



engaging with older people

improving the
quality of life for
older people

the older people's
shared priority



2

engaging with older people

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they stress their wish to be engaged is more than just having their rights respected and express frustration when they see money being spent without being consulted first on what is important to them, what works and what doesn't

2.1 introduction

Engaging with older people is a critical to making change happen. Repeatedly older people have said that they want to contribute, to be a part of society, and to have a role¹. They stress their wish to be engaged is more than just having their rights respected and express frustration when they see money being spent without being consulted first on what is important to them, what works and what doesn't.²

Guide 1 why bother?

Taking the lead from older people, national policy therefore increasingly emphasises the importance of engagement. This national policy emphasis – which is summarised in Guide 1 – is an important driver for change at a local level. Indeed from 2005, the Comprehensive Performance Assessment of local authorities includes consideration of how effectively they engage with older people in their decision making.

This brings new challenges to policy makers, commissioners, managers and practitioners alike, but there is limited guidance about what engagement means or 'how to do it'. This can lead to frustration as people struggle to find new approaches or, at worst, cynicism when superficial approaches are perceived as nothing more than 'box ticking'.

- ¹ Social Exclusion Unit [2006] A Sure Start to Later Life: Ending Inequalities for Older People. The Stationary Office. <http://www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk/page.asp?id=573>
Department for Communities and Local Government [2006] Together We Can Annual review 2005/06 The Stationary Office. <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1500186>
- ² Joseph Rowntree Trust [2005] Involving older people. What standards should we expect. Joseph Rowntree Trust. <http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/ebooks/>

2.2 engagement as a spectrum of activities

Traditionally engagement has meant 'consultation' and this has often focused on seeking people's views about draft policies or service strategies. It is an approach that tends to dominate where the focus of local services is constrained by the narrow lenses of [health and social care delivery](#).

Well organised consultation can, of course, be a useful way of gaining valuable insights, such as information about differing cultural perspectives or views about potential policy changes. However, a much broader view of engagement is emerging in those authorities who are developing a [community leadership approach](#).

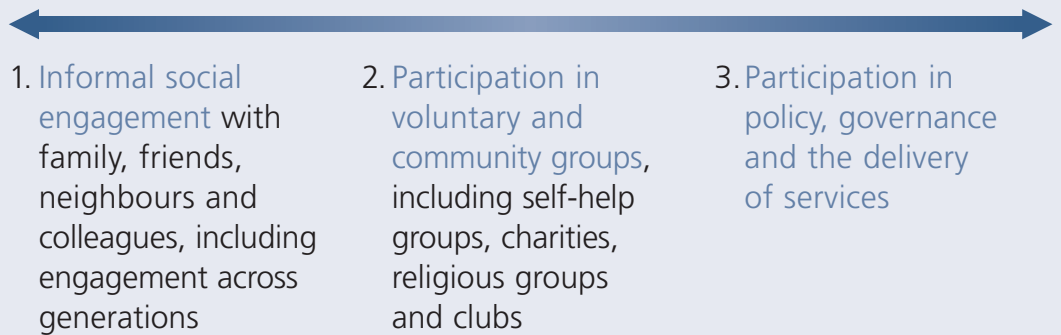
This includes consultation but also embraces the contributions that older people make to their communities. These contributions may be informal, such as supporting family, friends and neighbours. They may be organised through groups, such as 'time banks'³ or volunteer schemes. They may include direct involvement in establishing priorities and designing, developing, delivering and evaluating services. In this way engagement covers a whole spectrum of activities⁴.

³ Time Banks are schemes that allow members to 'trade' their time and skills with other members without the need for currency. For example a member may earn credit by doing childcare for one person and spend it later on carpentry with another person in the same network

⁴ Nash V [2002] Laying the ground: civic renewal and volunteering in Paxton W and Nash V [eds. 2002] Any Volunteers for the Good Society? IPPR

2.2 engagement as a spectrum of activities

A spectrum of engagement activities



This spectrum does not imply that one form of engagement is preferable. It highlights the need for local agencies to promote, enable and support engagement across the spectrum and to develop the approaches needed for each set of local circumstances.



2.3 informal engagement and participation

The choice about – and primary responsibility for – participating in community life and keeping active, lies with older people themselves. Local agencies, however, need to work with older people to unlock the potential for them to contribute. The collective task is, as a minimum, to remove the barriers that inhibit participation.

There is a clear mutuality of interest in doing this, as there is good evidence that the health, well-being and independence of older people can substantially benefit from this type of engagement. For example:

- Older people report positive impacts from learning and developing new skills. These impacts relate to their enjoyment of life, self-confidence and their ability to cope with events such as divorce or bereavement.⁵

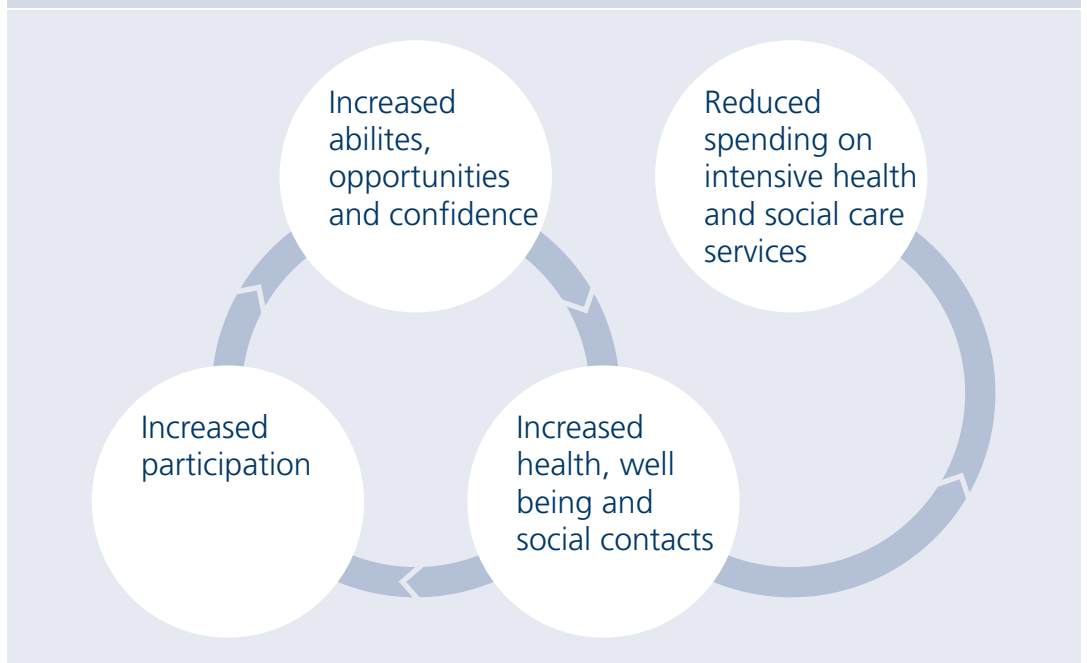
- Better health and engagement in local community life are closely correlated and can become self-reinforcing to improve well-being and boost the resilience factors that prevent a negative cycle of decline in quality of life. Indeed the positive effects on health of positive well-being have been found to be even larger than the effects from body mass, smoking and exercise. This is illustrated in the Cycle of Well-Being opposite.⁶

local agencies need to work with older people to unlock the potential for them to contribute

⁵ Department Work and Pensions [2005] Opportunity Age – Meeting the challenges of ageing in the 21st century. Stationary Office. http://www.dwp.gov.uk/opportunity_age/

2.3 informal engagement and participation

The cycle of well-being



Source: Social Exclusion Unit

An array of approaches can be taken to promote and support this informal engagement and participation, some examples are given on the following pages.

⁶ Social Exclusion Unit [2006] A Sure Start to Later Life: Ending Inequalities for Older People. The Stationary Office. Office Deputy Prime Minister. <http://www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk/page.asp?id=573> Making Life Better for Older People. An economic case for preventive services and activities. <http://www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk/downloaddoc.asp?id=810#search=%22Making%20Life%20Better%20for%20Older%20People.%20An%20economic%20case%20for%20preventive%20services%20and%20activities%20%22>

2.3 informal engagement and participation

Promoting and supporting informal engagement and participation in community groups

- ‘In Touch’ phone befriending in Camden supports housebound older people who feel isolated from the wider community: volunteers make a regular phone call to see that people are all right. An unintended consequence has been the number of older people who are now both receivers and volunteers and as a result housebound older people are now engaged with their communities.
- As part of the Local Area Agreement (LAA), Islington has commissioned a [phone friendship line](#). The aim is to bring people together in an area to support each other informally. People within a block or area will be matched and asked to contact each other to check they are well. The aim is to help people who feel isolated get to know each other and therefore offer a feeling of security. This scheme seeks to answer the question posed by older residents; ‘who can I tell if I am in trouble?’ and to bridge the generational gap.
- ‘Silver Surfers’ in Basingstoke and Deane is a national event that aims to encourage older people to gain IT skills. At these events students from local secondary schools ‘buddy’ an older person, encouraging and supporting them to access the web, send an email and gain basic IT skills. These events are an example of cross generational work and support the citizenship curriculum. They allow the students to contribute to their local community and the older people are gaining new skills as well as meeting and talking to young people. They often find they have a lot in common!

2.3 informal engagement and participation

- National Institute of Adult Continuing Learning (NIACE)⁷ has an 'older and bolder programme' specifically aimed at encouraging older residents to take part in learning. The programme has been particularly successful at encouraging older residents who may not have had educational opportunities in earlier life to engage with learning. This in turn has often led to older people engaging with other activities.
- A group of grandparents regularly met when they picked up their young grandchildren from school. They started talking and felt they could be doing more. They recognised that some young children had no contact with older people and would thus grow up with no reference point to older people and ageing. The group arranged with the Head teacher to go into schools during break times to act as role models, for the children to ask them questions and make friendships. This grew to become the trans-generational project in Islington.
- Hastings & St Leonards Seniors' Forum are working with young people on an area of work they have collectively called 'doing things together'. The focus is looking at shared issues like crime. Older people were part of the carnival float with young people at the local festival.
- The Rotary Club in Poole holds afternoon social events for older people. People attending really enjoy these and stress the benefits of getting out and meeting others.

⁷ NIACE (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education,).
http://www.niace.org.uk/research/older_bolder/Awards.htm

2.3 informal engagement and participation

- Physical activity classes have been a popular way of engaging older people in activity. These can take place in a variety of settings – for example community centres and gyms. Other means are to engage people in physical activity as part of their everyday lives. [Seaford Seniors Forum](#) worked with Seaford Community Partnership, the Town Council & voluntary groups to develop an exercise path to encourage local people to get out walking using a circular, 5 mile track with marker points. In [Calais, France](#), a group of older people meet regularly at the dog's home to walk the stray dogs. This has proved successful as people report feeling useful, having something in common with others who also like dogs, and maintaining fitness in a fun way.
- In [Thessalonica](#), Greece, the authorities have sponsored 'cafés' where older people can meet to drink coffee (subsidised prices), cook and play games. [Looking for examples from abroad can often give ideas about how minority groups would prefer to engage.]
- '[Time Banks](#)', allow members to 'trade' their time and skills with other members without the need for currency. For example a member may earn credit by doing childcare for one person and spend it later on carpentry with another person in the same network.
- [Peer Mentor Schemes](#) allow people to share skills – for example a scheme where older people are trained as computer champions who train and support others to make use of computers or older people as health trainers.

MIND YOUR HEAD



2.4 participation in policy formulation, governance and service delivery



As well as developing our approaches to informal engagement, there is also a need to improve the way older people participate in policy formulation, service delivery and governance.

Many of the issues that local agencies face cannot be resolved by the actions of services alone and the engagement of older people in the issues brings new capacities and opportunities. Information about older citizens' experiences, perspectives and needs

is indeed essential for any manager or planner when defining problems, designing and delivering solutions and monitoring effectiveness.

The level and nature of engagement in these processes can be considered using the notion of a ladder, ranging at the bottom from no engagement through to control by older people at the top. The chart opposite, based on the work of Australia's National Resource Centre for Consumer Participation in Health, illustrates this.

2.4 participation in policy formulation, governance and service delivery

The ladder of engagement

Control	The organisation asks the community to identify the problem and to make all the key decision on goals and means. It is willing to help the community at each step to accomplish goals.
Delegated control	The organisation identifies and presents a problem to the community, defines the limits and asks the community to make a series of decisions, which can be embodied in a plan it can accept.
Joint planning	The organisation presents a tentative plan subject to change and open to change from those affected. It expects to change the plan at least slightly and perhaps more substantially.
Advisory	The organisation presents a plan and invites questions. It is prepared to modify plan if absolutely necessary.
Consultative	The organisation tries to promote a plan. It seeks support to facilitate acceptance or give sufficient sanction to the plan.
Receiving information	The organisation makes a plan and announces it. The community is convened for information purposes.
None	The community not involved and change happens.

Source: Australia's National Resource Centre for Consumer Participation in Health

2.4 participation in policy formulation, governance and service delivery

Typically, where the emphasis of public services is heavily focused on [health and social care delivery](#), the approach taken tends to be lower down the continuum, with the emphasis on giving information and seeking feedback. As one older person put is 'They give us a printed document and ask us our views. What's the point, it's already set in stone.'

Greater levels of engagement tend to be reflected in organisations who are taking a [community leadership approach](#). In these cases there is greater emphasis on enabling people to understand and exercise their powers and responsibilities as citizens and on empowering them to organise through groups to work for their common good.

The approach requires agencies to involve citizens and there is an increased receptivity to the voice of older people.

A survey of local authorities in 2006 highlighted that much engagement activity continues to focus on the former approach, following traditional models of relaying and collecting information through literature, surveys and meetings, which require more passive, rather than active, engagement. It notes, however, that older people's forums are growing in popularity.⁸

older people's
forums are growing
in popularity

⁸ Policy Services Institute and Better Government for Older People [2006] Census Survey to collect baseline information on existing engagement activity with older citizens

2.4 participation in policy formulation, governance and service delivery

Policy Studies Institute and BGOP Survey of Local Authority Engagement

- Most activity was focused on service users [or potential service users], rather than more broadly on older people as citizens. Further engagement with older people was, however, a priority for most authorities and older people's forums existed in three quarters of the respondent areas.
- Fewer than half of respondents indicated they provided training or support to help older people engage, although most had a dedicated budget to fund older people's groups or buy in services such as Age Concern's Voice and Choices Programme. This approach can, however, mean those people who do not see themselves as 'older' become excluded from engagement by default.
- The most common forms of engagement related to newsletters and user feedback surveys and the least common were involvement of older citizens in the delivery of services and the use of older citizens as mentors or inspectors.
- Early findings on levels of engagement indicate that being engaged in one activity acts as a trigger for people to become engaged with other activities.

2.4 participation in policy formulation, governance and service delivery

As illustrated by the following, new models are beginning to emerge around different ways of engaging with older people in policy formulation and governance.

Brighton and Hove Older People's Council

Brighton and Hove Older People's Council (OPC) is the first directly elected group of its kind in the country and builds on a Danish model to offer a new way of enabling older people to have a voice in the decisions that have most impact on their lives. The OPC is made up of nine older people, each representing a zone of the city. Members are elected by older people in Brighton and Hove to represent their interests. The first elections took place in June 2003. 42,000 older people in the city registered to vote, of whom almost half voted in the election, giving members of the Older People's Council a strong mandate. The work of the OPC covers the range of issues that are most important to older people. There is growing evidence that their contribution is making a difference. For example, the needs and aspirations of older people are now routinely considered when decisions are made on planning and regeneration.

2.4 participation in policy formulation, governance and service delivery

Basingstoke and Dean over 55s Forum

Set up in 2004 as a direct response to feedback from residents during the development of the borough wide Strategy 'Promoting Quality of Life for Older People' the Basingstoke and Deane [over 55s Forum](#) is going from strength to strength. With over 300 members, the Forum enables local people to have a say in matters that affect them. The Forum is listening to its members and is involved in:

- The Older Persons' Partnership Board, a sub group of Basingstoke and Deane Local Strategic Partnership.
- Supporting the development and delivery of 55Plus See on-line version at www.basingstoke.gov.uk/55Plus and the 55live line 01256 845 555.
- International Day for Older People: arranging 'Young at Heart' event with a chance to have a go at a range of activities.
- Silver Surfers – where local students mentor and support an older person to acquire computer skills.
- A catalyst for engagement e.g. with the Taxi Federation.

2.4 participation in policy formulation, governance and service delivery

Manchester Valuing Older People Initiative (VOP)

Manchester Valuing Older People Initiative (VOP) has placed older people at the centre of its programme of work in the following ways:

- Fifteen older people make up the VOP Board, which holds local agencies to account, sets priorities and monitors progress.
- Members of the Board and other older residents sit on the dozen VOP task groups, working closely with officers from statutory and community organisations.
- VOP has also developed networks in four areas of the city, which bring together front-line staff, community groups and older people to develop local plans and projects and promote local activities and opportunities.



2.4 participation in policy formulation, governance and service delivery

Engagement in delivery: 'co-production'

There is an emerging recognition in the public sector that engagement with customers entails activity beyond local community involvement, consultation or general volunteering. Organisations working with citizens in a 'whole system' approach seek to involve citizens to

- Actively establish priorities
- Devise plans
- Develop and design plans
- Deliver services
- Monitor and evaluate processes and outcomes

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contribute

There are many benefits of enabling older people, who are often considered as receivers, to become contributors. Rather than simply assisting public services to gain a better insight about how services can be delivered, older citizens themselves often welcome the opportunity to actively contribute. Service providers can also gain real insights into the lives of customers through working together. In this sense, the customer becomes the service provider, changing the status quo of the provider and the customer. In local government in particular, citizens can assist with the delivery of services and can also participate in performance evaluation and accountability by being closely involved in monitoring and evaluating the outcomes they have helped to prioritise locally.

2.4 participation in policy formulation, governance and service delivery

Services are not neatly demarcated between agencies and sectors. Rather a variety of interlocking services are responsible for different aspects of the same problems. 'Co-production' acknowledges this and goes further to demonstrate that there is no real divide between public sector agencies and customers. The customer insight it provides is therefore reciprocal, enabling partnerships between professionals and clients that respect what both sides can provide. This approach requires systems to broaden out their definition of work and to allow people who are normally the object of services to be actively engaged in providing mutual support. The kind of activities that are creating benefits are typically simple and informal – like picking up a prescription or going for a walk – things that don't require elaborate



planning, high levels of investment, specialist skills or qualifications. It is hard to make them the subject of performance targets, yet research indicates that this kind of work may have disproportionate value in terms of health promotion and illness prevention.

2.4 participation in policy formulation, governance and service delivery

Co-production in Peckham

Jessie and Coral are both retired and in their 70s. One is West Indian and the other is Nigerian and they offer health advice and information to local residents through a health bus run by the Cares of Life (CoLP) in Peckham. CoLP is one of a number of community initiatives supported by South London and Maudsley NHS Trust designed to encourage the uptake of mental health services by the local Afro-Caribbean population. They are not in paid work, but they are nonetheless carrying out vital activity.⁹

⁹. From 'Natural Resources: Older People At Home Alone'. One of three essays commissioned as part of the New Economic Foundation's Co-production research project, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation



2.5 making it happen

A number of guiding principles are emerging among practitioners, which have been influenced by Joseph Rowntree's standards for involving older people.¹⁰

Emerging principles

- 'Engagement' should be a **method of working from start to finish**, thus constituting a mainstream activity in all work.
- Older people need to have a clear say in **setting the agenda**.
- Older people need to be **represented in sufficient numbers** – for example at least one third of those attending a meeting – to avoid the risk of people feeling isolated or the meeting being dominated by one person's views.
- Engagement requires a **shift in attitudes**, particularly about the nature of power and the shaping of aims and objectives: 'who's to say and whose to judge if it is achieved?'
- For engagement to be sustainable it must **focus upon action and be goal orientated**, especially if engagement is seen as tackling a sense of dependency and powerlessness.
- A **range of approaches** need to be employed. Engagement is much more than a set piece committee meeting: in its broadest sense it is about people feeling they belong.

¹⁰ Joseph Rowntree Foundation [2005] Involving Older People. What Standards should we expect. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. <http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/ebooks/>

2.5 making it happen

The way these principles are put into practice will vary: local agencies need to develop their own approaches, suited to their local circumstances, but needless to say, it is essential to engage with, and work with, older people in finding the right approach. The following points highlight the experiences and learning of a number of authorities.

A. Know your population

- **Analyse data.** It is essential to understand your population. In its simplest terms this means understanding the size of the older population in relation to total population, the age breakdown of the older population by gender and ethnicity. Subsequent mapping of the population, allows authorities to analyse the match with those local resources older people say are important, including for example access to shops and markets, life long learning facilities, clubs, leisure facilities, parks, public toilets etc.

The Public Health department is a helpful starting point in understanding of the local population and the factors impacting on its well being.

MAIDeN (<http://www.maiden.gov.uk>) is a model for collating statistics, initially developed by local information officers in Gloucestershire County Council. It uses over 350 local themes from 14 partner organisations. The collated and analysed data is made available to all statutory and community services in the county.

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2.5 making it happen

- Learn by asking older people what they think.

Islington commissioned a survey of the local population who were aged 55 and over about living in the borough. The results emphasised that older people did not think in terms of services. They highlighted a feeling of not being engaged in the life of the borough. As a result service planners began to emphasise ways of changing the culture of the borough to be more inclusive and customer focused.

- Use existing data from other surveys and reviews. Often different departments in Councils and PCT's have carried out surveys – for example Best Value Reviews. While they may not have been exclusively focused on older people, they often contain the views of older residents. A common complaint by older people is being asked the same questions repeatedly: save their time and yours by gathering information from others first.

B. Ensure effective representation

- Work with all groups of older people. Work with people who are already regularly involved, because they care and feel they have a point to make but build on this base to widen out opinions. Draw in others – not just the most confident, articulate and vociferous, or those with specific agendas.

Shropshire County Council regularly review the members of their forums to ensure that no individuals or groups are dominant. They also make on-going efforts to widen the pool of 'active' participants by using Age Concern for training. Nonetheless they are keen to ensure concerns about representative involvement do not risk excluding people.

Thurrock Council worked with black and ethnic minority citizens aged 50+ on determining service requirements based on information about the communities collected as part of their second pilot project for the Audit Commission's Area Profiles.

2.5 making it happen

- **Find the more demanding, assertive older citizens.** Some local authorities believe that an absence of more demanding, assertive older citizens is limiting the effectiveness of older people's involvement. Whilst there has been considerable national government and media commentary about an increasing number of more demanding and assertive older people with rising aspirations, this is not particularly apparent. As a result there is felt to be insufficient push for change from older people themselves. A key contributory reason is thought to be that the newer, more challenging older citizen does not in fact perceive themselves as 'old'.

- **Sustain involvement.** Involvement fatigue can set in if there are no obvious successes. Some quick wins are helpful. Clarifying the role of participants, setting clear goals and managing expectations are also beneficial in this context.

London Borough of Camden found that over-involvement can lead to poor quality feedback so they try to ensure older people are not overloaded. They also explain to people that they are 'on a journey' and should not expect change overnight.

an absence of more demanding, assertive older citizens is limiting the effectiveness of older people's involvement

2.5 making it happen

C. Build capacity

- Develop knowledge and confidence among older people.

Several local authorities have accessed the voluntary sector as a valuable resource in terms of building the knowledge and skills of older people in planning and decision making. Shropshire County Council, for example, has used Age Concern to strengthen the capacity of older people on its older people's forums. They have shared policy approaches with participants and trained them in how best to engage. However, full-on management and active steering of the Forums has been avoided since it is judged likely to inhibit objective input from older citizens.

- Develop an effective and sustainable funding strategy. Initial seed funding is important to get groups and forums up and running. Conversely however, continuous Council funding can jeopardise the independence of forums and restrict their ability to say and do what they want.

Manchester City Council's VOP initiative set up a specific fund to provide small grants for community groups wanting to promote older people's involvement in community activities.

Shropshire set up their forums as a charity, enabling them to remain independent and to trade and raise funds in their own right.

East Sussex provided set-up money for their older people's forums as well as for training and establishing countywide engagement mechanisms, but intends to concentrate on-going support in relation to fundraising.

2.5 making it happen

D. Ensure good access to information

- Use imaginative ways of getting information to older people.

People often say it is difficult to reach older people because 'we don't know where they live'. The key is to involve the whole system: different partners will regularly reach different sections of the older population, for example social landlords will reach older tenants and transport planners will have lists of people with concessionary travel permits. By building a strong partnership with a range of organisations, information can be filtered more effectively to older people.

Be imaginative, the 'data protection act' is not there to excuse you from contacting older people.

In Islington the Quality of Life Partnership Steering Group decided it wanted to launch its strategy by contacting all residents aged 55+. As the partnership included the PCT's health promotion service, it was possible to access PCT data as a part of a health promotion activity. This resulted in 17,000 older residents being given contact details for the strategy, being asked to engage by volunteering in an 'Islington needs you!' survey and sent a 'signposting leaflet', which has been written by older readers and library staff.

Other examples include: working with voluntary sector partners and good neighbour schemes; using the concessionary travel data bases, accessing the local radio and press, linking up with the fire brigade, using posters and leaflets on Parish Council notice boards, GP surgeries, in supermarkets ... and don't forget word of mouth.

Guide 3
working as a
whole system

2.5 making it happen

- **Provide quality information about engagement opportunities.**

The London Borough of Camden invested in good quality literature to explain what they were doing to engage older people and to make sure they reached the right audiences. Professional marketing tools have been employed to ensure that older people are aware and informed about the variety of opportunities for involvement. At the same time it has been found important to control the amount of information communicated since too much can be confusing.

- **Use information to empower older people.** The provision of information can be used to empower older people and engage them more actively in making decisions and choices about service and resource options. A data-based picture of local older people can inform not only service providers, but older people themselves.

This increases capacity to make informed choices about their well-being and quality of life. Such data is vital if older people are to be involved in decision making about service delivery.

Kent County Council has introduced an electronic self-assessment system for people with lower levels of need. It is designed to provide them with the necessary information to assess their own eligibility and help them decide which of a range of services they may be entitled to, such as adaptations to their home and day care services. Following the assessment, citizens are able to make use of 'client cards' which give them control over service selection and a channel to pay for their own care packages.

2.5 making it happen

- **Make use of older people as an information resource.** Older people have experience, knowledge and expertise to commission and deliver services that help support and improve their well-being. However, this level of involvement is a real challenge to encourage, manage and have accepted by existing providers. Training and ongoing support is required. Quick successes are needed to evidence quality, value and effectiveness.

Word of mouth is a powerful means of communicating with older people. People tend to receive most relevant information face to face through informal networks of family and friends and it most people's preferred channel of communication.

One Council recently invested significant money on press and bus posters advertising a free telephone installation and line rental service for older people on low incomes. Subsequent research showed these advertisements received very low awareness and message recall. The large majority of people accessing the service had learnt about the initiative through word of mouth.

older people have
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deliver services

2.5 making it happen

A useful tool is to identify and use trusted third parties as advocates to disseminate information to older people, especially harder to reach and more isolated groups. There are a broad range of people, young and old, who can be used as 'sign posters' for the community including hospital night staff, church committee members, retired head teachers, carers, health and social workers, and transport drivers. There is also evidence of people wanting to interact with older people, but not having the training to do so. Therefore there is the opportunity to build capacity and use these people as communicators.

Camden's 'Networker' programme of older volunteers pass information on healthy living, mental health and social care issues by word of mouth to older people with mental health problems. They also provide practical help such as making phone calls to people with memory problems to remind them about hospital appointments and medication.

- **Develop joined-up information systems.** Older people benefit significantly in being able to access information from one source. There are many good examples of single access points by phone, face to face and Internet. However, there is a need to work in a more whole systems way with partner organisations to share both the content and medium of information provision.

2.5 making it happen

Manchester City Council provides an information directory for older people in hard format and on-line, 'Directory of Data Sources Relating to Older People's Health, Well-being & Quality of Life in Manchester'. This covers data available across the council and its partner agencies relevant to neighbourhood renewal, NHS, local authorities, the community and voluntary sector and older people themselves.

Portsmouth City Council works with Angel Radio, a local radio station that has an older target audience, to train older people to become programme presenters, and co-ordinate health and social care information included on programmes.

Islington held a community safety information event at the local shopping centre on a Saturday. This brought together all the partners involved in the different aspects of safety to run a stall: Physiotherapists (falls); trading standards (doorstep selling); Fire brigade (fire safety); police (bogus callers); victim support; PCT (health promotion). Over 300 older people accessed the stall in a morning as it was located where they normally shop.

- [Involve older people in collecting data and responses to findings.](#) Older people themselves can participate in gathering information, for instance through running discussion groups or conducting surveys. In this way they come to own the data rather than it being the result of something done to them. It can also be an inducement to their involvement in pushing for change in response to the findings.

2.5 making it happen

E. Communicate well

- **Understand how to communicate effectively.** The Central Office of Information's (COI) Common Good research project amongst older people, 'Communicating with Older People'¹¹ (2006), was designed to develop an understanding of how government can communicate more effectively with older people.

The research highlighted that older people usually ignore age references, but are receptive to more subtle allusions that contextualise people such as time-period linked music and historical events.

Older people deal with life as a series of events; gains and losses such as loss of employment, bereavement, caring for a partner, or more trips to the doctor. These are predominantly issue-related, not age related, and as such are not fixed but fluid, with people moving in and out of various stages. The COI developed a number of segments based on the different ways people deal with these gains and losses.

Information provided around key events is the most likely to engage older people, meet real needs and minimise risks of social exclusion. However, the information needs of each segment are very different, highlighting the need for discrete rather than mass targeting of communications.

¹¹ Central Office of Information [2006] Good research project amongst older people, 'Communicating with Older People' (2006), www.commongoodresearch.gov.uk/olderpeople
Burt, A. 'Shock of the Old: is local government communications failing the over 50s?' IDeA, 2005 www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idh/aio/337451
Local Government Association (2004) 'Communications in local government. A survey of local authorities 2004' www.lga.gov.uk/Documents/Publication/commsinlgsurvey.pdf

2.5 making it happen

- **Use Positive imagery and humour.** Negative stereotypes prevent engagement and positive imagery is needed to help shift stereotypical views. Humour helps to engage, there are some good examples of local authorities making efforts to generate such positive imagery.

Nottinghamshire County Council sponsored a 'Positive Images of Older People' photography project. The images submitted show a wide variety of older people as contributors to society through voluntary work. Mobile exhibitions of the photographs have been hired out for local events and a series of postcards developed and widely circulated to volunteer bureaux, libraries and other community facilities to promote volunteering and the positive contribution older people make to their community.

Manchester City Council launched a 'Positive Images of Ageing' campaign and now has a comprehensive picture reference library of positive images that can be used for communications. They produce an annual calendar, 'Growing older with attitude in Manchester' featuring a selection of these photographs.

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