

BUSINESS PLAN

2026-29

Table of Contents

1. Introduction, Vision & Mission
2. Values & Principles
3. Strategic Framework
4. Strategic Priorities
5. Aims & Objectives
6. Activity

Introduction, Vision and Mission



Age UK Blackburn with Darwen is a registered charity that exists to support older people within the Borough of Blackburn with Darwen. This document provides an overview of the context and environment that the charity works within and details of our current priorities, aims and objectives which are delivered through an annual action plan.

The charity's **vision** is for *all older people in Blackburn with Darwen to have the opportunity to live the life they choose.*

And its **mission** to support this is to *listen to the diverse voices and views of local older people and use these to influence both our own and others priorities. To deliver quality, person centred services which meet local needs and maximise independence.*

This is achieved through the provision of a range of community-based services, through engagement activity with the local older population and through a range of influencing and partnership work.

Values & Principles

Organisational values

We will

- Treat people with respect and dignity
 - Listen and respond to people's views
 - Recognise and respond to the diversity of individuals
 - Recognise and maximise the contributions individuals can make
 - Care about each individual and be passionate in what we do
 - Encourage and support innovation
-

Operating principles

We will

- Be customer led and responsive to changing needs
 - Offer effective services delivered by a professional and trained workforce
 - Work in partnership to achieve the best result for local older people
 - Be efficient and offer the best value we can
 - Have a workforce who are proud to work for us and who feel valued, supported and respected
 - Provide quality services, striving at all times for best practice and continuous improvement
 - Work as one team to meet our aims and objectives
-

Strategic Framework

Operating Context

At the time of the 2021 Census there were 22,500 people aged over 65 living in the borough which is 14.5% of the total population, with 1.7% being over 85. Since the 2011 Census the over 65 population has grown by 18% compared to 3% for the rest of the population and is expected to grow by 40% over the next 20 years. People over 65 from minority ethnic communities make up 13% of the older population, which is expected to become more diverse over the next decade.

The borough is 10th in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2025 (based on average score) and some of its population are experiencing significant health and other inequalities. There are significant levels of poverty, with a higher-than-average proportion of older people reliant on the benefits system. It also has lower than average life expectancy, and lower than average healthy life expectancy with a higher proportion of people living longer in poor health. Over 50% of the older population have a long-term limiting health problem, which is higher than the England average, and with this, associated higher levels of disabilities and reduced independence.

The numbers of older people caring for a loved one is also increasing. In common with many areas, there is also a predicted significant increase in the prevalence of people living with dementia. The borough has higher than average falls resulting in a permanent effect and a high estimated prevalence of loneliness and the effects on health and independence that this has. In addition, fuel poverty levels are high at 15.6% and levels of digital exclusion are high with around 60% of those aged 75+ never having been online. The borough was disproportionately affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and the long-term impacts of this directly and indirectly on physical and mental health and on healthy life expectancy continue to affect the lives of local older people.

The charity plays a key role in supporting older people in the borough, working with a broad range of both public and voluntary sector partners to both deliver services and to influence wider provision for older people. Our influencing activity is focused on promoting positive ageing and independence and a key aim is to support the Age UK network priority to *Change the Way We Age* by supporting a change in narrative around ageing from a deficit to positive thus improving the lives of local people.

Our services are experiencing increasing demand both in terms of the number of people and the complexity of need. As such the well-being and workforce development support we can offer to our team is a key priority. Our services are funded from a variety of sources including contracts from the local public sector, grants from a range of trusts and funders, and income generation via charitable activities and fundraising. Our action plan also reflects the need to continue to diversify our income sources.

Local Plans & Developments

The Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Blackburn with Darwen identifies a number of key priorities relevant to the older population including:

- Healthy homes, places and communities
- Mental and physical wellbeing
- Good work and maximising income
- Positive ageing and independence in later life
- Dying well

The Age Well Partnership, which is a strategic subgroup of the Health & Wellbeing Board, and a key element of the Blackburn with Darwen Place-Based Partnership is responsible for oversight of these priorities in the context of 'ageing well' and has also identified a number of key workstreams to provide an additional focus, which include:

- Delivery of a local dementia action plan to support a joined-up approach to supporting people to live well with dementia
- Reducing frailty and delivery of a falls prevention action plan
- Development of Blackburn with Darwen as an Age-Friendly place and oversight of implementation of the Positive Ageing Framework

These priorities have been drawn up based on engagement with local older people and on the needs identified through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. The organisation's key actions and priorities cut across all of these priorities and support the achievement of them.

The external operating environment is changing with a number of key strategic developments in plan that will mean that we need to retain a flexible approach to partnership working, strategic alliances and models of service delivery, and the next two years are likely to see significant transition and transformation. Within the health and care environment the Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board is evolving into a more focused strategic commissioning role with delivery based on population footprints along with the development of neighbourhood health models of care.

Within the local government environment the formation of the Lancashire Combined County Authority along with the forthcoming local government reorganisation will result in a changed landscape for local authority decision making, commissioning and delivery. We will have a key role to play in ensuring that the needs and voices of older people in Blackburn with Darwen can influence all of these developments.

A focus on population health, reducing health inequalities, new models of care, and the continued development of integrated delivery and the drive to avoid unnecessary admissions to hospital will all shape how we need to deliver and develop our services going forward and this forms a key part of our future action planning.

Partnerships

Partnership is an important area of activity for the charity and we work with many organisations across the public and voluntary, community and faith sectors either informally, or through formal contract arrangements. We also work with the private sector to support our fundraising, income generation and volunteering activity. In addition, as a community based organisation we view our work with the education sector as a key responsibility which is achieved, for example through the provision of placement opportunities for students from several education establishments and working with local schools to promote intergenerational interaction. The provision of volunteering opportunities for local people is also a key activity for us which also enables us to enhance and add value to our service offer through the skills, knowledge and experience our volunteers bring.

We are a member of the Age UK network, working closely with the Age UK national charity on areas such as influencing and campaigning, income generation and development of evidence based service models. Being an Age UK network partner also brings particular requirements in relation to quality and organisational standards and delivery of our collective shared strategy.

Our Key Stakeholders

In delivering our mission and objectives we view our key stakeholders as the local older communities; our current service users, customers and their carers and families; our staff team; our volunteers; the local authority; local and regional NHS commissioners; GP's and other primary care providers; NHS trusts providing hospital and community services for our population; our funders; people who fundraise for us; the local key voluntary and community sector partners we work with; Age UK national; and our key suppliers. We communicate and update our stakeholders through a variety of mechanisms including publication and distribution of our Annual Review and Impact Report, through our website and social media and through distribution of service leaflets, updates and reports.

Our **ambition** is to deliver the highest quality services which support older people to have a good quality of life, be as healthy and well as possible and remain independent for longer. We aim to embed our service offer within local health, wellbeing, care and support pathways and to play a key role in delivery models, so that as many older people can benefit from our expertise as possible. We are agile and responsive and change and adapt to respond to new and emerging needs, retaining a focus on the fact that all older people are individuals and that our offer must therefore be flexible.

Strategic Priorities

The charity has eight strategic priorities for 2026-2029

- To provide flexible service models which use a person-centred, individual approach, recognising that we all age differently and have different strengths and needs
- To ensure all our services and activities are dementia friendly and to continue to develop our service offer to support people to live well with dementia
- To ensure our services reach and are accessible to those who are most in need, with the aim of reducing health and other inequalities
- To maintain a focus on prevention and earlier intervention to maximise independence
- To maximise the use of digital technology to improve efficiency and increase the number of people we can support
- To increase our reach to support people across the diverse communities in the borough
- To diversify and sustain our income sources to support the ongoing delivery and development of our service offer
- Maintenance of quality standards and a culture of continuous improvement

These will be delivered through the following Aims & Objectives

Aims & Objectives

Aim A

We will ensure we understand and respond to the current and future needs of local older people in all their diversity

Objectives

- Ensure our engagement reaches the diversity of local older people, their carers and families through a variety of mechanisms and partnerships
- Ensure we use all relevant data and insights to inform service development and respond to emerging needs
- Embed a strengthened approach to co-production with older people and their carers and ensure that this directs and shapes service developments and priorities
- Actively participate in the shared Age UK *Lets Change the Way We Age* campaign and other national campaigns which are relevant to local older people

Aim B

We will develop and deliver person-centred services to meet local needs and demand

Objectives

- Continue to develop and extend our approach to delivering flexible, individual person-centred service models maximizing a strength and asset based approach
- Focus our marketing to target identified gaps in who we reach
- Develop and deliver services which focus on prevention, earlier intervention and recovery, to support resilience and maximum independence
- Maximise the use of digital technology to support service access, delivery and development
- Ensure that all our services feel welcoming to any older person who wishes to use them
- Continue to extend our service offer for older people living with mental health conditions including dementia
- Develop new and existing partnerships which support and enhance our service delivery priorities

Aim C

We will take positive action to support the ongoing sustainability and development of our charity

Objectives

- Proactively pursue all relevant opportunities for commissioned services, including continuing to develop our social value framework
- Maximise the full potential of all current income generation and funding streams
- Explore and develop new models of income generation through services
- Ensure best use of all resources to manage costs
- Support ongoing continuous improvement through the maintenance and delivery of a robust quality assurance framework and achieve new external quality marks, as relevant to our services
- Maintain and continue to develop the Environmental & Sustainability Plan
- Ensure our workforce are trained and supported to deliver quality provision and can adapt to emerging and changing needs.
- Adapt and evolve our approach to volunteer recruitment and retention to increase organisational capacity

Aim D

We will actively engage, be involved in, and respond to current and forthcoming changes in the external operating environment

Objectives

- Be proactively involved in the delivery of the Age UK network shared strategy
- Be involved in Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care System developments that are relevant to older peoples issues and services on a neighbourhood, Blackburn with Darwen and Pennine footprint
- Actively monitor and respond to the changes and opportunities through the development of the Lancashire Combined County Authority and local government reorganisation
- Play an active role in influencing the delivery of the 'Age Well' priorities for BwD

Activity

Our **annual action plan** sets out the activity that will be delivered to achieve these aims and objectives. In addition we also have a number of **specific action plans** in place which focus on key priority areas and which form part of this overall business plan.

These include:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion delivery plan
- Environmental & Sustainability implementation plan
- Volunteering Strategy
- Funding action plan

Agreed 18 February 2026

Contact

Age UK Blackburn with Darwen
4 King Street, Blackburn, BB2 2DH
01254 266620
www.ageukbwd.org.uk
enquiries@ageukbwd.org.uk



Registered charity no: 1143809
