



Health Survey Report

**“What matters most
in your community around health and
well-being services?”**

July 2012

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1. Introduction

This report describes a health and well-being survey undertaken by Rotherham Older People's Forum (ROPF) between March and June 2012. The survey was funded by NHS Rotherham through their Community Health and Well-Being Grants.

2. Background

Rotherham Older People's Forum is a strategic level group whose members are all older people representing a range of older people's groups across Rotherham. It works in partnership with organisations and service providers to ensure the needs and views of older people from all Rotherham's communities are listened to.

In 2011 ROPF undertook a piece of social action research asking "what matters most" to older people in Rotherham. The findings of this research highlighted five priority areas:

1. feeling safe
2. tackling loneliness
3. maintaining independence
4. keeping active and healthy
5. getting involved

ROPF now draws on these priorities to inform its workplan. This survey is part of ROPF's work under the "keeping active and healthy" priority.

3. Purpose of the survey

The aim was to contact Rotherham's 100+ older people's groups asking the contact person to:

- Discuss with their group "what matters most" in their community about health and well-being services.

- Invite their group to join ROPF to ensure that their views about the services they use in their communities continue to be heard at strategic decision-making levels.

This would enable ROPF to build a picture of the health needs and priorities of Rotherham's communities which it will report to its strategic health partners.

This project aimed to support two of the priorities of the NHS Rotherham grant fund:

- Engagement- by encouraging people, particularly from communities often overlooked, to have their say about health services
- Access to services - by building relationships and communication between groups and service providers

4. Survey Method

In order to reach as many older people as possible a postal questionnaire was used. The questionnaire was an A5 sized postcard which explained what the survey was about and asked the contact person to discuss with their group the important health issues in their community and to summarise their discussion on the postcard. The postcard was printed with a freepost return address.

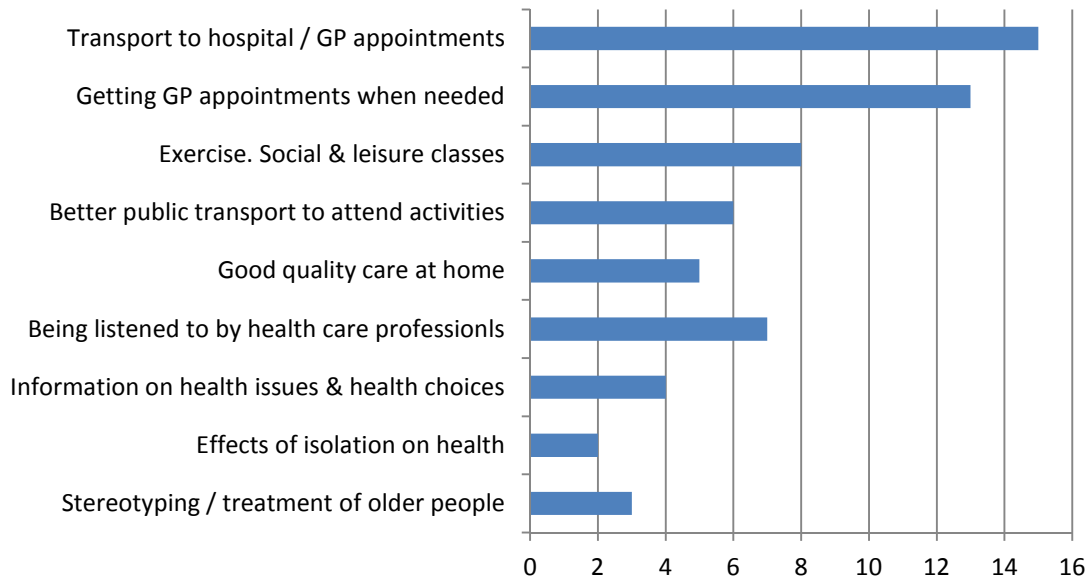
A postal contact list of 80 older people's groups was drawn up using Voluntary Action Rotherham's community group database, Gizmo. These were all given an identity number to indicate which group and from what part of Rotherham any completed postcards were from. A further 100 postcards were distributed through Age UK Rotherham, Crossroads Care Rotherham, Carers Corner and by individual ROPF members.

5. Findings

Of the 180 postcards posted and distributed 25 were completed and returned, a relatively good response rate of 14%.

Each individual response was typed up. Collated responses were then analysed in order to identify emerging themes.

The following graph illustrates which issues matter most:



A number of single issues were made which, together with the issues highlighted in the graph can be drawn together under four broad themes:

1. Access to healthcare
2. Attitude of healthcare professionals
3. Quality of Social Care
4. Access to activities

i. Access to healthcare

As can be seen from the graph 'what matters most' to 60% of respondents is inadequate transport to hospitals and GPs. For 52% of older people in the survey it is not being able to get an appointment to see a doctor, or one of their choice, on the day that they are ill.

- *"Getting appointments with our GP is very difficult at present time, going to surgery and then told to go home and then the GP calls you and asks what is your symptoms" Rawmarsh*
- *"I want to be able to see my GP when I need to and not to be left waiting" Broom, St Anns (REMA)*
- *"appointment when problems show, not a week of suffering until local doctor available" Ravensfield*
- *"travel to hospital and back needs to be better organised with no one waiting for a long time to be taken home" Rotherham*

Access to physiotherapy and chiropody was also noted as a concern. One respondent suggested nurses visit people in their own homes to do basic health check tests. Another suggested volunteers/escorts be available to help people get to the correct department in hospital.

ii. Attitude of healthcare professionals

Older people feel that doctors and other healthcare professionals do not listen to them or their needs or take them into account. They don't feel that some doctors give enough information on a condition or treatment.

- *"Very poor information given by doctors while in hospital being treated"* Kimberworth
- *"being listened to by doctors and nurses-there is never enough time"*
- *"I want to feel part of my own health choices, to listen and act on what I say"* Rotherham
- *"receptionists ask personal questions about your health"* Ravensfield

Some healthcare workers were noted for being particularly helpful, for example those from the Falls Clinic and AgeUK Rotherham.

Older people often feel they are stereotyped by healthcare professionals

- *"Want to be treated the same irrespective of age"* Kimberworth
- *"people think we are old without an active brain!"* Rotherham

iii. Quality of social care

A number of issues were raised about the need for older people to live independently, within their own community. Some, however, feel that the quality of care currently provided is not high quality that promote choice and dignity for people living in their own homes or those living in care homes

- *"paying for care, when ill or disabled care should be available. Many feel this is discrimination"* Ravensfield
- *"cleaning their homes must be hard. Who is responsible for keeping them clean and their homes?"*

- *We are concerned about the quality of training for paid carers. Is action only taken after complaints? There should be more unannounced inspections" Rotherham*

iv. Access to exercise, social and leisure activities

Many respondents noted that older people are often unable to access activities within their own community due to **lack of transport**. This then causes loneliness which in turn affects people's health and well-being.

- *"Exercise and activity classes for older people would be welcome if there was a transport link"*
- *"there are many classes and groups to attend but the transport costs can be a problem" Kimberworth Park*
- *"the fare on the door-to-door bus or taxi eats into my limited pension"*
- *"services such as the "active always" program helps eliminate social isolation" Rotherham*

Two respondents felt that having a daily phone call, such as that provided by Age UK Rotherham, would help people to feel less isolated

5. Conclusion

It is clear from this survey a major health priority for older people living in Rotherham is **being able to get an appointment with their local GP on the day that they need it**. There are high levels of frustration and dissatisfaction with the appointment systems currently operating at most local GP practices. Older people say they want to be able to phone up the practice as soon as they feel ill and get an appointment to see a doctor that same day in order to treat the illness before it possibly gets worse.

Actually getting **transport** to an appointment with a GP or at hospital is felt to be the biggest concern for older people. Bus passes can only be used in the middle of the day and some areas do not have good bus routes to Rotherham hospital. For those who can't use public transport taxis are an expensive option, particularly for appointments in Sheffield.

During appointments with the healthcare professionals older people strongly feel they are **not listened to** properly, treatments and conditions are not explained clearly, information on treatment options is not always given and some feel patronised. This will clearly have an impact on the effectiveness of prescribed medication and treatment and individuals feeling of being in control of their own health and well-being.

Being able to **access activities** which can help prevent illnesses and maintain independence is also a difficulty across the borough. In areas where health, fitness and social activities are available many are unable to access them due to **lack of transport** and assistance.

In conclusion most older people want to maintain their independence, health and well-being but in order to do so they need to have more choice and control over how and when they access health care services. They don't want to be treated as passive recipients of healthcare, they want to be actively listened to and to understand the healthcare options and treatments available to them and/or their family members..

6. Next steps

- present findings to ROPF members at the July members meeting
- distribute report to all members and of those who responded to strategic partners in the voluntary and statutory sectors
- make report available on the ROPF website
- discuss findings with NHS Rotherham and other relevant partners including Rotherham Health Network and Health and Well-Being Board