

londonage

Age UK London Magazine Spring 2018



Your Vote Matters!

Your guide to the upcoming
London borough council elections

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With the London borough council elections rapidly approaching, we hope that this edition of London Age will keep you informed about the issues affecting older Londoners.

We start by revealing the key points of “Make London’s Boroughs Age Friendly!” the new manifesto for the local elections from Age UKs in London.

Also in this edition, we asked London-wide representatives from the three leading parties within London borough councils to outline their vision for older Londoners. In alphabetical order, we hear from: Conservative Leader of Kingston Council, Kevin Davis; Ruth Dombey, the Liberal Democrat Leader of Sutton Council; and Labour’s Leader for Health and Adult Social Care for London Councils, Richard Watts.

We then hear from Age UK’s Charity Director Caroline Abrahams, who runs the rule over the upcoming green paper on care and support for older people.

There’s also room for my thoughts on the new position of Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, particularly what this means for older Londoners.

I hope you enjoy reading our local election edition of London Age!



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Top News

Gas Safe Register

Age UK London has announced a new partnership with Gas Safe Register, with both organisations looking to work together to promote vital gas safety information to elderly people.

The collaboration will look to support good practice in a situation where lives and individuals' well-being could be put at risk, as badly fitted and poorly serviced gas appliances can cause gas leaks, fires, explosions and carbon monoxide poisoning.

Paul Goulden and Ronnie Jacobson of Age UK London said, "We are delighted to be working with the Gas Safe Register to help keep older people in London safe in their own homes. Through our communications, Age UK London want to make sure older people know how to find a Gas Safe registered engineer that has the right qualifications to fit, fix and service their gas appliances, keeping them safe".

Jonathan Samuel, Chief Executive of Gas Safe Register, said: "Gas Safe Register is the official list of gas engineers who are qualified to work safely and legally on gas appliances. By law, all gas engineers must be on the Gas Safe Register. It replaced CORGI. Only use a Gas Safe registered engineer to fit, fix or service your appliances and always check the engineer's Gas Safe ID card."

Find out more about the new partnership on the Age UK London Business Directory website: www.aubdlondon.co.uk

The Way Ahead Renewed!

Over the last year, Age UK London has been funded by the City of London Corporation's charitable funder City Bridge Trust to engage with over 500 older people's organisations in London - improving their capacity to support older Londoners and boost London's civil society.

We are delighted to announce that the grant has been extended in recognition of "The Way Ahead" project's success.

Find out more about The Way Ahead on the Age UK London website: www.ageuk.org.uk/london/projects/city-bridge-trust-way-ahead

Alzheimer's Show 2018

If you're caring for a person with dementia, are a relative or just want to find out more, visit The Alzheimer's Show for the latest dementia information, products & services.

This two day event, on the weekend of June 8th, features practical workshops, informative presentations and talks, Q&As with dementia experts, professional advice clinics and a wide range of dementia and care specialists all under one roof at Olympia London in Hammersmith.

Book your tickets on the Alzheimer's Show website: www.alzheimersshow.co.uk

Make London's Boroughs Age Friendly!

Age UKs across London have written a manifesto for the upcoming London borough council elections, to ensure that candidates do all they can to make London a great place to grow older. We've identified five key areas for change, which are summarised below.

The London local elections are rapidly approaching, with polling day set for Thursday May 3rd. Four years on from the last London borough elections, all London borough councillor seats are set to be decided, alongside Mayoral contests in Hackney, Lewisham, Newham, and Tower Hamlets.

As London continues to grow in size, the number of older Londoners is increasing too - a 2016 estimate revealed that over a million Londoners were aged 65+ and 140,000 of that total were over the age of 85. A socially and economically diverse demographic, older Londoners contribute massively to every borough of the capital, as paid workers, volunteers, carers, family members, community activists, and in a whole host of other ways. As the number of older Londoners continues to increase, so too will these vital contributions to city life.

However, there are also a large number of older Londoners who are experiencing poverty and inequality, just like London's other demographics. Whilst poverty amongst older people had been falling, there has sadly been a recent increase in the number of people who have dipped below the poverty line in later life. London's housing crisis continues to affect people of all ages, with a serious lack of affordable housing in many areas. Loneliness too is an intergenerational concern, yet isolation is a particular concern for the older generation. The Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness has discovered that "more than 1 in 3 people aged 75 and over say that feelings of loneliness are out of their control."

Meanwhile, the pressure on local government finances has driven adult social care services to breaking point. The broken care system stems from central funding cuts, yet it is those within local government who hold the statutory responsibility to support those in need. Across the UK, some 1.2 million older people with care needs receive no help, which has very serious and harmful results for those who require support and the family members who care for them. Over half of Londoners aged over 65 have a long-term health condition or are disabled, and in 2017 almost 67,000 older Londoners were estimated to have dementia.

Older Londoners are an extremely diverse group in terms of their ethnic and cultural background, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation and a whole host of other senses. Some 22% of Londoners aged 65+ are from "non-white ethnic groups" and 36.7% of over 65s in London were born outside of the UK. 14% do not have English as their first language.

Taking all of this into account, it is clear that whilst older Londoners face a number of similar concerns to their younger counterparts, there are a number of issues that are unique to the older generation.

With this in mind, Age UKs across London have produced a manifesto for the London borough council elections, to ensure London does all it can to be a great place to grow older.

We have identified five key areas for the election candidates to focus on: Care services; age friendly boroughs and neighbourhoods; communicating with older residents; age friendly housing; and accessible transport.

Age UKs in London call on candidates in the May 2018 London borough council elections to commit themselves to make the changes outlined below:

1. **Quality, Responsive Local Care Services**

- Give top political priority to ensuring that older people with identified care needs are not left without support
- Meet the 2014 Care Act duty that the local authority ensure that information about support for older people and their families or carers is available and that this sets out details of what services are available, connections between different services, and how accessibility requirements will be met
- Ensure that commissioners and providers meaningfully involve older people in making informed decisions about their care needs and care planning – co-producing local services
- Make sure that the borough and the local NHS develop a shared understanding and definition of what integrated care means for their population in their local area, and then work towards delivering this shared aim

- Keep on the agenda the importance of a preventive approach to reduce the future need for long term care
- Make services responsive to the needs of older people living with dementia and mental health issues

2. **Age Friendly Boroughs and Neighbourhoods**

An Age Friendly Borough

- Bring the borough into line with the Age Friendly Cities approach and cooperate with other local authorities and the Mayor of London to develop this concept. In particular, work to make the borough dementia friendly if this is not already in progress
- Incorporate ageing and older people positively in all work areas including business, the economy and regeneration; develop positive and non-ageist messages about older people including their contribution
- Ensure inclusive and effective consultation of older people in developing key policies
- Encourage provision of accessible community meeting places, residents' lounges etc.: these are valuable to community groups and people of all ages

Age Friendly Neighbourhoods

- Develop Lifetime Neighbourhoods which are walkable, with sufficient shops and facilities, public transport links and green spaces

- Prioritise tackling litter and fly tipping: older people have told us this is a key concern about local neighbourhoods
- Encourage the provision of clean, well-maintained, free public toilets.
- Encourage the maintenance of pavements, without obstructive street furniture or tripping hazards and ensure that adequate lighting is provided for pedestrians
- Do everything possible to ensure local communities keep vital services like libraries and post offices

Tackling Loneliness

We support the recommendation of the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness that:

“Metro mayors and council leaders need to understand how their communities are affected by loneliness; to identify people who may be particularly at risk in their areas; and to set out plans for local action to address these challenges. Ensuring communities have spaces in which they can come together will be vital.”

We call on candidates to support this recommendation.

3. Better Communication with Older People

- Make particular efforts to engage with isolated older people
- Make information and advice accessible to all older Londoners, including disabled people with physical and sensory impairments and those who are not online

- Provide resources to tackle digital exclusion and get more older Londoners online
- Encourage information and support to be provided for older people in relation to a wide variety of topics, including energy-saving guidance, benefits and services
- Improve phone-based information provision using automated systems, which many older people find difficult to use
- Work with and support voluntary and community sector networks which can be effective in providing advice and getting key information to older people and others
- Develop information-provision within the community. For example, leaflets in libraries or doctor’s surgeries can reach many people who are not online

4. Make London’s Housing Age Friendly

- Ensure provision of more genuinely affordable, accessible housing to rent (long term) and buy for people of all ages
- Meet at least the London Plan targets for provision of good quality, affordable specialist housing for older people across all tenures
- Act to ensure acceptable standards for private sector tenants, including through landlord licensing and improved housing enforcement, and respond to the needs of older private sector tenants

“A socially and economically diverse demographic, older Londoners contribute massively to every borough of the capital.”

- Ensure social housing is both adequate and safe; ensure there are adequate emergency plans safeguarding vulnerable people
- Ensure information and advice on housing choices (like mobility schemes for social housing tenants) and on housing support and adaptations is accessible to older people. Many older people in social housing currently struggle to use online mobility schemes
- Strengthen the connection between housing, health and social care, particularly the addition of housing policies and actions to improve health and reduce NHS and social care costs
- Prioritise the best possible support to repairs, aids and adaptations to enable older people in all housing tenures to remain independent at home
- Support practical housing solutions to improve housing conditions for lower and middle income older homeowners living in older housing stock
- Support proposals for innovative housing solutions such as co-operatives and co-housing which can benefit older people

5. Accessible Transport for Older Londoners

- Ensure that the borough supports retention of the Freedom Pass and TfL 60+ Oyster Photocard and that they are not means tested
- Improve the street environment for pedestrians, for example limiting street furniture and ensuring older and disabled pedestrians and public transport users are not disadvantaged by the design of new facilities like Cycle Superhighways
- Improve bus connections to London hospitals, which are insufficient in some cases
- Ensure that pedestrian crossings always allow sufficient time for older people to cross the road
- Work to improve Door-to-Door transport services for older and disabled people, building on the positive features of Dial-a-Ride, TaxiCard and other services and encouraging support to community transport providers

By calling on candidates to commit to making changes in these five areas, Age UKs in London hope to see positive steps made towards making the capital as age-friendly as possible.

To request a full, hard-copy of the manifesto, please email Age UK London's Communications Officer George Harvey: gharvey@ageuklondon.org.uk

Health and Adult Social Care: A Conservative Perspective

With the London borough elections rapidly approaching on Thursday May 3rd, Age UK London asked - via Local Government representative bodies - for London wide representatives from the 3 leading parties within London borough councils to outline their vision for older Londoners. Conservative Councillor Kevin Davis, Leader of Kingston Council, discusses the positives of a closer working relationship between the Health and Social Care departments.



As we approach the end of Winter and another “Winter Crisis” in our hospitals, behind the headlines and statistics about discharge delays are very many stories of real, human experiences. Those experiences will speak to all of us about a fear we all have for our futures as we get older – the fear that, at some point, our independence and choice over how and where we receive care will be lost.

As a country, we’ve seen the huge strides made in the way we access and use a range of services over the past decades. In response, many boroughs have moved to single points of access for local services, and have switched provision online so that residents have more immediate responses to a range of needs. It is clear to us that, as with the rest of our lives, if our experience feels disjointed and remote the answer is emphatically not to put power in evermore centralised teams, but to have more individual control over the decisions that affect us and breakdown the barriers between systems and services.

For instance, if you’re a Londoner with dementia, you might experience speech and language difficulties as well as loss of memory, and may be reliant on friends or family for care and support. You might experience multiple appointments with

your health and care workers, which are repetitious and frustrating. You might feel disempowered by a system which is fragmented, and it might be hard work on you and your carers.

Imagine, however, having a single Health and Care Coordinator, provided by a joint Health and Care Team in your area. With the support of the Coordinator, you can meet with your GP and Social Worker together, and together develop a care plan which they can read and update online. Because of this, it means that you or the people supporting you call or email for help or advice. Your care is paid for from a joint fund from health and social care, which means that you and your carers can make decisions about how the money is spent so that you get the greatest benefit. It also means you or your Coordinator can call on other community services to make life better for you and your carer, possibly by making home more dementia friendly, meaning your expectations of living independently is improved and your carer is able to feel more relaxed. Furthermore, because your local health and care team is joined up with local voluntary and charitable groups, you’re visited once a week by a local charity and spend an hour a week with them at a local allotment so that you can enjoy gardening whilst your carer also gets a break.



This is just one story. There will be stories like this all across London and I believe it is an experience which should be commonplace and not the exception, for dementia sufferers but also for anyone who has the desire and ability to live independently.

In our view we need to create a “single public service”. The evidence is compelling that centralising provision will never be able to tailor itself to local needs, and will be inefficient and ineffective. A single service could better use data to predict the future but also more efficiently manage the needs of the individual.

This is why London boroughs have signed a devolution agreement with Government, which will give us the opportunity to deliver new and innovative ways of providing health and care – where health and care funding follows the resident, where there is more emphasis on out of hospital care and supporting independent living and on providing the opportunities for self-care that make us all healthier in the long-term.

By devolving powers to local government, real savings can be made through decisions being closer to the people that they affect. More importantly, boroughs know first-hand the services their communities need but are restricted by a highly centralised health system that limits their ability in delivering in doing so. Integrating social care and health across the local area is vital to in order to respond to the needs of our growing and ageing population and put health and adult social care on a financially sustainable footing, as well as ease the pressure on our overworked hospitals.

So, as we prepare to leave the Winter behind us, let’s consider the potential for brighter days ahead. There is a better way of doing things for you and your family, as well as for the hard working health and care professionals across London. This is a brighter future which we in local government are determined to deliver for you all.

Find out more about Councillor Kevin Davis on the Kingston Council website: www.bit.ly/2Eqeotx

An Age Friendly City for all Londoners

With the London borough elections rapidly approaching on Thursday May 3rd, Age UK London asked - via Local Government representative bodies - for London wide representatives from the 3 leading parties within London borough councils to outline their vision for older Londoners. Councillor Ruth Dombey, Leader of Sutton Council and Vice Chair of London Councils, outlines how the Liberal Democrats are working towards creating the first “Age Friendly” borough in the capital.



Ageing is a natural process. It's part of life. It brings experience, self confidence and skills. We should be celebrating the contribution that older people make to society and to their local communities. They are a valued asset and can provide support and advice to the next generations.

Yet all too often the elderly are seen as a burden on society and ageing is viewed with trepidation. Worries about deteriorating health, financial stability and increasing loneliness distract us from appreciating the positive impact that older people can have on our lives. This has to change.

Last December I was delighted to announce that Age UK Sutton will be helping Sutton Council with plans to develop our borough into the first “Age Friendly” borough in London, as defined by the World Health Organisation. We want to ensure that all older people's needs are met, their ideas are listened to and their voices are heard. But more than that, we want to adapt our communities and change our attitudes to ageing.

We can't do this on our own. It needs a concerted and joined up effort across the public and private sectors. It means involving the whole of the voluntary sector, the health sector, Further Education colleges, the police and fire service, employers and housing associations - as well as the Council's own regeneration officers, social workers, community workers, town planning and highways engineers. It means breaking down the silos between all the different organisations and listening to people, valuing their views, taking on board what they are saying to us and working differently as a result. And it means flexible and practical solutions - whether it's about home adaptations, access to public transport or staying active.

There are many practical ways that we can make change happen. Lib Dem-run Sutton Council was the first London borough to renew Freedom Passes online only. If people can't manage on their own at home, they can go into their local library where a member of staff can help them or do it for them. Often this leads to them gaining confidence in using the internet, signing up to free courses in their local library and learning new skills.

Being more confident about using digital technology is also a way of helping people remain independent and stay in their homes for longer. There is a huge array of digital tools and gadgets that provide reassurance to families that their relatives are well but also can quickly call for help if needed. People can choose solutions that suit them best and give them the independence they prefer. As Liberal Democrats, we believe that personal freedom and choice is key to independent living - but with the proper support when needed.

There is growing recognition that social isolation and loneliness are bad for people's mental and physical health. We want to develop strong and cohesive communities with activities and social networks within easy reach. We want older people to be involved in the decision making that affects their lives and also be appreciated and valued for the experience they bring. If we encourage volunteering, life-long learning and flexible employment opportunities, we can help improve people's quality of life and standard of living.

We know that health plays an increasing role as people get older. We want people to be able to manage their longterm conditions and receive good quality health and social care. Lib Dem-run Sutton Council is the only London borough to fund specialist dementia-trained Admiral Nurses to help people living with dementia and their families. They are helping people live more positively with dementia, giving one-to-one support and practical solutions. We are also raising awareness of dementia within the local community - shops, banks and public services - so that everyone can contribute to developing a Dementia-Friendly community.

“We want older people to be involved in the decision making that affects their lives and also be appreciated and valued for the experience they bring.”

Many of our councillors are now Dementia Friends and the Lib Dem 2016 London election manifesto committed London to become a Dementia Friendly City.

But we want to do more. We believe that if we adapt our communities and our attitudes to ageing, we can all benefit from the experience and skills of older people - experience such as business, parenting and practical everyday skills.

We want to declare Sutton an “Age Friendly Borough” where age is not a barrier to living well and where everyone can participate and be valued. We have asked Age UK Sutton to be our lead partner on this journey and to work with us, our residents, our businesses, our voluntary and community groups and the other public sector partners. With their expertise, commitment and understanding of the issues affecting older people, we can work together to bring about change - the sort of change that will benefit everyone, wherever they live, however they lead their lives and whatever their age.

Find out more about Councillor Ruth Dombey on the Sutton Council website:
www.bit.ly/2q9NUIB

Health and Adult Social Care: A Labour Perspective

With the London borough elections rapidly approaching on Thursday May 3rd, Age UK London asked - via Local Government representative bodies - for London wide representatives from the 3 leading parties within London borough councils to outline their vision for older Londoners. In our final piece, Richard Watts, Labour Leader for Health and Adult Social Care on London Councils, outlines how to build a better health and care system for all Londoners.



As we emerge from another bitter “Winter Crisis”, which has seen our hospitals stretched with dangerous overcrowding, patients enduring increased waiting times and being left uncertain over operation cancellations, there is surely one thing we can all agree on – this is not good enough for a modern city like London.

Our NHS staff, ambulance and paramedic services are continuing to do an outstanding job providing care to our patients across London. Boroughs are committed to supporting them in every way they can to provide a quality service. However, pressures faced by our social care and health staff are intensified by an ageing population living with more complex needs, and are exacerbated by an insufficient level of Government funding.

It is no coincidence that while there has been a £6 billion reduction in national spending on social care, there was also a 50 per cent rise in the numbers of older people stuck in hospital. Local councils are working hard to help more people return home quickly, with the right support in place, but this task is made all the more difficult by continued Government funding cuts.

In London alone, the cumulative funding shortfall for adult social care will be at least £300million by the end of this Parliament. As Council Leaders, it is our job to make the case for urgent financial support urgently on behalf of our residents. We do this tirelessly.

Our job is also to find the solutions that improve access to local services and build a better health and care system for all Londoners. The future has to be one where Londoners are supported earlier to improve their overall health and wellbeing, where more health and care services are available through a single local “hub” where social workers, nurses and GPs sit side by side and where online services allow residents to receive support to range of needs instantly.

The current system is broken. It is not sufficiently funded and is disjointed. Only by making more decisions closer to the resident will things change. While we welcome Government’s decision to recognise the importance of adult social care in their decision to add this responsibility to the Secretary of State for Health’s portfolio, it does not go far enough in addressing underlying problems of sustainability and effectiveness.



“The current system is broken. It is not sufficiently funded and is disjointed. Only by making more decisions closer to the resident will things change.”

Londoners are looking for a clear and easy system that joins up the services that they use, and coordinates the care they receive from their GP and social worker. Devolving power, alongside appropriate funding, boroughs would be enabled to use their knowledge of their communities to deliver a system of care tailored to the unique challenges of local people. Devolution would deliver a higher level of care that is responsive to the needs of residents by targeting the full potential of local resources to develop local solutions.

We must not accept the challenges of the “Winter Crisis” as the new norm when it comes at real human cost and when there is a way to enhance the level of care that we deliver to you and your families. The care that you receive should meet your needs and be democratically accountable through the leaders you have chosen. Closer alignment between adult social care and health across a local area is vital in order to deliver a service worthy of our residents, and will help ease pressures on our overworked hospitals.

Find out more about Councillor Richard Watts on the Islington Council website:
<https://bit.ly/2GILiYf>

How Optimistic Should we be About the Future of Adult Social Care?

Age UK's Charity Director Caroline Abrahams analyses the upcoming green paper on care and support for older people and discusses the ways in which Age UK can help to create a better social care system for the future.



There is almost universal agreement that adult social care is struggling and completely failing to keep pace with the demands of an ageing population, following years of successive governments failing to come up with a plan for making it fit for purpose and financially sustainable. That's why Age UK enthusiastically welcomed the announcement, last year, of a Government consultation – or 'Green Paper' – along precisely these lines.

Unfortunately, this consultation paper has been delayed by various political mishaps, including the departure from Government at Christmas of Damian Green MP, who was effectively the Prime Minister's Deputy and who had been leading the work. A Government reshuffle soon after was another reason to slow things down, as a new Social Care Minister, Caroline Dinenage MP, came into post and needed time to be briefed about this complex area of policy.

“Adult social care is struggling and completely failing to keep pace with the demands of an ageing population”

Now, some two months later, hopefully the work is back on track again, so that there remains a good chance of this consultation document still coming out 'in the summer', as has been promised. And really, it cannot be published too soon, as there is no doubt that it is becoming increasingly difficult for older people and their families to find good, local, affordable care, whether in a residential setting or in their own homes.

The aim of the Green Paper is to look ahead and propose ideas for how social care can be made to work much better for the future. A notable feature is that the focus is tightly on older people, even though almost half of the spending on social care in our country is actually on adults below the age of 65 who are disabled, chronically sick or who have mental health problems.

Many disability organisations are understandably unhappy about apparently being marginalised in this way, as is the Care and Support Alliance (CSA) – the umbrella group for more than 80 charities in the field that campaigns for decent social care for every adult who needs it, regardless of age, and better support for carers.

“It is becoming increasingly difficult for older people and their families to find good, local, affordable care”

The Government has responded to this criticism by establishing a ‘parallel workstream’ to look at the issues for people aged under 65 who need social care, and this is being led jointly by the Departments of Health and Social Care, and of Housing, Communities and Local Government. We have been assured by officials that each piece of work is informing the other; the proof of this pudding will no doubt be in the eating!

There are signs that a key element of the Government’s interest in social care is to explore how it may be possible for them to ‘encourage’ older people to spend more of their own resources on it, perhaps particularly their housing wealth – for those who have it – of course a fair few don’t. This would help to explain why the Paper is about older people; the feeling is that the Government’s plan may be to look at how more money may be brought in from them for the benefit of the system as a whole.

At Age UK we have been talking to older people about their views of how to fund a better care system and the general sense we have had back is that most are not implacably opposed to making a bigger financial contribution than they do now, if they can afford it, but only for something considerably better than is available today and also on the basis that the responsibility for funding social care is shared across our society, since we all have a stake in a decent system.

This seems perfectly reasonable to me, but here’s the rub: social care is in such a bad state today, and is bedevilled by so many different problems that it is hard to see how it will be possible to create a better system very quickly, and it would not be fair to expect today’s older people to have to pay more if they will not benefit themselves. For this reason it seems that if the Green Paper, when it eventually emerges, is really to transform social care for the better, it will need to be accompanied by a major injection of public funds, up front, from Treasury coffers.

Recently it was announced that the next Government Spending Review will begin in Spring or Summer 2019. The proposals in the Green Paper should therefore feed into this two or three review of how Government spends our money, and so one idea is that the Spending Review will be the mechanism for bringing more public money into social care. Meanwhile we have to hope that the system holds together.

For our own part at Age UK, we are doing and will continue to do everything possible to help the Green Paper to construct a better social care system for the future – which must include ensuring it is fully informed by the views and experiences of older people and their carers – while simultaneously campaigning as hard as we can for more investment in the social care system we have today. Both are equally important.

Find out more about Age UK’s reaction to the upcoming green paper on their website: www.ageuk.org.uk/latest-press/articles/november/care-and-support-green-paper/

Finally... Health and Social Care are Together at Last!

In this piece from the Age UK London Blog, our CEO Paul Goulden analyses the new position of Secretary of State for Health and Social Care following the Cabinet Reshuffle, and discusses the ways in which this could impact upon the lives of older Londoners.

Finally, the penny drops... health and social care are better together!

Jeremy Hunt has been made the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, and whilst much of the instant reaction has been around the Health Secretary himself and the winter NHS crisis, and the political strength or otherwise of the Prime Minister, I'm far more interested in the implications of this newly titled position. There was previously a junior ministerial post at Health covering social care, but changing the name of the department is a huge signal about the future emphasis of the work.

The benefits of looking at an older person's health and social care needs are clear. If an older person continually goes to the doctor with conditions that just don't seem to improve, the doctor may not know that this person is having to make daily choices on heating their home or buying food. Similarly a social worker may find a client confused or unsteady on their feet, not knowing that the GP has changed their medication.

In the first case, a welfare benefits check could bring the older person more income, meaning that they can heat their home and eat properly which will improve their wellbeing and their resilience to illness. In the second case, the social worker can instantly report back to the GP and the meds can be reviewed straight away, rather than waiting for the next GP visit or worse, a crisis.

These are slightly crude examples but they illustrate the benefits of joined up working.

The Health and Social Care Act promoted the concept of integrated working between health and social care, but the problem here was that this had been done in a piecemeal way, with different models and methods of working adopted by different local authorities and clinical commissioning groups across the country, many involving local Age UKs. Social prescribing projects and integrated care models have been piloted, but with varying degrees of success and buy-in – perhaps this new Secretary of State role is an opportunity to really embed this idea?

“The Health and Social Care Act promoted the concept of integrated working between health and social care, but the problem here was that this had been done in a piecemeal way, with different models and methods of working adopted by different local authorities...”



However, if it is going to work then I think there are 3 areas that need serious work:

Motivation and Resourcing

If this is just a cost cutting exercise then not only does it demean older people, but it is doomed to failure. In the short term, integrated care will need resourcing properly, by which I mean spending on recruitment of quality frontline staff, and training.

Ultimately it should reduce health and social care interventions (and save money) by getting the right care to the right person at the right time, preventing the escalation of minor issues into crises, and allowing them to stay healthy and independent for longer. But unless it is done properly it will create a low-skilled, unmotivated workforce, operating in a bureaucratic mess – and those who will suffer most are the older people.

I.T.

It is bizarre and almost inconceivable that in 2018 there is no single IT health and social care platform in use. There is not even a single platform used in local authorities, or a single one in health – there are many, and some of the systems don't even talk to each other. If health and social care integration is going to work on the ground then it is going to mean that multi-disciplinary teams have the ability to share client/patient data between professionals in real time – and we have the technology! But without a common platform that puts the older person at the centre of the work, professionals on the ground will have to deal with duplication and miscommunication, and the older person will be the one who suffers from the confusion.

The problem here is that large scale government IT procurement does not have a happy history...



Culture and Leadership

In the paragraph above I used “client/patient”, which illustrates the cultural divide between health and social care – a social worker will say “client”, a nurse will say “patient” but they are talking about the same individual. Even when the same phrases are used, there are issues – “safeguarding” means different things depending on the social care or health context.

Does this matter? Well, yes because it illustrates some deep-rooted ways of working – if this is going to work it will need visionary leadership, strong communication and constant reinforcing from Jeremy Hunt.

By the way...

It’s worth mentioning at this stage that if the new Secretary of State for Health and Social Care wants expert local staff and volunteers

who have a good all round knowledge, a caring attitude and who put the needs of the older person at the heart of their work, then he doesn’t need to look any further than those charities who work with older people in the community – and local Age UKs across the country are already doing this work every day. Just saying...

Going Forward...

And so whilst I think this new emphasis on social care as part of the health remit has huge potential to really bring some dignity and quality care to older people, it’s fair to say there are some huge issues that need tackling. Over to you, Mr Hunt...

This article originally featured on the Age UK London Blog. For similar blogs on older Londoners, please visit: www.ageuklondonblog.org.uk/

In the hotseat...

Sonia Rego, discusses her role as the Communications and Young Persons' Co-ordinator, for our subsidiary charity Healthwatch City of London

How do you come to be working for Age UK London?

My background is in global public health, and before working for Age UK London, I managed health programming in rural Ghana. I've also worked on a composting toilet project in Haiti, worked in refugee resettlement in the US, and worked in racial health disparities research. The overarching theme of my life's work is stewardship; the idea that we are stewards to the earth, and we are stewards to each other. And for me, that means working towards health equality. My position at Age UK London fits nicely into these criteria.

What projects are you involved in?

I manage the City Health directory, which is a directory of all health and social services in the City of London, and I work with Healthwatch City of London to monitor publicly funded health and social services in the City.

What one thing would you ask local boroughs to do to improve things for older people?

I'd like to see more integration of older people into community based initiatives. There's a weird cultural phenomenon of isolating older people, since they're perceived as no longer productive members of society- which couldn't be further from the truth!

Alleviating isolation doesn't happen in... isolation. It's important to have community building groups, and events where people come together as a community, and get to meet and work with people they might not come into regular contact with - like older people.

I really like the idea of Transition Towns, which are grassroots community projects that increase self-sufficiency within communities, to reduce larger issues such as climate destruction, and economic instability.

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London Age highlights issues which affect older people in the capital. It is produced to support Age UK London's mission to improve the quality of life for older Londoners and to enhance their status and influence.

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Age UK London works across the capital to improve the quality of life for older people and to enhance their status and influence.

If you have any comment on the magazine content or ideas for the next issue, we'd love to hear from you: gharvey@ageuklondon.org.uk

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