: Social Policy Research Unit, York Publishing, 1995)  
ISBN 1871713706
- Older People as Researchers  
[www.arvac.org.uk/docs/info\\_bull95e.html](http://www.arvac.org.uk/docs/info_bull95e.html)
- *Older people speaking out: developing opportunities for influence* (Patricia Thornton, York Publishing, 2000)  
Pdf available from  
[www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/1859353371.pdf](http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/1859353371.pdf)
- Online consultation and involvement, including online discussion groups and focus groups, Institute of Cultural Affairs: Training courses in involvement methodology  
[www.ica-uk.org.uk](http://www.ica-uk.org.uk)
- Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU), Direct Payments Survey  
results and good practice guidelines, to be published 2005  
[www.pssru.ac.uk/dps.htm](http://www.pssru.ac.uk/dps.htm)
- Quest net – charitable organisation dedicated to community involvement  
[www.quest-net.org](http://www.quest-net.org)

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### including specific groups of people in consultation/involvement projects

- *Finding Your Way: Explorations in Communication* (Kate Allen, Dementia Services Development Centre, University of Stirling  
[www.dementia.stir.ac.uk](http://www.dementia.stir.ac.uk)  
ISBN 1857691490
- *Getting it Right: including disabled people in communication and consultation* (Philip Cortese and Louisa Nardini, Local Authorities Research and Intelligence Association [LARIA], 2002)  
[www.laria.gov.uk](http://www.laria.gov.uk)  
ISBN 0 950678 189
- *Including the Person with Dementia in Designing and Delivering Care* (Elizabeth Barnett, Jessica Kingsley Publishers)  
[www.jkp.com](http://www.jkp.com)  
ISBN 1-85302-740-5
- PRIAE (Policy Research Institute on Ageing and Ethnicity)  
[www.priae.org](http://www.priae.org)
- Shaping Our Lives National User Network: Event access and ground rules for meetings – developed by service users  
[www.shapingourlives.org.uk](http://www.shapingourlives.org.uk)

### guidelines on consultation methods

- Active Citizenship Centre – guidelines and case studies of community participation  
[www.active-citizen.org.uk](http://www.active-citizen.org.uk)
- Beth Johnson Foundation (Trust focused on innovative and developmental work that has the potential to develop, influence and challenge the role and status of older people in society)  
[www.bjf.org.uk](http://www.bjf.org.uk)
- Consultation good practice guidelines  
[www.thecompact.org.uk](http://www.thecompact.org.uk)
- Consultation toolkit  
[www.crimereduction.gov.uk/toolkits/p031105.htm](http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/toolkits/p031105.htm)
- Review of consultation across London  
[www.london.gov.uk/mayor/consultation/past.jsp](http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/consultation/past.jsp)



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