

Age UK Gloucestershire Impact Report 2021-2022

Progress against our 5 key strategic objectives



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1

To drive a new narrative about ageing to encourage people to see it as an important part of the life course:

“ Just to say how very much I enjoyed the latest edition of Grapevine, I spent a lovely hour reading it and tackling the puzzles. It seems to be gaining its own character and is going from strength to strength so you should be very proud. It is giving people a different view of older people and that’s what we need to be doing. Well done you! ”

Attitudes to ageing are critical to ensuring people have the best experience of later life. Everyday ageism affects how people feel about life after 50; lowered expectations and conviction that life will inevitably be ‘worse’ impact negatively on older people’s health, their drive to make positive changes and the way our systems prioritise older people’s needs. We challenge ageism through our communications, events and programmes to present a realistic but optimistic view of later life.

We produced 3 editions of **Grapevine Magazine** to provide positive activities and create a sense of community. This was particularly welcomed during the lockdown period, with 10,000 copies of each edition distributed directly to our supporters and through our partner networks. Increasingly content is generated by readers’ suggestions and contributions of advice, experiences and skill.

With the addition of a Digital Engagement Coordinator to our Communications team, we were able to increase the reach and effectiveness of our **digital communications**. In autumn 2021 we established a monthly



email newsletter to keep supporters up to date with social events and opportunities, respond to trends identified by our Help Team to offer proactive advice, pre-empt issues and ensure that the breadth of support offered by AUKG was well understood.

Our **social media** accounts were increasingly active, linking to useful age-positive articles, promoting partner services and encouraging conversation about ageing, and Age UK Gloucestershire's **website** continued to develop as a trusted source of accurate and up to date information. 26,529 individuals visited our pages in 2021/2 (21,553 in 2020/1)



2

To champion and lobby for age-friendly communities across Gloucestershire to influence the way places are physically set up

We remain committed to trialling new, innovative approaches. This is embodied by our **Community Circles Pilot** which began this year, focussing particularly on offering support to people Ageing Without Children (AWOC). This strengths-based approach works with individuals who risk becoming isolated and who need a little help to grow their support network to enable them to do the things that are important to them, such as spending more time with the people whose company they enjoy, starting a new hobby or re-engaging with an old one, going out more or joining new activities. Results for individuals are transformative:

We have supported 19 people to build their own Community Circles this year.





Homeshare Gloucestershire continued to provide an innovative housing solution. The early part of the year focussed on maintaining existing matches through lockdown via daily welfare calls to all existing matches as well as prospective householders/sharers. These calls were very much welcomed by Homeshare participants, and meant we were able to pre-empt any issues that they may be experiencing, both with Homesharing and general health/wellbeing concerns. Existing matches reported that having each other's company was a lifeline during lockdown; "I don't know how I'd have got through without my sharer". A further 15 matches were brokered over the year, with a clear trend for people approaching us at an earlier life stage indicating that Homeshare is becoming a more mainstream option for many.

Two of the domains of Age Friendly Communities are accessible information and social participation. Our conversations with older people indicated that there was a nervousness around re-joining activities after extended periods of lockdown, which prompted us to produce a short, easy to use poster, **Your Guide to Getting Back Out There: Your Guide to Enjoying Life Outside Your Home Post-Lockdown**. We encouraged older people to share tips, advice and information that they had found beneficial to support their peers.

This peer-support approach and wish to recognise and publicise the authentic experiences of older people also permeated

“ I needed confidence, I needed people around me because I was lonely and wanted to learn skills and be part of a group. [Community Circles] picked me up off the ground. I had no confidence and now I feel like a completely different person. This felt like a chance to change, which I didn't think was possible at my age. Suddenly I do things I have never done before. ”

our work with older carers. We secured funding from the Carers Gloucestershire Legacy Fund to have in depth conversations with 45 older carers, both current and those whose caring responsibilities had recently ended, to help us understand the unique challenges facing older people with caring roles, listen to their stories and give them a voice to advise other people in a similar situation. These people were incredibly generous with their time and suggestions and this resulted in From One Carer To Another, a resource which was promoted through Grapevine, social media and remains available through our website.

“ Your poster is great, so much good advice on here and I think it will apply to all people venturing out for the first time. ”



Ensuring that older people have a vehicle to share their opinions has also driven our **Question of the Month**. Over the year 653 people have told us what they think about a range of current issues from staying active to accessing health care, community safety, climate change and accessible high streets. These responses have given us a mandate to represent older people's views to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, contact local councils about Changing Places grants for public conveniences, and report to the Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust about patient experience.

Our dedicated and enthusiastic **Digital Support Volunteers** have been on hand throughout, initially via telephone and zoom/teams and recently at four outreach locations in the community, to support people to make better use of their technology. Their patience and knowledge has helped 99 people to be better connected; including using FaceTime, joining our online social groups or using WhatsApp to stay in touch.

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To stimulate a range of opportunities at neighbourhood level for older people to access so they can gain purpose and social networks

In early 2021 the country was still observing the third lockdown due to COVID-19. Most of the people we talked to were keen to return to normal social activities, but many were anxious and had lost social confidence after a prolonged period of isolation.



To support older people to re-engage with community life we worked with social spaces, community centres and hubs to offer advice on reopening safely as well as measures they could take to encourage older people to visit.

We had stayed in contact with our **Springboard Social Group** members and over the summer months encouraged the groups to reconvene.





Initially phoning members, we gathered their personal views supported them individually to return to face to face meetings. We worked with groups to find new locations where their previous hosts were unable to accommodate. This saw a shift in many cases from libraries to local pubs and cafés, which encouraged a change in tone within the group to more informal and social. By December, 13 groups were re-established with around 50 older people taking part every week. Alongside our existing Springboard Social Groups in the Gloucester area we worked to establish new groups in Wotton Under Edge and Cheltenham, hosted by new partners The Keepers and Holiday Inn.



To accommodate people less confident or unable to meet face to face, we continued to maintain our **Online Springboard Group** through Facebook. Alongside this we ran regular **IT & Tea** sessions to support people with IT issues in a friendly and supportive environment, as well as our **Cuppa With Jane** online social sessions led by a skilled facilitator to ensure everyone felt welcome, comfortable, valued and encouraged to contribute. These ‘virtual’ friendships translated to face to face meetings as restrictions eased.



Our **Ukulele Group** returned to meeting weekly once again, to provide music, fun and companionship to new and experienced players and has delighted wider audiences with their skills, including at the Christmas Party hosted by the Holiday Inn in Cheltenham.



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To partner with local systems so they work in a more individual and strengths-based way with older people. Where necessary, we should provide casework to support people to reconnect with their community through times of transition of vulnerability

“ I was really pleased when someone phoned and showed me that I was not forgotten now I was back home. Someone cared whether I had what I needed. Thank you ”



Our **Out of Hospital Team** continued to provide valuable support to older people following a stay in hospital to help them regain confidence at home. Commissioned by the Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group, our experienced team work alongside NHS staff to support the hospital discharge pathway so that older people can return home as soon as they are well enough. Having maintained comprehensive telephone support during lockdown the team returned to home visits as soon as restrictions permitted, and supported 1191 older people over the year.

We further supported our NHS colleagues by securing funding from NHS England to continue the **Pathway 0 Project**, providing follow-up welfare calls to older people following discharge from Gloucestershire Royal and Cheltenham General hospitals. The team made calls to 4407 people considered most at risk of readmission to hospital, to offer

“Very friendly and I felt comfortable and well at ease talking to you. Your advice was constructive. I began by feeling very nervous returning to my home after a considerable time in hospital after being seriously ill and having to manage on my own. Your instilled confidence and gave many useful contacts which have helped considerably. Many thanks and I would thoroughly recommend you.”

reassurance and refer on to other services (including our Out of Hospital and Help Teams) as required.

This year also saw the development of an additional service to support the hospital teams in the timely discharge of older people to help ease pressures on the system; our **System Flow Support Team (Hospital to Home)** has been commissioned by the Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (GCCG). Based in Gloucestershire Royal Hospital this new team is delivering a raft of in-hospital advice and support to help people prepare for their discharge where previously they may have to had to wait for this once home.

We continue to represent older people to ensure their needs are considered in system design. We are active partners on the **Ageing Well Board** of the GCCG, representing the Voluntary Sector.

This year also saw the start of a major county-wide programme, **Digital Divides**, to map digital exclusion in the county, seek to understand underlying causes and suggest new approaches to tackle these. As older people are among those most at risk of digital exclusion, Age UK Gloucestershire is on the steering committee (alongside Barnwood Trust, Gloucestershire VCS Alliance, Forest Voluntary Action Forum and Gloucestershire County Council.), and has hosted the initial stages of this work.

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To be the safe place that people can contact if they don't know where else to turn and where they can receive informed, patient and accessible help to move forward. Also encouraging forward planning about later life for all.

“ You were so patient and extremely helpful, I could not have done it without your help! ”

Age UK Gloucestershire's **Help Team** continues to be our flagship frontline service in supporting older people in immediate need. Demand for Help Team support has remained high, with both the number and complexity of contacts increasing. 5530 individuals turned to us for help in 2021-2, of these 64% required extensive follow up support. To meet this increased demand and maintain the quality of service we were able to expand the team and successfully recruited an additional three part-time colleagues in summer 2021 to add





capacity. The team is increasingly operating an outreach service in order to provide face to face support around the county. We now have a base at 3 community hubs (Wotton Under Edge, Tewkesbury, Newent) and are a regular presence at Springboard Social Groups. The Help Team is supported by a team of committed and skilled volunteers, trained to support people to complete both Attendance Allowance and Blue Badge applications to enable people to stay independent at home.

Our publication **Your Guide To Later Life** was distributed across the county to encourage people to think ahead about their later life wishes, make plans in advance and give them details of the support available.

Fundraising:

Age UK Gloucestershire is registered with the Fundraising Regulator and all fundraising activities were carried out in accordance with their guidelines. In Autumn 2021 we ran our first Christmas Appeal to an audience beyond our existing contacts, to grow our supporter base, with support from an external agency. No fundraising was carried out during the year by a third party/professional organisation.

We remain committed to protecting vulnerable people. All our fundraising communications are carefully planned, and peer-checked to ensure that supporters are not overwhelmed by volume or pressure of communications.

Volunteers and partners:

We could not achieve all this without our fantastic team of volunteers, who support every aspect of our organisation. During the lockdown in the early part of the year, volunteers played a crucial role in helping us keep in touch with older people. They supported us to make welfare calls and gathered older people's views via Question of the Month, provided digital support to help people feel more comfortable using technology, provided content and delivered our Grapevine magazine, and assisted with mailings. As restrictions were lifted and face to face contact resumed, volunteers supported our Out of Hospital team by visiting people in their own homes to help them settle back in after a stay in hospital, and helped to support our Springboard and Ageing Well groups to reconvene. Over the year, 47 people gave their time through specific volunteering roles. We are so grateful to each of them for the vital role they play.

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We have been supported during the year by a range of commercial, voluntary, charitable and statutory organisations and wish to extend a heartfelt ‘thank you’ to:

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Ableworld Gloucester, Active Gloucestershire, Ageing Without Children, Age UK, Age UK Friends, Arnold Clark Community Fund, Barnwood Trust, British Red Cross, Brockworth Community Centre, Brockworth Parish Council, Churchdown Library, Community Circles, Community Wellbeing Service, Ecclesiastical, Esmée Fairbairn

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Foundation, Forest Voluntary Action Forum, GL1 Leisure Centre, GL11 Community Hub, Gloucester Central Library, Gloucestershire Carers Hub, Gloucestershire Community Foundation, Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucestershire Deaf Association, Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service, Gloucestershire Football Association, Gloucestershire

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Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Gloucestershire NHS Clinical Commissioning Group, Gloucestershire Old Person’s Association, Gloucestershire VCS Alliance, Holiday Inn Cheltenham, Homeshare UK, Independent Age, Julia and Hans Rausing Trust, Keepers Community Centre, Longlevens Community Centre, Longlevens Library, Nationwide

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Foundation, Newent Library, Quedgeley Library, Spirax-Sarco, SSAFA Gloucestershire, Tesco Quedgeley, Warm and Well, Waterstones Café Gloucester, and all the many individuals and community groups who have supported us with time, funding and expertise this year.

Age UK Gloucestershire is a member of the Age England Association, and a Brand Partner of Age UK. Age UK Gloucestershire remains an independent charity, registered in England and Wales (number 1111773).

Key Achievements and Performance in 2021 – 2022 Summary

- Received and responded to **5,530** enquiries through the Help Team. Of these **3,526** required multiple contacts, extensive follow-up and problem solving.
- Provided welfare benefits support to **138** individuals, securing **£218,000** in previously unclaimed benefits;
- Made proactive welfare calls to **539** older people during lockdown to check how they were doing, offer reassurance and support and seek their views.
- Consulted **653** people through our Question of the Month, to ensure older people's voices were heard on a range of local issues.
- We supported **1,191** discharges through the Out of Hospital Service (2020/21: 922), with a further **4,407** receiving a 'safe home' call from our team as part of a Discharge Pathway '0' project;
- Set up and supported **15** new Homeshare matches during the year;
- Supported **19** people to develop new Community Circles to help them do the things that were important to them.
- Encouraged **13** Springboard Groups to reopen, and provide a safe space for friendship, support and fun for an average of **50** older people every week.
- Produced a Guide to Getting Back Out There to encourage older people to resume social activities and feel comfortable outside their homes.

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- Helped **99** older people to feel more comfortable using their technology so they could connect with friends and family, and feel secure online.

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- Listened to **45** older carers share their experiences and collated their advice and wisdom into our 'From One Carer To Another' resource to support other older carers.

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- Maintained our on-line Springboard Group for sharing information and conversation, and social meet ups, with over **400** registered members.

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- Created and distributed **3** editions of our information and activity magazine Grapevine, distributing a total of **30,000** copies to older people across the county.

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- Provided vital information to help people plan for later life through our Guide to Later Life in Gloucestershire, distributing **25,000** copies through our networks.

- Supported around **50** active volunteers to get involved with a range of services and activities, with additional people supporting our work with practical tasks such as distributing Grapevine to older people.

- Provided up to date information through our website with **26,529** (2020/21 21,553) people visiting our website during the year, undertaking **34,294** sessions and accessing some **69,966** page views. 88.8% were 'new visitors'.



Age UK Gloucestershire

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