

**Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Subject: Report and Recommendations: Elderly Persons Scrutiny Working Group**

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## **Introduction**

### **1. Purpose of the Report**

To present the final report and recommendations of the Elderly Person's Working Group.

### **2. Background**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee established a scrutiny review to examine issues related to the consequences of an aging population. In particular, it wanted to explore what support and help is available to improve the lives of socially isolated people in Gedling Borough, recognising that there is a, 'hidden group' who are entitled to help and support but who may not be aware of what is available.

### **3. Method of Investigation**

Members received briefings from Gedling Borough Council officers, Gedling Homes, and Nottinghamshire County Council. Background information was provided using desktop research and Councillor's own experiences.

### **4. Information**

- **Reasons for the Review**

Issues related to the growing elderly population were identified as the first priority for review in the 2016/17 work programme by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. While living longer is a cause for celebration, it is important to stress that the elderly

are not one homogenous group. Some elderly people are very active and fully independent, enjoying longer healthier lives, able to work longer and contribute to the economy. However, living longer may present other issues and can result in an increasing reliance on other people, particularly if there are additional needs due to the aging process, for example, loss of mobility, sight, or hearing.

Members wanted to establish what support is available for socially isolated people who are entitled to help, support and advice and how this 'hidden group' of socially isolated people could be identified. Social isolation may be a choice for some elderly people but a combination of factors including bereavement, physical or mental deterioration, lack of finance, weakening of family ties and unsuitable housing can all contribute. Social isolation is not the same as loneliness, towards which a great deal of resources are currently being directed. Social isolation refers to a lack of social, or family, contact and is a tangible, whereas loneliness is a more personal experience and is linked to the quality, or quantity of relationships. It is prevalent in all strata's of society, not just those living alone. It is, therefore, possible to be isolated without being lonely and to be lonely without being isolated. It is important to try and alleviate both isolation and loneliness, as this has an adverse effect on physical and mental wellbeing. Social isolation is not an inevitable consequence of growing older; many older people continue to contribute to the community, benefitting both themselves and others.

- **Ageing Britain – statistics**

Around one third of children born in the UK in 2012 are expected to celebrate their one hundredth birthday. Only 1% of those born in 1908 lived to be 100. The population aged 65 or over, increased by 3.8 percentage points between 1974 and 2014, from 13.8% of the UK population to 17.7%. This proportion is projected to increase by a further 6.6 percentage points of the UK population by 2039. This rise in proportion of the population, indicates that the UK has an ageing population. This is due to existing age structure of the population, where people born, in the post war baby boom are ageing and living longer. Ageing of the population refers to both the increase in the average (median) age of the population and the increase in the number and proportion of older people in the population. The median age of the UK population, the age at which half the population is younger and half the population is older in mid-2014 was at its highest at 40.0. Over the past 40 year period, 1974 - 2014, the median age of the UK population has increased from 33.9 years to 40.0 years; an increase of over 6 years.<sup>1</sup> Since mid-2005, the number of people aged 65 and over has increased by 21% and the population aged 85 and older has increased by 31%. The number of males aged 85 and over has increased by 54% since mid-2005, compared to an increase of 21% for females.

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<sup>1</sup> Office of National Statistics. February 2016.

Overall, the age structure of Nottinghamshire is slightly older than the national average, with 19% of the population aged 65+ in 2011 compared with 17% in the rest of England. The number of people aged 65 is expected to rise from 161,709 in 2015 to 219,351 in 2030, an increase of 35.6%. Estimates indicate that 20% of the total population in Nottinghamshire is aged over 65, and this is expected to rise to 25% of the population by 2030. This is predicted to continue over the next fifteen years with 65-84 year olds increasing by over 30% and 85+ year olds by over 90%.

<sup>2</sup>

In Nottinghamshire, life expectation varies considerably and is influenced by higher levels of deprivation in some areas, reducing life expectancy. Life expectancy in Ashfield and Mansfield 2011 -13 was significantly lower and Broxtowe and Rushcliffe significantly higher than for the East Midlands. It is projected that, in Gedling Borough, by 2026, there will be a 23% increase in over 65 year olds to 28,444 individuals and of these 1,446 will be aged over 90.<sup>3</sup>

- **What we found out**

There are a great number of voluntary and statutory organisations who offer a wide range of support services and a whole variety of examples of work being done to help the elderly to tackle loneliness and social isolation and to support people to stay in their own homes. This includes information, advice and guidance, available through a selection of websites, often signposting to specialist organisations. Provision of telephone support, work with individuals and carers to ensure people are accessing appropriate financial and physical support is also available. In addition, there are a number of locally led approaches, such as lunch clubs and social clubs aimed at the over 50's. Members learnt about some of the initiatives, however, because of the range of organisations involved, and the varieties of support available, their examination was limited and by no means were all the services available were explored.

The Gedling Health and Wellbeing Plan 2016 -2019, addresses loneliness and isolation seeking to reduce hardship and provide support to the most vulnerable, by promoting independence, thus reducing the impact on health and social service, organisations. This document includes a range of people in its target group, not just the elderly, and is supported by a range of organisations, both statutory and voluntary, including Nottingham North East Clinical Commissioning Group, Gedling Homes and Nottinghamshire County Council Public Health. Work is undertaken with representatives of community groups, which includes people who have engagement with community centres, in an attempt to reach isolated individuals. As Gedling Borough has no responsibility for the provision of services specifically for the elderly, it takes a community development approach, raising the profile of what is already

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<sup>2</sup> Nottinghamshire County Council Joint strategic needs assessment

<sup>3</sup> Profile of Gedling Borough , Autumn 2016

available in communities. It is hoping to establish the needs for both lonely and isolated people through consultation and available data; this will assist in obtaining and allocating resources.

The use of Community Navigators, who are volunteers who provide people with emotional, practical and social support, and assist in facilitating access to services, enhancing participation, is being explored. To support this funding, application was made to the Department of Local Government and Communities Fund, along with Age UK, to take this work forward. Unfortunately the bid was unsuccessful. Mapping of existing community hubs, including allotments and community centres, is being undertaken, to identify places for people to meet and share experiences, helping people to keep mentally and physically active. Promotion of local opportunities for socially isolated people in Gedling in the Contacts magazine and the Keep me Posted email newsletter, which is launching a Health and Wellbeing category, will help disseminate information. The provision of walks in Gedling and increased funding from Sport England will increase participation in the borough for the over 50's.

Specific projects like Men in Sheds, which supports older men who want to get together to share and learn woodworking skills, older men being a difficult group to reach, has been very successful in Gedling. There is currently a proposal to make this scheme available for people with dementia. Moves towards making Gedling a dementia friendly borough will help improve wellbeing and generate better health outcomes. Some of the local churches also play an important role in reaching out to isolated people.

Nottinghamshire County Council Adult Social Care and Health department has lost 34% of its budget and despite some income the budget had reduced from around £400 million to £200 million. The authority is now predominantly a commissioner of care, although it still does provide some direct services. It currently provides care for around 16,000 people across Nottinghamshire, commissioning services from a range of providers both in the private and charity sector. The charter for the future of Adult Care Services sets out what the public can expect from the County Council. Its primary aim is to divert people from high cost services such as residential care, to one which enables people to stay in their own homes and where support is available for families to assume greater responsibility. The START team, the remnant of the Authority's in house home care service, focuses on short term support, which is delivered over 6 weeks, with the intention of "enablement", enabling people to return to their homes following crisis points, such as falls or hospitalisation, rather than resorting to residential care. START predominantly receives referrals from hospital social work teams and around 80% of those referred are able to then remain in their own homes. Home Care is currently commissioned from the private sector but currently both the County Council and providers are struggling to meet demand and a review is underway.

Day centre provision has been rationalised and now provides service to a broader group of service providers, for example, rather than having dedicated day service provision for elderly service users, there is now mixed provision within one setting for elderly, physically and learning disabled service users. The .Help Yourself Website - The Nottinghamshire Help Yourself site is a partnership between health, the voluntary sector and Nottinghamshire County Council, which brings together information and advice in one central place, so that people can find the information they need easily. Personal budgets are now offered to 90% of people who are eligible for services. A “personal budget” is the provision of money directly to a service user. That service user is then responsible for commissioning and managing their own services.

The County Council has also commissioned the Connect project, which is delivered by Metropolitan Housing in the South of the County, including Gedling. This is a time limited service in the community to promote independence. It helps to find information about local services, activities and opportunities and staff can help with money issues, housing problems, health and other issues. The County Council’s Health and Wellbeing Board is also working towards making ‘every contact count’, so that the day to day interactions between organisations and individuals ensures that there are positive changes to physical and mental health and wellbeing, for example, getting GPs to establish patients individual circumstances and sign post to relevant organisations. The County Council is also actively working to support carers, offering information, advice and support services.

The Nottinghamshire County Council Older Persons Advisory Group (OPAG) is made up of representatives supporting older people working together to shape policy. It provides an opportunity for older people to scrutinise and comment on new policy ideas, service delivery and other issues. Gedling Borough is keen to ensure that the views of older people are heard and is currently working to establish its own Seniors Council, which will nominate representation on to the Countywide OPAG. It is envisaged that the Seniors Council will become self-sustaining, with participants taking over the administration of the organisation.

To enable people to live independently, Gedling Homes provides a range of affordable housing and service options. Some of this provision is specifically for older people, and people with dementia. The Community Engagement Team works to keep residents engaged and interested and includes involving residents in the operation of their home. This includes walking tours, scheme meetings and tenant inspectors. In the past 6 months, residents have participated in a number of activities for pleasure, and to enhance their skills. This has included food hygiene, water colour painting, IT training, cook and eat, flower arranging and Zumba. There are two work clubs, one in Netherfield and one in Arnold, to help support people back into work. Tenants are supported to participate in a range of interesting and

motivating activities from local gardening projects, historical events, singing and local history. The Care4Me project is Clinical Commissioning Group funded and helps people access a range of services and activities to keep them well and improve their health. Recent referrals have been made to chair based exercise, Men in Sheds, walking groups and sitting and befriending services. Plans are underway to create and develop a memory café at St Andrew's Mapperley which would support people living with dementia and their careers and would be open to the community and supported by volunteers.

Age UK Visiting Service provides social contact for people who are socially isolated in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. Subject to availability the service provides a trained volunteer visitor, who will socially engage with older people either in their own home, or the wider community and offer companionship and emotional support.

Gedling Borough Council through the safeguarding database, which includes anyone members of staff believe are vulnerable by virtue of their situation and mental health, including people who self-neglect, can help identify lonely and potentially vulnerable elderly people. Once identified individuals can be referred appropriately through a management process administered by Public Protection. If considered necessary cases can be referred to the Vulnerable Persons Panel, a multi-agency team, where relevant information can be shared to ensure that appropriate interventions and problem solving plans can be put in place.

## **5. Conclusion**

As the number of older people continues to grow, planning for the needs of older people becomes a greater priority. The wellbeing of older people goes beyond health and social care and will, with the increasing squeeze on public sector finance, need an increasing contribution from voluntary partners and the local community. Demographic changes will result in people living longer, but not necessarily more healthily, making more demands on health and social care. To support this, there will need to be effective strategies in place to counteract this shift, and to support older people to remain independent for as long as possible. Older people are more likely to live alone and are especially vulnerable to loneliness and social isolation which itself can have a detrimental effect on their physical health and wellbeing.

As public resources continue to reduce, despite the ever increasing demand, many current and traditional delivery methods are no longer affordable. There are many opportunities available to access information which signpost people to support services, websites, directories or telephone help-lines linked to social support services. At the same time, there is also a growing recognition of the potential within communities that can enhance and complement the public sector offer. The voluntary sector currently delivers many interventions and it is necessary for health and social care commissioners to work alongside this group, if the issues that will emerge with growth of an ageing population are to be challenged. Adequate

resourcing for initiatives in the community needs to be available. The challenge is to develop these new ways of working, including and utilising all the resources available locally, to achieve the best outcomes possible. There is need for a positive individual and community attitude towards ageing and as, increasingly, people are no longer entering high cost residential care, it is necessary to ensure that the services available for staying at home are targeted and available for those that need them.

Members were concerned about the possible duplication and waste, in terms of the way services are currently provided by a range of different organisations. Although there are many schemes and projects providing a valuable service, it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of the interventions available and ascertain if they have improved the health and wellbeing of an individual. Members considered it necessary to develop arrangements to ensure that activities and initiatives are co-ordinated, in order to minimise this potential for duplication.

Members acknowledge that there are already a range of services and assistance available in Gedling that can meet individual need through supported group activity, for example, Men in Sheds. However, they did feel that some people lack confidence or knowledge and this may prevent them from engaging in social activities and lead to them becoming isolated. There is a need to know what is available in the locality, and where support and help are accessible, if isolation and loneliness are to be tackled. This may require personalised support, particularly as increasingly, advice and information about support services is accessed through the Internet, a mechanism that some elderly people do not have means, or the confidence to use. The importance of knowing what is taking place in the local area and where support, advice and help can be accessed is crucial in looking to encourage individuals to tackle isolation. Members were concerned that the 'hidden group' of elderly people may not be recognised and could be missing out on what is available, whilst acknowledging not everyone wants to be included. They considered that new imaginative ways needed to be identified to reach these individuals. Inclusion of vulnerable elderly people in the safeguarding database managed by Public Protection was recognised as a mechanism to address some of these concerns. Enhanced safeguarding training for both employees and taxi drivers to enable them to recognise elderly people who self-neglect, and where there may be issues that require interventions, was advocated.

## **Recommendations**

1. Include information in the Bereavement Services Booklet that will signpost to relevant support services that offer assistance at a critical point in people's lives. Ensure that members of staff in Bereavement Services are aware of the support that is available if they identify a person in need.

2. All frontline members of staff undertake safeguarding training that will help them identify elderly people who appear to be lonely, or who self-neglect, and are in need of support.
3. Ensure that all information disseminated by Gedling Borough is available in a format that elderly people are able to access, and in the places where they go.
4. Explore the feasibility of establishing a link with major supermarkets where employees may be aware of elderly people in need of support.
5. Investigate the possibility of establishing a 'Men in Sheds' in the south of Gedling.
6. An elected Member attends the Seniors Council and feeds back any information that may help other members to assist elderly constituents in their ward.
7. Members join their GP Patient Participation Group, to promote the 'every contact counts' ethos, and encourage GP surgeries to identify and signpost isolated individuals to support services.
8. Ensure that enhanced safeguarding training is available for taxi drivers to assist them to recognise and support the vulnerable elderly.