



## Making The Most Of Older People

An Age Manifesto for the 2014  
London Borough Council Elections

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# Making the most of older people

## Older people in London

There are over 2 million<sup>1</sup> people aged 50 or over in London, roughly a quarter of London's population. Some boroughs have a higher proportion of older people. Just over 900,000<sup>2</sup> people are aged over 65. London's older population is expected to grow rapidly in the coming years. This is particularly true of the oldest age groups. Older people's role and importance in our communities are likely to increase.

### Older Londoners are diverse

Like Londoners as a whole, older Londoners are very diverse. In 2013 the GLA reported that about 27% were from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities and the number of BAME older Londoners is also expected to rise rapidly. Opening Doors London estimate there to be 100,000 older lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in London. Older Londoners follow a very wide variety of faiths and beliefs.

### Older Londoners are contributors

Older people are often seen as needing services and support. It is very important to remember that older people are also workers, volunteers, entrepreneurs, carers for adults and children, consumers, community leaders and activists. In 2013 the GLA published a report on 'The Economic Contribution of Older Londoners'<sup>3</sup> which put figures on the contributions of older Londoners (50+ and 65+) as paid employees, volunteers, informal carers and grandparents. Figures from the report found that Londoners aged 65+ contributed £6.3 billion annually to London's economy.

<sup>1</sup> GLA figures

<sup>2</sup> GLA figures

<sup>3</sup> Report can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/1oJgHt6>

## London's borough Councils and older people

Older people represent a major resource for vibrant, sustainable communities and we urge London's borough Councils to make use of this resource by enabling older people to be involved and contribute. Fully involving older people in local community development and making the most of their contribution will bring economic and social dividends.

### The financial context

We understand that London borough Councils are working against a background of financial austerity and reduced funding from central government. This affects many areas which are important to older people, and, in particular, adult social care. Age UK's national 'Care in Crisis' campaign has been pressing for a fair national funding solution which will enable support to be extended to older people with so-called 'moderate' (but still considerable) needs who are excluded from support with the current very restricted funding. We call on London's boroughs to support the call for adequate national funding to meet growing care needs.

We believe that Councillors and borough officers across London understand the need for better outcomes for older people in health and social care. We urge London's boroughs to make this a priority and work creatively with the voluntary sector and older people to make it a reality. Whatever the financial situation, we need to achieve quality and dignity for everyone who needs care and support. Supporting older people to live independent and healthy lives in the community will also benefit the public purse in the long run as calls on the NHS are reduced.

We also urge Councillors to work together with the community and the voluntary sector to find ways to maintain and open up adult learning, libraries and leisure services, which are important to many older people and others.

We call on all candidates, if elected in the 2014 London borough Council elections to:

- 1 Make your borough age friendly
- 2 Make travel accessible
- 3 Ensure high quality health and social care services
- 4 Help older people stay fit, active and involved
- 5 Provide accessible, affordable housing
- 6 Equal opportunities in employment and volunteering
- 7 Make London's streets safe and attractive
- 8 Make information accessible



# 1. Make your borough age friendly

Older people can play a hugely important role in their local communities, as contributors and consumers, as long as certain basic needs are met.

These might be as simple as paving, public toilets, street lighting, transport and a place to sit down. The design of our environment and housing also reflects and impacts on attitudes to ageing and whether or not people of different ages are able to interact positively.

Some local authorities have joined the UK Age Friendly Cities Network. The age friendly approach involves planning key issues like street and public space design, transport and housing to take account of older people. It means ensuring that older people are respected and included in their communities and have access to volunteering and employment if they wish. This model was originally developed by the World Health Organisation.

We call on candidates in the 2014 London borough elections to take an age friendly approach to running the borough, and to consider joining the UK Age Friendly Cities Network to ensure that older people are:

- Respected by the community for their past and present contributions.
- Always considered as potential contributors as well as users of services.
- Regularly consulted by public bodies, in good time to contribute to significant decisions that affect them.

‘The design of our environment and housing also reflects and impacts on **attitudes to ageing.**’





## 2. Make travel accessible

London's boroughs pay for the Freedom Pass which many older people see as key to being included in society. They use it to volunteer, socialise, keep in touch with or care for their family and friends, go shopping and use health and leisure facilities.

Many of these trips contribute to the local economy. London boroughs also have an important role in planning and co-ordinating transport services in the local area.

We call on candidates in the 2014 London borough Council elections to commit themselves to:

- Continuing to support the Freedom Pass as a key way of helping older people be included and contribute to society.
- Working with local mobility forums, disabled people's organisations and older people's organisations to make travel accessible in the borough.
- Working with the NHS and Transport for London to ensure that hospitals and other health facilities are well served by public transport.

'Continuing to support the Freedom Pass is a key way of **helping older people be included to society.**'



# 3. Ensure high quality health and social care services

Our ageing population means that London's local Councils have an increasingly important role in making our boroughs healthy places to grow older, ensuring that everyone gets the health and social care services that they need.

As well as being responsible for commissioning adult social care services, Councils have a leadership role in the Health and Wellbeing Boards responsible for joining up services across each borough and, since April 2013, the responsibility for Public Health. Promoting active ageing and opportunities to access leisure services will be an important part of that.

In London, just as across the country as a whole, older people are the major adult users of the NHS. National funding restrictions for older people's social care have led to a crisis for funders and users of care. Limited funds and rising complex needs mean that access is increasingly confined to those with the highest support needs, while many services have to be commissioned at a cost which can impact on quality, choice and dignity. Demand will continue to increase in the next four years.

We call on candidates in the 2014 London borough Council elections to commit themselves to:

- Making sure that ageing issues, dignity and choice are a key priority in Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs) and other health planning in the borough. Key issues for consideration include social isolation and loneliness affecting older people and support to people with long term conditions including pain management and safeguarding vulnerable adults.
- Ensuring that all adult social care services commissioned in the borough are of high quality, use trained and qualified care staff who receive the London Living Wage, can give those using the service choice and control in meeting their needs and incorporate a recognised Dignity Code.
- Taking a positive stand in the national debate on improving social care standards and providing adequate funding for older people's social care in future, ensuring that those with moderate as well as critical needs can get support.
- Making sure that health and social care services in the borough have a focus on preventive services that promote active ageing and ensure older people stay healthy with a good quality of life, and therefore help to keep people out of hospital.



- Commissioning health and social care services in a way that allows the local voluntary and community sector a realistic chance of bringing in its grassroots expertise.
- Setting up a Dementia Action Alliance in the borough and making sure there is high quality support for people with dementia and their carers; consider becoming a Dementia Friendly borough.
- Making sure that independent care navigation, advice and advocacy services are available in the borough, including for people with dementia.
- Making services suitable for all older people, including BAME and refugee communities, LGBT older people and faith groups, to ensure that needs are met across the borough's diverse communities.
- Working in partnership and sharing good practice on the preventative agenda by joining the Age Action Alliance network and using this to help forge local solutions;
- Including older people and voluntary sector representatives in the borough's Health and Wellbeing Board and working in partnership to ensure good community consultation and feedback is possible with older people themselves.



## 4. Help older people to stay fit, active and involved

Many older people want to stay physically fit and mentally alert. The more they are able to do so the more they will be able to contribute to the community and the less support they are likely to need in future.

Older people's wellbeing is strongly influenced by the services and facilities available in their local area.

We call on candidates in the 2014 London borough Council elections to:

- Make it a priority to find innovative ways to keep public libraries and other community spaces open, as they are valued by many older people, among others.
- Continue to support lifelong learning, as a social good in itself as well as for employability and skill sharing.
- Support the provision of keep-fit classes and green gyms.
- Consider how to make swimming pools affordable and accessible for older people and others on low incomes.
- Provide a range of attractive and interesting leisure services.

**'Older people's wellbeing** is strongly influenced by the services and facilities available in their local area.'



## 5. Provide accessible, affordable housing

London's Councils have considerable influence over housing, as planning authorities and providers and commissioners of social housing. Older people experience a wide range of housing problems in London.

Much of London's housing stock is old, in poor condition and hard to heat and insulate. There is a shortage of well-designed, modern housing for older people with support needs. Older people in social housing experience many issues with how their housing is managed, including the attitudes of staff and other tenants to diverse older people. Older homeowners who are 'asset rich and income poor' may be in real difficulties but are not a policy priority. The same goes for the considerable number of older people in the private rented sector.

We call on candidates in London's 2014 borough Council elections to:

- Encourage the provision of up to date specialist supported accommodation for older people (extra care housing, sheltered housing and residential care).
- Require all new homes to be built to 'Lifetime Homes' standards.
- Require new developments to be built with access to local facilities that people of all ages need.
- Support the provision of independent information and advocacy about housing issues and options for older people.
- Make fuel poverty and winter cold a local priority linking housing, health and social care.
- Tackle ageist attitudes and make housing services friendly to older people from all communities including LGBT and BAME older people.
- Listen to older tenants in social housing, engaging them in key decisions about provision.

**'Older people in social housing** experience many issues with how their housing is managed.'





## 6. Equal opportunities in employment and volunteering

Older Londoners make a massive contribution to the economy and community through paid employment, volunteering, caring for adults and as grandparents. Supporting older people's involvement can help Councils boost the local economy.

We call on candidates in the 2014 London borough Council elections to commit themselves to:

- Encourage the Council to be an age-friendly employer which recognises the qualities of older workers and avoids discrimination.
- Specifically include the contribution of workers and entrepreneurs aged 50+ in local plans for regeneration and economic development.
- Recognise and support the contribution of volunteers of all ages, for example in health and social care and cultural activities.
- Support opportunities for lifelong learning, training and reskilling, ensuring confidence and digital inclusion.
- Ensure that the Council becomes a London Living Wage employer, if it has not become one already.

'Recognise and support the contribution of **volunteers of all ages.**'



# 7. Make London's streets safe and attractive

Councils have a key role in making sure streets are safe, accessible and attractive. Streets cluttered with street furniture, advertising boards and with pavements in poor condition can be positively dangerous for older people.

Many other features of street design and maintenance can have an impact on whether older people are able and feel safe to get about and take part in community life.

We call on candidates in the 2014 London borough Council elections to commit themselves to making sure that:

- Pavements are well-maintained, free of obstructions and have drop kerbs.
- There is sufficient street lighting to make older people and others feel safe by day and at night.
- Pedestrian crossings are sufficient in number, situated where they are most needed and give sufficient time for people to cross.
- There are sufficient public toilets and benches in public spaces.

'Features of street design and maintenance can have an **impact on whether older people are able to feel safe** to get about and take part in community life.'





## 8. Make information accessible

Councils have an important responsibility to make sure that everyone in the community can access information about services they need.

Increasingly there is a tendency to go 'digital by default' and more and more of the information that Councils provide is located on their websites. However 78% of Londoners aged over 75 are not online and 661,000 Londoners aged over 55 have never used the Internet. Age UK London recently launched a campaign called 'Wealth of the Web: Broadening Horizons Online' to provide more support to older people to get online: <http://bit.ly/1d5T9be>

We call on candidates in the 2014 London borough Council elections to commit themselves to:

- Supporting local initiatives to help older people get online and generally take advantage of the digital world.
- Continuing to provide key information about local services to the whole community including people who are not online: this could be through paper based information or 'assisted digital' at libraries or post offices.
- Ensuring Officers and Members of the Council are alert to issues of digital exclusion and work to ensure the continued engagement of older people as active citizens and valued members of their local community.

'Support local initiatives to **help older people get online** and generally take advantage of the digital world.'