

Older People Needs Assessment

Chapter 6

Service User Feedback

1. Introduction

This section brings together feedback from Older People using key national findings and information collected at a local level.

2. National Research

2.1 Housing Choices and Aspirations of Older People

This was commissioned by the Department for Communities and Local Government to inform the “Strategy for housing in an ageing society”, the results were published in February 2008. Researchers undertook eight focus groups composed of ‘younger’ older people (aged 48 to 64), and ‘older’ old people (aged 65 and above) to explore the influences on participants’ housing decisions, and their future housing intentions and aspirations. The groups included the following participants:

- 49 individuals participated;
- 21 men and 28 women.
- 29 participants were aged between 48 and 64, and
- 20 were aged 65 and over.
- The oldest participant was 82.
- 24 participants lived alone, and
- 25 lived with their partner or other family members.

The groups were located in different parts of England, including rural, urban and suburban areas; covering owner occupiers, those renting within the social and private rented sectors, older people with disabilities, older people from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, and older lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.

The key findings are summarised below:

Reasons for Moving House

Most participants expressed their determination to stay where they were currently living for as long as possible. However, most also acknowledged that it would be their health that would be the deciding factor if they were to move in the future.

Almost all those who had or were in the process of moving or had moved more recently were to a greater or lesser extent experiencing health problems of one type or another, most usually mobility problems.

Future intentions

Participants were generally reluctant to consider what steps they might take now to make life easier in the future. Most felt their current homes could be successfully adapted if necessary, although wheelchair access would be problematic, but very few had made any significant changes to their homes in preparation for later life. Many felt that it was impossible to plan for future uncertainties, and that they could make any necessary adaptations if and when the need arose.

However some older participants stressed the importance of considering housing options, and if necessary moving, when you are young enough to cope with moving.

Those who had moved said they had been determined to make a deliberate choice to move to a particular place, rather than be forced to move when they might not have the capacity to look at different alternatives.

Most people, whether or not they themselves intended to draw on the equity in their homes, were supportive of the principle of equity release especially if people did not have pensions, or family who would inherit.

Housing options for older people

Some participants, particularly those from the Asian community, would welcome better independent advice about the range of housing options available to them.

Most people thought that bungalows are the best option for older people because of their perceived accessibility. Two bedrooms were seen as a minimum requirement for most people, as well as having reasonable space standards for the whole dwelling. Good access to local services and transport links was also essential.

Few people spoke about the potential role of assistive technologies or the possibility of home care. The older disabled participants, however, had some experience of home care and were concerned about the quality of care. They noted a lack of support services that would generally make their lives easier, for example, help with small household repairs.

Generally sheltered housing was seen as a “good thing”, but only really necessary for the very old or for those who were infirm. Sheltered housing was seen to be a more attractive option than a care home. Those participants who lived in sheltered housing appreciated the combination of independence and security.

Very few people had heard of extra care housing, although some had heard of retirement communities and villages, usually through media reports. People generally had very low opinions of care homes. Their views were informed by the experience of visiting people, but also by negative media reports that highlighted cases of abuse or neglect.

Future care and housing was a concern for the older lesbians and gay men. Most felt that they would want to stay in their own homes and receive home care due to concerns about possible homophobic attitudes among staff and other residents in specialist housing or care homes.

2.2 New Deal for Carers

The 1999 national strategy on carers is currently being updated, as part of the strategy development, the Government commissioned Opinion Leader to conduct an engagement programme with adult and young carers, professionals involved in implementing policy and members of the public. The engagement programme with adults involves an online and paper based Ideas Tree, a series of 9 regional events with 50 carers attending each event and two national 150 people deliberative events.

The overall aim of the first stage of the adult carers' research is to understand what would make the biggest difference to carers' lives both in their role as a carer and in their lives outside caring.

The early findings from this engagement exercise are included in this section, which includes 6 of the 9 regional events. The regional events were conducted in September and October and included carers that reflected a range of age, type of carer, ethnic background and length of time caring.

The key issues and suggestions emerging from the regional events and the online ideas tree are as follows:

Physical and Emotional - Providing a caring role places considerable physical and emotional pressure on carers and many would like to see an increase in the provision of emotional support for carers.

Respite Care - The lack of availability and flexibility of respite services is an issue which is frequently mentioned by carers. Carers would like increased respite provision for carers so that they can have a break from the physical and emotional impacts of caring. There is also a requirement for the respite facilities to be flexible to carers' needs

Information - Carers believe that there needs to be improved access to information regarding the provision of support for carers. Many carers were unaware of the range of support services available for them and their entitlements. Some carers called for a carers' pack to be given to all carers when they become a carer and for a centralised website which has information on the range of issues which affect them.

Responsiveness - Many carers experience long delays in receiving help and support from statutory agencies after their needs have been assessed. These delays can have a major impact on carers' health, wellbeing and finances. Carers would like to receive timely help and support to be made available to them.

Continuity of Care - Many carers experience inconsistencies in the care provided for them. This can lead to the cared for person becoming distressed when 'strangers' provide personal care for them. Carers would like systems to be put in place to ensure that care provided to them is as consistent as possible with as few key care workers providing care as possible.

Bureaucracy - Carers perceive that they experience a considerable amount of bureaucracy in their role as a carer. This takes up much of their valuable time and adds to the pressure that they face. The main areas where carers want action are in the streamlining of benefits forms, and the simplification and streamlining of information sharing about the person they are caring for with and between health and social care professionals.

Financial Wellbeing - Most carers become financially worse off once they take on the role of a carer. This is due to a fall in income from carers giving up work or reducing the hours of paid work and a rise in expenditure from looking after the person they care for. The two initiatives which would make the most difference to

carers' financial wellbeing are improving the level of the Carer's Allowance and paying the allowance to all carers regardless of income, savings and employment status, and providing additional funding to help with the additional costs faced by carers

Access to Employment - Having the opportunity to be able to go to work is perceived to be very important by many carers, both in terms of the opportunity to improve carers' financial status and the social and emotional benefits of work. Two initiatives which would facilitate carers gaining employment are ensuring that employers provide flexible working for carers, and allowing carers to work without losing benefits.

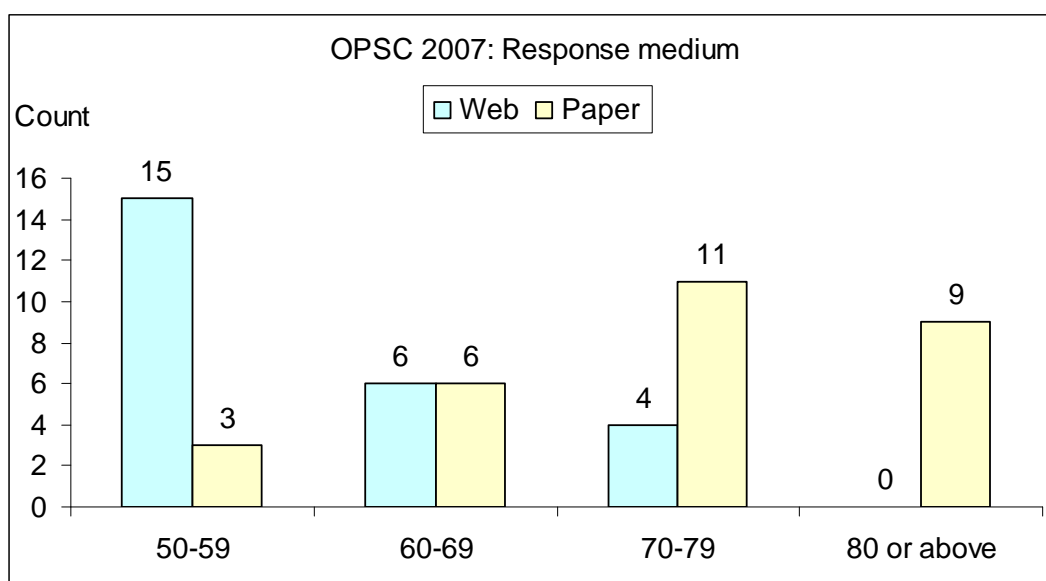
Recognition - Carers would like more recognition of the role that they play as a carer, in particular by the general public, health and social care professionals and employers. Carers want to be valued and respected by society for the job that they do, they want health and social care professionals to recognise their expertise in providing for the person they are caring for and for employers to be more flexible in their approach to employing and retaining carers.

3. Local Research

3.1 Older Peoples' Strategy Consultation 2007

Background

Consultation for the North Somerset Older Persons Strategy was conducted between July 9 and September 28, 2007. In total there were 110 Responses received from people aged 50 and over. Responses were received via the web or submission of a paper questionnaire. The following table shows the method used, by age group and may give an indication of preferred communication method at different ages:



Respondents were asked to comment on the Council's 7 strategic objectives:

- Improving Health
- Improved Quality of Life
- Making a positive contribution
- Exercising Choice and Control
- Freedom from Discrimination
- Economic Well-being
- Personal Dignity

The following tables under each heading show the ranking given to pre determined priorities. Respondents were also given the opportunity to comment on any aspect they wished to. The results of the consultation are as follows:

Improving health

| Order | Details | Score |
|--------------|--|--------------|
| 1 | To better connect and co-ordinate health and social services for older adults and carers in North Somerset | 3.54 |
| 2 | To provide services and support for older people to manage their health conditions themselves: | 3.22 |
| 3 | Identify how older people and their carers can be supported to stay active and how the council can support this. | 3.01 |
| 4 | Make access to council services and facilities for older people and disabled people a priority | 2.91 |
| 5 | To work with the Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership to improve services for adults and older people with mental health difficulties, their families and carers | 2.2 |

Other Comments

34 respondents added issues that they felt were not covered in the above priority list, this included:

- 9 comments were made in relation to access to services, out of hours, suggesting wider availability of one stop shop / healthy living centres and having services where people go (such as mental health worker / counsellor at sports venues, or health consultations at pharmacies).
- 3 comments were made in relation to better, more appropriate access to transport – both in rural areas but also within urban areas – direct to sporting locations.
- Promotion of opportunities for self care and self management, (4 comments),
- Better Joint working between agencies and with the voluntary sector (3 comment)
- Services to address loneliness (2 comments)
- Better information (4 comments)
- Cost of services (1) and lack of resources from statutory agencies (4)
- Dislike of contact from social services were mentioned by 2 people.

Improved Quality of Life

The following table shows significant support for community and subsidised transport schemes.

| Order | Details | Ranking |
|--------------|--|----------------|
| 1 | Focus on the transport needs of older people particularly subsidised schemes for rural areas and community transport schemes | 5.07 |
| 2 | Encourage leisure centres to develop more programmes and activities focusing on older people | 3.85 |
| 3 | Develop a strategy within the crime and drugs partnership to promote projects which encourage older and younger generations to work together to develop trust and respect | 3.82 |
| 4 | Work in partnership so that neighbourhoods feel cleaner, safer and greener by tackling litter, graffiti, abandoned vehicles and fly tipping by using the new enforcement powers alongside better education | 3.53 |
| 5 | Work with schools to explore the potential for older people to become involved in joint schemes to raise awareness of recycling and green issues | 3.28 |
| 6 | Continue to work with developers to make sure that all future developments in the district are sustainable | 2.71 |

11 comments were received in relation to transport, these included the following:

- Improve public transport directly to such things as the gym or theatre
- Improve accessibility for those with poor mobility (seats at bus stop, low steps)
- Transport needs to be affordable and reliable
- Transport at times that it is needed, reduced services at the moment after 7pm

Good neighbour support was mentioned by 3 people who commented that it is the small things that matter, informal support networks in the community can be a real help. Loneliness and isolation were also mentioned. One person suggested more drop-in centres, day centres, etc. for lonely older people.

Making a Positive Contribution.

The following table shows the ranking given to the pre determined priorities:

| Order | Details | Ranking |
|--------------|--|----------------|
| 1 | In all future strategies ensure that issues raised by older people are specifically reported and solutions identified where possible | 3.43 |
| 2 | Work with older people and their organisations to improve the involvement of older people in developing policies and services | 3.29 |
| 3 | Working with the community and voluntary sector and | 3.13 |

| | | |
|---|--|-------------|
| | council directorates to increase the volunteering opportunities for older people | |
| 4 | To undertake consultation with older people on the best way for the council to consult with them in the future | 3.07 |
| 5 | Work with local organisations to identify best practice and practical solutions to assist those older people and carers who want to continue or get employment | 2.79 |

Comments received covered the following:

- Ensure access for isolated groups
- Ensure clear feedback mechanisms
- Use Plain English
- Find ways to increase opportunities for Older volunteers
- Improve attitudes to older people (including Council Staff)

Exercise of Choice and Control

The following table shows the ranking given to the pre determined priorities:

| Order | Details | Ranking |
|--------------|---|----------------|
| 1 | To take into account, when developing the council's customer access policies and services, older people's preferences for traditional communication methods | 3.85 |
| 2 | The council will work with independent-sector providers to improve the information about the range and quality of services used by people who fund their own care | 3.08 |
| 3 | To work with partners to explore how learning and education for older people on computers and electronic communication can be improved | 3.06 |
| 4 | To continue to explore ways of developing the mobile library service, community cafes and other access points to council information services | 2.87 |
| 5 | To give focus to developing and extending the opportunity for self-directed support schemes in North Somerset - these are new ways of offering people more choice and control over services | 2.73 |

Comments received covered the following points:

- Some older people want solutions presented to them. They do not want the effort of seeking out information and taking action on their own behalf.
- Need help to participate, suggest the use of a named contact person that can help with any area of concern, form filling, understanding what is available.
- Provide better information
- Use Plain English

Freedom from Discrimination or Harassment

The following table shows the ranking given to the pre determined priorities:

| Order | Details | Ranking |
|--------------|--|----------------|
| 1 | To work across agencies to continue to raise awareness of and provide an effective safeguarding service for all vulnerable adults | 3.83 |
| 2 | Undertake work to identify and tackle the numbers of older people experiencing harassment in North Somerset | 3.61 |
| 3 | Work with organisations to identify where there may be unfair treatment and discrimination being experienced by older people in contact with the council, and develop actions to tackle this | 3.41 |
| 4 | In the life-time of the older people strategy, work on and produce an "Age Equality Scheme" for the council | 2.57 |
| 5 | Undertake work to identify as accurately as possible the current numbers and needs of older people from black and other minority ethnic groups working with the race equality forum | 2.29 |

The following points were made under this section:

- People in general are ageist
- Experience of anti gay attitudes
- There should be better monitoring in Care Homes to protect vulnerable people
- People need help, as they get older, to access services (understand the bureaucracy, form filling, what is available and how to access)

Economic Well-being

The following table shows the ranking given to the pre determined priorities:

| Order | Details | Ranking |
|--------------|---|----------------|
| 1 | To work with organisations providing advice about money and support to older people to develop a strategy for improving advice and information to people in low incomes just above benefit levels and who fund their own care | 2.91 |
| 2 | To continue to make older people aware of the existence of council tax benefit and seek ways to improve the claiming process | 2.71 |
| 3 | Work with organisations working with older people to gain advice from older people themselves on how it could be easier for them to access benefits | 2.59 |
| 4 | Through the older people housing strategy, develop plans to address the issue of housing disrepair, and continue to raise awareness and information about tackling winter fuel poverty | 1.76 |

With a ranking of 1.76, tackling disrepair and fuel poverty has received the least support of all areas.

The following comments were made in relation to this area:

- Forms are complex and need simplification
- More help and advice needed, eg
 - employment options,

- help to claim benefits,
- request for a named contact person to help with queries
- Improved information about financial assistance
- Benefit resources are limited (pension, carers allowance)
- Remove means testing for benefits

Personal Dignity

The following table shows the ranking given to the pre determined priorities:

| Order | Priority Area | Ranking |
|--------------|--|----------------|
| 1 | To look at how more services can be provided for older people living alone in isolation | 3.06 |
| 2 | To make sure that funding from central government keeps pace with the increased demand on adult social services arising from the increasing number of older people over 80 in North Somerset | 2.92 |
| 3 | To look at how new technology can help older people to remain living at home | 2.27 |
| 4 | Review the existing carers' strategy in relation to older carers to make sure the needs of all carers are being met by existing policies and services | 2.21 |

Again comments were made in relation to attitudes of staff to older people and the suggestion for more information, help with benefits and an identified contact.

Specific service areas mentioned were the long waiting time for Occupational Therapy and more resources for carers.

Summary of comments made by Carers

6 Respondents identified themselves as Carers as follows:

- 3 were aged 50-59,
- 2 were 60-69
- 1 Over 80 years of age

Other comments are shown below (where the same person repeated a comment in more than one section, it is only referenced once in the table below:

| Comment | People |
|---|---------------|
| Improved Access to Financial Help | 3 |
| Attitudes to Older People | 4 |
| More Services (Drop in centres, Meals, Care link) | 2 |
| Not wanting statutory (LA) involvement | 2 |

Summary of Overall Comments

The request for increased support received the greatest amount of overall comment, most commenting on the need for help with accessing services or completing forms. Others mentioned the need for more support for those leaving hospital and isolated people in the community.

Issues relating to transport, access and volunteering were the next largest grouping of comments. These are summarised as follows:

Transport - Affordability and frequency/coverage were the main points made. Comments were also made in relation to improving mobility standards and introducing routes direct to leisure facilities.

Volunteering – Information for organisations and introduce ways to encourage more opportunities for volunteering along with a request to value the contribution made by volunteers.

Access – comments related to a wider geographic spread of services, out of hours services, improving speed to access to services when needed and provision for those that do not leave their home.

Other key subject areas were as follows:

- Better information about what is available
- Concern about attitudes of staff to older people
- Issues around financial assistance and affordability
- Significant support for developing or expanding good neighbour schemes

3.2 Older People Housing Strategy

The following summarises feedback received in the North Somerset Older People Housing Strategy:

Information / Communication

- Documents should be written in plain English and as short as possible
- Communication of information can be done via the parish magazines or the village newsletter/booklets.

Service Gaps

- Help with gardening and odd jobs would help promote independence
- Older people can get very isolated and depressed and are often housebound due to limited mobility.
- There is a need for flexible accommodation, and for 2 bedroom accommodation
- Affordable housing should be available to 'local' older people, smaller private housing and bungalows just do not become available.

Other Comments

- Concern was raised about the standard of care in some nursing/residential homes, requesting that all care homes maintain a quality of care well above the minimum standard.

Service User Feedback - Summary

Housing Aspirations

1. Individuals, on the whole want to stay where they were currently living for as long as possible.
2. A persons health is likely to be the deciding factor if they were to move in the future.
3. Most felt their current homes could be successfully adapted if necessary, but very few had made any significant changes to their homes in preparation for later life.
4. Bungalows were felt to be the best option for older people because of their perceived accessibility.
5. Two bedrooms were seen as a minimum requirement for most people, as well as having reasonable space standards for the whole dwelling.
6. Good access to local services and transport links was also essential.
7. Support services that would generally make their lives easier, such as help with small household repairs would be beneficial.
8. Sheltered housing was seen to be a more attractive option than a care home.
9. Very few people had heard of extra care housing, although some had heard of retirement communities and villages.
10. People generally had very low opinions of care homes.

Carers

11. Many Carers would like to see an increase in the provision of emotional support for them to access.
12. Carers would like increased and flexible respite provision, so that they can have a break from the physical and emotional impacts of caring.
13. Improved access to information about support for carers is needed. Some carers called for a carers' pack and for a centralised website which has information on the range of issues which affect them.
14. Carers would like to receive timely help and support to be made available to them.
15. Carers would consistency of care, with as few key care workers as possible.
16. The streamlining of benefits forms, and better information sharing about the person being cared for with and between health and social care professionals was seen as important to carers.
17. Help with the additional costs faced by carers was also seen as important to financial wellbeing.
18. Flexible working arrangements for carers would help in securing and maintaining employment.
19. Carers also stated that they want to be valued and respected by society for the job that they do.

Older Peoples' Strategy Consultation 2007

Carers Comment

20. Improved Access to Financial Help
21. Improve staff attitudes to Older People
22. Provide more Services (Drop in centres, Meals, Care link)
23. Not all people want statutory (LA) involvement

Overall Comments

24. The request for increased support received the greatest amount of overall comment, most commenting on the need for help with accessing services or completing forms. Others mentioned the need for more support for those leaving hospital and isolated people in the community.
25. **Transport** - Affordability and frequency/coverage were the main points made. Comments were also made in relation to improving mobility standards and introducing routes direct to leisure facilities.
26. **Volunteering** – Information for organisations and introduce ways to encourage more opportunities for volunteering along with a request to value the contribution made by volunteers.
27. **Access** – comments related to a wider geographic spread of services, out of hours services, improving speed to access to services when needed and provision for those that do not leave their home.
28. Other key subject areas were as follows:
 - Better information about what is available
 - Concern about attitudes of staff to older people
 - Issues around financial assistance and affordability
 - Significant support for developing or expanding good neighbour schemes

Older People Housing Strategy

29. Documents should be written in plain English and as short as possible
30. Help with gardening and odd jobs would help promote independence
31. There is a need for flexible accommodation, and for 2 bedroom accommodation

Service User Feedback - Recommendations

1. Ensure that people have a choice to stay independent in their home for as long as possible, with access to community based services
2. Where people chose to move to more supported or more accessible accommodation that they should have access to accommodation providing 2 bedrooms.
3. Facilitate the development of affordable services offering practical help around the home.
4. Investigate ways to improve access to affordable community transport and to help address the need for help in accessing services generally.
5. Ensure actions identified in the North Somerset inter agency Carers Strategy are progressed to ensure that concerns raised by carers are addressed.