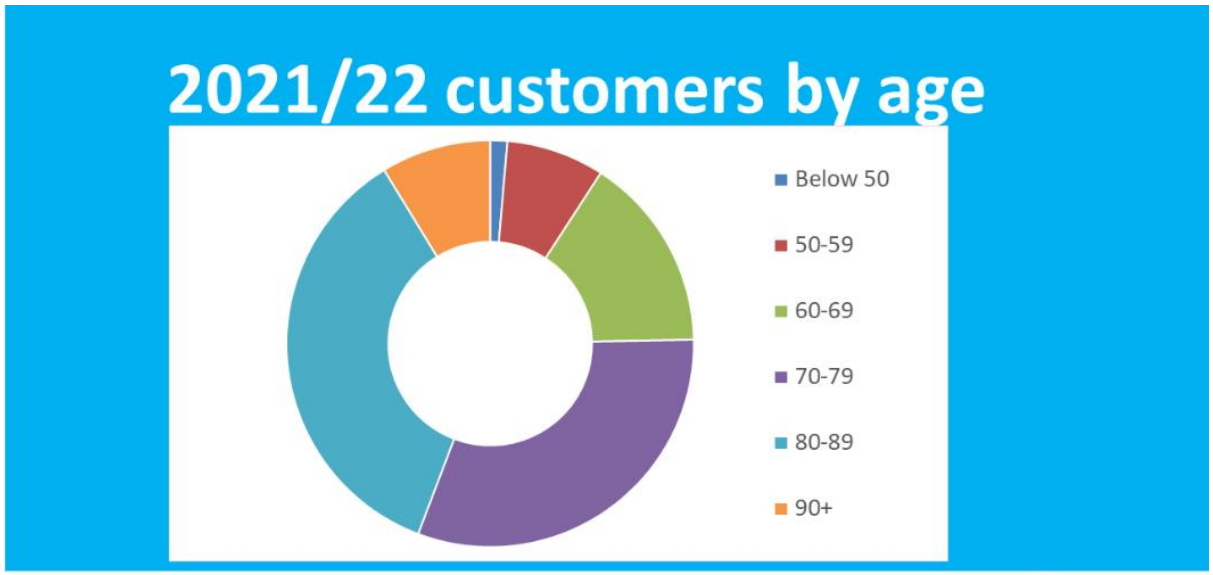
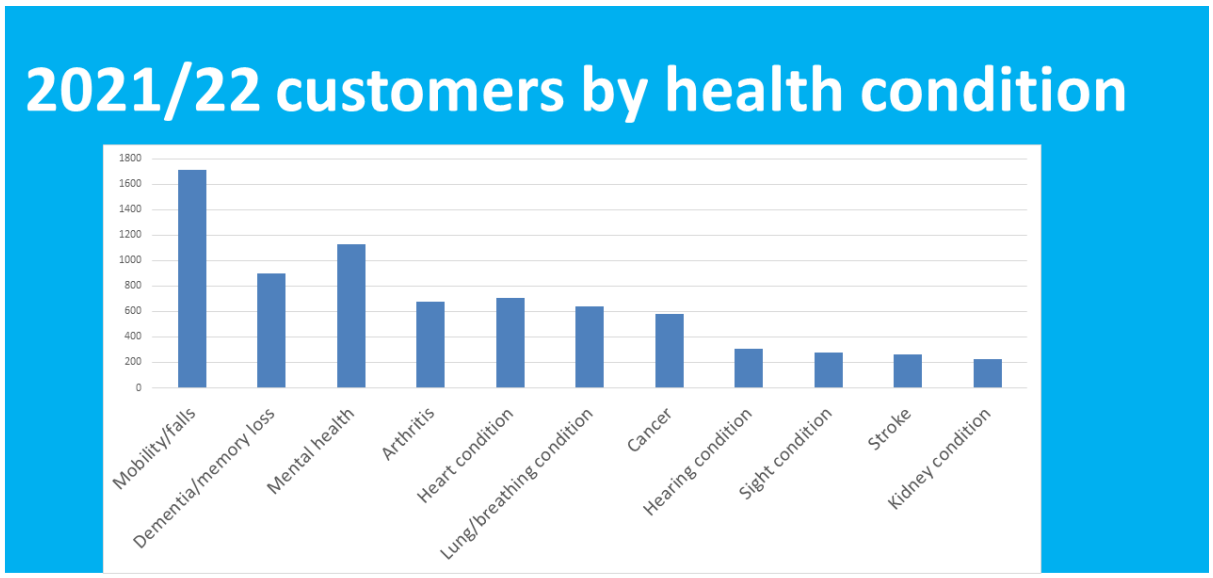
Overview

The year to March 2022 was another busy year for Age UK Sheffield – one in which we continued to expand our service delivery to older people who needed our support as they emerged from Covid lockdowns, whilst completing the delivery of a long-term Lottery-funded capital development.

During 2021/22, we provided services to 5,078 people, including taking on 3,295 new cases for people who required our support. We supported those people to increase their income by a total of £2,645,912 in the first year, by claiming the additional benefits they were entitled to.





Free, independent Information and Advice

This is our largest service by volume, offering anyone aged 50 or over free and impartial advice. The service is independently quality-accredited through the Age UK Information and Advice Quality Programme.

Feedback

"I cannot tell you how nice it is to be able to have a shower without worrying I am going to fall and hurt myself. Your service has really helped me to get my life back."

During 2021/22 we took on 1,780 new cases, addressing a total of 3,671 needs identified. The majority were people living in poverty who needed benefits advice. There was also extensive demand for advice on community care needs, such as support in the home.

Feedback

"Your support has been amazing. I never thought I would get to a point where I didn't have to worry about debts."

Of the customers who disclosed their age, one-third were aged 70-79, with another 32 per cent aged 80-89.

By the end of the year, we calculated that our Information and Advice service had helped older people to claim an additional £1,023,101 in annual benefit income that they weren't previously claiming but will now receive for the rest of their lives, plus a further £541,395 income in arrears.

Our I&A service is generously supported by Westfield Health Charitable Fund, Age UK's Warm Homes programme, and Sheffield Area Kidney Association.

Mildred (not her real name) was aged 81, living alone in Council accommodation, with multiple heath conditions. She had to strip wash because she could not get in and out of her bath and had difficulty using the steps at the front and back of her home.

We supported Mildred to successfully apply for Attendance Allowance at £89.60 per week (£4,659 per annum), plus £627.20 backdated. Her pension credit was also increased by £67.50 per week (£3,510 per annum), plus £1,030 backdated. We also referred Mildred for a disabled facilities grant to create safe access to a shower and grab rails at the front and back doors.

Independent Living Co-ordination (ILC)

Our ILC service is our flagship service which is targeted at people with multiple long-term health conditions who are most at risk of unplanned hospital admissions or otherwise losing independence. All ILC customers begin their service a with a 2-3 hour guided conversation to establish all their needs, including health, financial, social, emotional, and housing support.

Feedback

"I didn't want to come to you for support because I felt too young. I often feel people won't understand the cultural differences – I'm English but Jamaican at heart. You have helped me in more ways than I could imagine. I push myself to go out every day now, even when I don't feel like it."

During this conversation, our ILC will co-produce a personalised independence plan with the customer to document their needs and discuss ways in which they can be met. We will discuss options, encouraging and empowering the customer to work on resolving the issues they feel able to, whilst supporting them with tasks such as applying for benefits or liaising with other professionals. We will aim to close most cases within 3-6 months, depending on whether the needs initially identified have been met. On average, 93-95% of ILC customer needs are met when their case is closed. Most customers are in a much better position to live independent lives but they are reassured they can contact us again if their situation changes.

Feedback

"Your support has made all the difference in the world to me. Having my first bath in months and months was just bliss. I no longer worry about how much it is costing me to heat my home."

Our ILC service is funded through a range of grants and contracts, including from NHS Sheffield Clinical Commissioning Group, individual GP Neighbourhood networks, and our partners at Weston Park Cancer Charity.

Sheila (not her real name) was a 79-year-old woman who lived in a large, detached house in the S11 post code area, a generally affluent part of the city. However, after being admitted to hospital after a fall, Sheila could not be discharged because her house did not have a working boiler or central heating (and hadn't done for five years) and her roof was leaking. She had no money to pay for repairs and her family and friends were not aware of the situation in which she was living. She had been burning paper and plastic bags on an open fire for warmth. To wash, she boiled a kettle in the kitchen and carried it upstairs to pour into the bath. Her electrical sockets were overloaded with fan heaters and buckets collected rainwater from the leaking roof.

We supported Sheila to access a range of grants to fix her roof, obtain a replacement boiler and have aids and adaptations fitted in her home (she had previously had a stroke and falls),

and liaised with contractors to get the house repairs carried out. We supported her with day-to-day needs when she was discharged to a care home whilst her improvement works were done. We liaised with a range of services to support her to be independent after returning home, including Sheffield Community Transport, personal alarms, assisted waste collection, and prescription deliveries. We obtained further grants to pay for a replacement cooker and carpets, and supported Sheila to access Attendance Allowance and increased Pension Credit, improving her income by over £8,000 per year.

Dementia services

This was a landmark year for the expansion of our dementia services:

- Our long-term Dementia Wellbeing Centre in Norfolk Park was awarded a new, five-year Council contract;
- In addition, we won further contracts to open new Dementia Wellbeing Centres in Hillsborough Park, and Botanical Gardens;
- We also won a new contract to deliver a weekly Young Onset (50-64) Dementia Wellbeing Centre, in addition to our existing Young Onset Hub;
- Our specialist advice service, Dementia Advice Sheffield, was recommissioned expanded to include customers and family members, as well as professionals and volunteers;
- We were awarded a further grant to continue our support for Sheffield Dementia Action Alliance.

Ivor (not his real name) started attending our Norfolk Park Dementia Wellbeing Centre in March 2021 after being diagnosed with dementia. He has previously held Clinical Psychologist roles in local hospitals. Ivor's condition worsened during the Covid pandemic; because he and his wife, Sally, had both had cancer, they shielded at home, and Ivor spent long periods of time looking at this phone or "zoning out" in front of the TV. Ivor had worked in day centres and Sally was concerned he may be distressed or embarrassed about attending one.

Now she says that their lives have changed in just three months. Ivor has "got a big smile back on his face" again and Sally is able to teach Tai Chi every Thursday when Ivor is at the Wellbeing Centre. He loves talking to staff and volunteers about this career and the books he had written on walks around Nether Edge. He is able to walk in Norfolk Park, get involved in silk painting, and has created his personal music playlist, which is on the wall.

In Touch

Our volunteer befriending service has grown since beginning in 2018, and we are now supporting over 100 older people. We take care to really understand every In Touch beneficiary, and to match them with volunteers who we believe has similar interests.

Mary* was referred to the Porter Valley in Touch service after working with our ILCs, when they noticed she was socially isolated. She had moved to Sheffield to be closer to her son

just before the first lockdown happened, and didn't know anybody else in the city. Mary suffers with a urinary incontinence that meant she no longer felt confident to leave her home without her son, and would go days without leaving her flat.

Mary* admitted herself that her confidence and life has changed significantly since she had started meeting with our volunteer. It has been nearly 6 months and they now attend the local café and treat themselves to a bacon butty/sandwich once a week, and have more evening walks planned as the summer evenings get longer. This confidence has also led to Mary now going for walks with her neighbour during the week and talking about her main passion which is folk music.

More case studies about a specific part of our In Touch service which focused on the Porter Valley neighbourhood can be viewed at: https://youtu.be/h5g0V2l6qM8

At Home with Age UK Sheffield

Our paid-for, not-for-profit, help at home service fills a gap in the market with a hugely important offer. To us, it's not just helping with someone's cleaning, shopping or transport needs; it's part of our commitment to keeping them safe and well at home.

Feedback

"Bev has become my rock in such a short space of time. I trust her because she is so caring about my needs."

Sylvia (not her real name) was aged 77, registered blind, and living with terminal cancer. She lives with her friend, who is deaf, and they manage by being each other's senses. We were asked to support Sylvia to manage her correspondence, and found a recent letter related to a previous £20,000 investment in fine wines she had made decades ago. The letter was "invoicing" Sylvia for £1,227 to retrieve cash from invested wines and close her account.

Our At Home worker phoned the company and uncovered an elaborate, but highly believable, scam. With Sylvia's agreement, we reported the matter to the Police, and supported her to receive professional advice to realise her investment. We also put a call blocker on her phone and referred her to Victim Support.

Partnerships

We partner with like-minded charities to work together to meet our shared objectives. Since 2016, Weston Park Cancer Charity has funded two Independent Living Co-ordinators to support people living with cancer, and their family members, in Sheffield.

During 2021/22 we started a new project, funded by NHS Charities Together, working in partnership with the GPA1 GP Neighbourhood to support the people living with dementia on their registers who were at the highest risk of an unplanned hospital admission.

87-year-old Bill was referred to our Weston Park Cancer Charity service by a hospital social worker after his wife, Jean, died of breast cancer. He was not coping and his only sister could not visit due to Covid restrictions. Jean had done all the practical tasks and Bill didn't know how to cook or use the washing machine.

Our ILC visited Bill the day after the referral and helped him to contact the Registry Office, a funeral director, and use the Tell Us Once service to notify Government departments. Seeing Jean's equipment and medication around the house was upsetting Bill so we arranged for it to be taken away. Over the next few weeks, at Bill's pace, we helped him to contact utility providers, insurance companies and banks to change account names and direct debits. Bill's mobility was very poor and we arranged for grab rails to be urgently installed.

Bill did not want carers in the house so we supported him to learn to use the microwave and washing machine. We supported him to apply for Attendance Allowance and Council Tax discount, increasing his income by £5,000pa.

Bill said: "I just didn't know where to start as Jean had always sorted everything out. I would have been in a right mess without you."

Retail

Our first charity shops opened in autumn 2019 as part of our longer-term strategy to replace lost income from our former insurance business, and to diversify our income sources. In October 2021, we opened our third shop in Broomhill. As well as generating important commercial income, our shops are an important front door to Age UK Sheffield services to an additional customer base.

Hillsborough Park

After a five-year development period, our new, Lottery-funded facilities opened in spring 2022. The Grade II-listed Coach House, which we rescued from dereliction, is now trading successfully as a public café, operated by the Depot Bakery, and bringing in important commercial income for our charity. We refurbished the neighbouring Potting Shed and reopened it as the Bradbury Makers' Shed, in which we are delivering an exciting range of creative activities. And we are also managing the nearby Pavilion building, which is one of our additional Dementia Wellbeing Centre sites, and the home of our performing arts and physical activity sessions.