The Partnership with Older People in Suffolk

Expecting the Unexpected

Sharing experiences and suggestions on managing life changing events

Consultation with the Suffolk Older People’s Council

Discussion date 20th September 2013
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A mini forum was held on the 20th September 2013 with members of the Suffolk Older Peoples Council (SOPC) who are an independent group that has developed out of the Older People’s Strategic Partnership Board which ended in 2011. The board was a partnership between Suffolk County Council, other councils and agencies and older people - see appendix 1. The forum discussed older people’s experiences of managing life changing events. 13 members of the council took part and discussed the following life changing events; moving home, retirement, health issues and being a victim of burglary, scam, crime or hate crime.

The recommendations made by the group were:

1. To assist in moving home decisions a ‘single point of contact’, who is a specialist in housing options, should be available who can support and assist with all aspects of moving home, this should include dealing with utility companies, loft/house clearance, packing/unpacking etc.
2. To support preparing for retirement pre-retirement courses or events should be available which include support with pension forms, information about post retirement options e.g. volunteering, information on local community groups and activities to get involved in and information regarding the importance of maintaining good health and keeping active.
3. Health professionals need to be more aware about the support available within communities after a health issue and should actively signpost to support within communities.
4. Older people need to be aware of the support available from the police service to maintain their home and personal safety police service maintain a high profile where possible. More availability of information such as victim support for people who have been a victim of a crime.

A final POPS summary report on ‘Expecting the Unexpected’ will be written in March 2014 looking at key points from all of the forums held this year.

For information regarding previous POPS reports see appendix 2.
To keep up to date with continuing developments and future POPS forums follow Age UK Suffolk on:

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INTRODUCTION

The second forum for the 2013–2014 programme titled ‘Expecting the Unexpected’ was held with 13 members of the Suffolk Older People’s Council (SOPC). The Council was formed in 2011 because of the disbanding of the Older People’s Strategic Partnership Board on 2011. The board fed the views of older people directly into Suffolk County Council. The Older People Council membership consists of representatives from various groups including Age UK Suffolk, Bury St Edmunds Friendship Centre, East Anglia Indian Association, East Suffolk Association for the Blind, National Federation of Occupational Pensioners, National Federation of Occupational Pensioners, Local Link Volunteer Botesdale, NHS Retirement Fellowship and the Suffolk Pensioners Association. The Council has also adopted and updated the Older People Charter, which is in appendix 3.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION FEEDBACK

Moving home

When moving or considering moving, it was felt that a single point of contact with specialist knowledge in housing options would be helpful to older people. Having someone to guide through the moving process providing advice and support as needed, dealing with utility companies, organising loft/house clearance and assisting with packing would help to alleviate any apprehension or fears older people may have about how they will manage a house move. Currently many older people rely on families or friends for support, if available, and some older people continue living in unsuitable accommodation as they find the whole house moving process ‘too traumatic’.

Attendees felt that Age UK Suffolk, Citizen Advice Bureau, Parish Magazines, friends and family would be an ideal means of acquiring information to support moving home. They also felt that having access to information regarding local trade’s people, furniture collection services and local neighbourhood schemes would be useful.

Attendees that had experiences of moving felt that it took a long while to settle down in their new communities and that they needed to ‘make the effort’ to make connections with new people. It was felt that the church and parish council could support with integrating new people and a local information welcome pack providing details of support available would be helpful.

“Quote “The thought of clearing the loft is too much”
It was recognised that someone with dementia would require more help and support to enable them to settle and adjust into a new environment.

**Retirement**

The experience of attendees was that retirement was a long-term life changing event with people feeling defined by their work life. They felt that often their work also became their social circle of friends. It was felt that people need to be encouraged to widen their social circles before retirement. On the positive side, attendees agreed that retirement gives you freedom and the opportunity to live life at a different pace.

In the group’s experience there is little known about any support that is available to help retirees to make important financial decisions. The group were not aware of any help to fill in pension forms or advice concerning taking lump sums from pensions. It was recognised that these forms could be confusing and difficult to complete although the department for work and pensions has tried to make them more user friendly.

It was recognised that any support material about pensions that was available was mainly on the internet and that this is difficult to access if older people do not have a computer or someone to help them. It was highlighted that the information about pensions needs to be available in different languages to meet the needs of all older people in Suffolk.

Attendees felt that older people are wary of independent financial advisors and would rather ask friends and family for advice. It was also identified that coping with retirement may be harder for older people who are on their own.

The group thought that ‘pre-retirement courses’ used to be available and also that organisations/charities visited companies to talk about the benefits of volunteering and the importance of maintaining good health/ keeping active in retirement. The group were unsure if this practice still occurred but felt it would be beneficial, if not, for it to be restarted. They also felt that Companies that offer flexibility with options to go from working full-time to part-time before retirement would make the
transition to retirement easier. As one attendee said “It’s a good opportunity to slide into retirement”.

Attendees felt that it is more difficult for men to adjust to retirement and that few men attend local community groups, particularly men if they are widowed or single, leading to isolation. Attendees recognised the value of volunteering in retirement as a way of continuing to make a positive contribution to the community. They saw this as a way of maintaining self-esteem, retaining their identity and mixing with different people.
Being computer literate before retirement was felt to be important as a means to keep up to date and have the opportunity to access information.

**Health issues**

In general the group felt that they had received good support with health issues - from both social services and Suffolk Family Carers. Support was available for carers and the cared for and was both practical and emotional support.

The group felt there would always be a need for personalised advice. People felt that leaflets can be confusing and difficult to understand and people are signposted to the internet, which can be inaccessible to many older people. The group also felt that cuts and changes to the NHS could affect people’s ability to access the information that they need in a way they would like to. There were also concerns that GPs are under time pressure, do not always have all the information needed and may not recognise the significant impact of preventative care.

The group felt that Improving the knowledge of health professionals, in terms of services available to support older people, would enable them to signpost more effectively and allow older people to access specialist care where needed. The role of community pharmacist was questioned by the group with mixed feeling as to whether they were the best point of contact for health information.

After a life changing health issue it was felt that sometimes extended families may impact on recovery, by being ‘over protective’, leading to a loss of independence and a reliance on others. Better support and advice to families and carers may help to have a more positive impact on how older people are able to best manage their health.
**Being a victim of burglary, scam, crime, hate crime**

The group felt that being a victim of burglary, a scam, crime or hate crime can have a long term affect on ‘normal’ life. The group felt that there needs to be a mechanism to help rebuild lives and confidence; recognising that family support is not always available.

Attendees recognise that the police have a limited resources for prevention work but feel that they have a responsibility, where possible, to advise people how to remain safe both in their homes and when in the community. This advice should cover the use of computers and cash point machines, raising the awareness of scams. The ideal option would be for home visits to discuss crime prevention. It was also highlighted that there is a need to continue to raise awareness, with regular reminders for older people to be vigilant. Crime prevention information and support needs to be available in all languages to be inclusive to all older people.

It was felt by the group that burglar alarms may give the impression that there is something worth stealing in the home.

Attendees were very unsure about the role of the victim support service and how to access the support that is available. They also felt that support to help moving on from for example a local befriender would help people to regain their confidence.

**Age UK ‘LifeBook’**

As a result of the first POPS forum held in Needham Market where attendees discussed the need for a pre-emergency planning system the members of the SOPC were shown the Age UK LifeBook, see appendix 4, to discover if the booklet contained all the information needed for such a system.

The LifeBook is a free booklet where you write important and useful information about your life, from who insures your car to where you put the TV licence. It helps you to be more organised, but could also be invaluable to a family member or a friend if they need to find important information in an emergency.

Members of the SOPC felt that the booklet would be useful for keeping information together and readily available. They felt if family members were available, it would be a good idea to discuss the booklet with them and to have an agreed place to keep the book so that it could be located when necessary. They also recognised the
importance of the booklet to the emergency services, neighbours, friends and support organisations where family are not available. For someone with memory loss the booklet could act as a means of support allowing them to use it as a prompt for important information. Suggested additions to the booklet were pages to record:

- computer and account passwords
- details of local groups and activities attended
- organisations that are currently providing services
- Tradespersons available locally.

The group felt that it may be ‘dangerous’ to have all the information in one place, the booklet would need to be kept safely with the possible need to give a duplicate copy to a ‘safe pair of hands’. It was also recognised that perhaps a central database of who has a booklet would be beneficial to families and allows for the booklet to be updated as situations changed. The database would also allow for reminders to be sent out to encouraging people to update their information.

The recommendations made by the group were:

5. To assist in moving home decisions a ‘single point of contact’, who is a specialist in housing options should be available who can support and assist with all aspects of moving home. This should include dealing with utility companies, loft/house clearance, packing/unpacking etc.

6. To support preparing for retirement pre-retirement courses or events should be available which include support with pension forms, information about post retirement options e.g. volunteering, information on local community groups and activities to get involved in and information regarding the importance of maintaining good health and keeping active.

7. Health professionals need to be more aware about the support available within communities after a health issue and should actively signpost to support within communities.

8. Older people need to be aware of the support available from the police service to maintain their home and personal safety police service maintain a high profile where possible. More availability of information such as victim support for people who have been a victim of a crime.
THE NEXT STAGE

Actions will be taken forward as a result of the forum. The POPS Co-ordinator will continue discussions with the SOPC in order to take forward the recommendations made from the Talkabout. A final summary report will be written in March 2014 looking at key points from all of the forums held this year.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Suffolk Older People’s Council Leaflet
Values

- Older people have the right to independence, choice and control over their lives
- The human rights of older people should be upheld and respected
- Ageism is not acceptable
- Discrimination on the grounds of age is not acceptable

Suffolk Older Peoples Council Talkabout Report 20th September 2013 - 'Expecting the Unexpected' Sharing experiences and suggestions on managing life changing events

Principles

SOPC will:

- be a democratic, open and inclusive organisation to all communities
- be a non party political, non-sectarian, non profit-making organisation embracing charitable ethics
- be accountable to older people in Suffolk
- Liaise with but not be controlled by any local, regional or national authority or organisation
- Operate with openness and transparency and within the law

What do you get out of it?

With SOPC it will be more about what you can give - and the key thing will be your support. By being a member, and we hope there will be thousands, you will make SOPC a force to be reckoned with and listened to. You can help identify areas where the quality of life for older people is found wanting and working together we will bring about improvement.

Members will be able to offer themselves for election to SOPC’s executive group, will vote to elect the executive group and will be able to take part in local and county consultation groups to ensure that local authorities, the NHS and others do not do anything that affects older people without talking with local retired people first.

As we find the money, we will put on conferences, and have a newsletter. We already have the support of Suffolk County Council to re-launch the Charter for Older People in Suffolk and get all authorities, from the NHS to the Police, to sign up to its principles.

Our older population has grown by 25% in the last 10 years, and will grow further in the next decade, so we need to organise ourselves. By joining SOPC we can, together, influence those who make decisions about us and make Suffolk a great place to grow older.
**Achieving our Purpose**

Suffolk Older People’s Council (SOPC) will ...
- fundraise so that FREE individual membership is available to all older people living in Suffolk
- offer membership at a nominal fee to all Suffolk groups run by and for older people
- build the membership of SOPC
- raise awareness of SOPC and its membership with county and local councils, the NHS and all providers of services for older people in Suffolk
- actively work with those agencies to find ways for SOPC and its membership of Suffolk older people to influence their strategies and services
- continue to promote The Charter for Older People in Suffolk

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**I would like to join Suffolk Older People’s Council**...

Please send me further information as it becomes available.

Surname: ______________________
First Name: ______________________
Title (Mr / Mrs / Miss etc): _______
Address: ______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________, Post Code: ______
Telephone Number: ________________
email (if you have one): __________________________

I have ticked how I would like to receive this information:
- [ ] by post
- [ ] by email
- [ ] LARGE PRINT

Older family, friends or neighbours who wish to join can send the same details on a piece of paper to the address overleaf. You may wish to protect your personal details by using an envelope.

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**Current Membership**

Age UK Suffolk - our strategic partner
Alzheimer’s Association
Bury St Edmunds Friendship Centre
East Anglian Indian Association
East Suffolk Association for the Blind
Future East - Regional Forum on Ageing
Individual Family Carers
Kesgrave Help Centre
Local Link Volunteer - Botesdale
National Federation of Occupational Pensioners
National Pensioners Convention - Anglian Region
NHS Retirement Fellowship Partnership with Older People in Suffolk (POPS) (Age UK & Suffolk County Council)
Suffolk Pensioners Association
VOICE - Older People’s Independent Panel (facilitated by Age UK Suffolk)

**Why not join?**

Come and make a difference by building a bolder voice for older people in Suffolk ...

Groups of older people or individual older members - all are welcome.

Fill in and return the attached form and help grow the membership of SOPC so we can get our voices heard. Why not invite other eligible members of your family, friends and neighbours to join too?
Appendix 2 Previous POPS reports
Copies of previous reports are available from www.ageuksuffolk.org or on request

- **Summary of recommendations from older people on developing dementia enabled communities - April 2012-March 2013**

- **Kirkley Talkabout March 2013**
  My Space, My Place… Lets Talk About Kirkley

- **Haverhill Talkabout March 2013**
  Living Today, Remembering, Yesterday

- **Eye Talkabout November 2012**
  Keeping Active, Staying Connected

- **Sudbury Talkabout August 2012**
  Living Today, Remembering, Yesterday

- **Elmwell Talkabout July 2012**
  Living Today, Remembering, Yesterday

- **Leiston Talkabout May 2012**
  Living Today, Remembering, Yesterday

- **East Bergholt Talkabout Nov 2011**
  Getting Involved and Staying Independent

- **Bilstedon Talkabout Oct 2011**
  Getting Involved and Staying Independent

- **Stowmarket Oct 2011**
  Building communities

- **Nayland Talkabout Sept 2011**
  Getting involved and Staying independent

- **Haverhill Talkabout July 2011**
  Building communities

- **Hadleigh Talkabout April 2011**
  Building communities

- **Newmarket Talkabout March 2011**
  Falls Prevention and local services.

- **Lowestoft Talkabout November 2010**
  - Falls Prevention and local services

- **Woodbrige Talkabout October 2010**
- Falls Prevention and local services

- **Brandon Talkabout July 2010**
  - Keeping an Active Body and Mind

- **Sudbury Talkabout March 2010**
  - Living Healthily & Ageing Positively

People, organisations or media wishing to use or reproduce information contained within the above reports may print or download Voice and POPS reports without requiring specific prior permission. Any quotes or excerpts taken from the reports must include the source accreditation to Age UK Suffolk and Suffolk County council.
Suffolk Older People’s Charter

Recognition and Respect

Communication and Information

Health and Wellbeing

Involvement and Participation
OLDER PEOPLE should have the following RIGHTS to:

**Theme: Recognition and Respect**

1. Be recognised as individuals and treated with dignity and respect
2. Be consulted on all issues that impact on their lives
3. Be referred to by the name and title that they prefer

**Theme: Communication and Information**

1. Be given clear and comprehensive information in a sensitive manner
2. Receive specialist support and information appropriately, particularly for those with a sensory loss, learning disabilities, or whose first language is not English
3. Have effective processes to enable their views to be heard on all issues that impact on their lives

**Theme: Choice, Control and Independence**

1. Have a wide range of community support services available locally to promote independence
2. Receive appropriate medical treatment regardless of age
3. Have equitable access to local facilities, e.g., Post Office, social amenities, GP surgery
4. Have equitable access to care and support services based on need irrespective of circumstance or geographic location
5. Live in an age-friendly physical environment
6. Be informed and enabled to have a dignified end of life

**Theme: Involvement and Participation**

1. Have effective processes that enable people to challenge decisions and the ways services are provided
2. Have formalised processes to represent older people’s views within local authorities and at regional level

**Theme: Health and Well-Being**

1. Be given clear and comprehensive information in a sensitive manner, particularly regarding diagnoses, interventions and side effects
2. Be provided with flexible services appropriate to meet the different needs of frail and vulnerable people, e.g., those who are rurally/socially isolated, mentally/physically ill, or people with disabilities
3. Be treated as an individual and never based on assumptions
4. Expect support and help in the community to improve the quality of everyday life
5. Have access to healthy living materials and programmes to enable them to make the most of their later years

TOGETHER we shall take RESPONSIBILITY for:

**Theme: Recognition and Respect**

1. Treating older people with dignity, respect and equity
2. Challenging ageist assumptions and discriminatory practice
3. Acknowledging and promoting the value of older people and the diverse contributions that they make to society
4. Respecting individual needs and wishes and enabling them to live the way they choose
5. Recognising, promoting and celebrating different cultures and faiths and valuing the diverse contributions they make to society
**Theme: Communication and Information**
1. Taking into account communication barriers and recognising the need to provide accurate information in plain language and in accessible formats
2. Providing clear and comprehensive information in a sensitive manner
3. Regularly reviewing the way information about different services is provided to ensure those in most need are able to access it

**Theme: Choice, Control and Independence**
1. Enabling people to have a range of choices that maintain their independence
2. Striving to enable people to live to their full potential irrespective of their age or physical/mental condition
3. Ensure an age-friendly physical environment in our communities.
4. Ensuring there are opportunities that will help break down barriers between people of different ages and cultures and promote community cohesion
5. Providing opportunities for people to plan their end of life choices

**Theme: Involvement and Participation**
1. Providing opportunities for older people and family carers to participate in making decisions that affect their lives, specifically those who are rurally/socially isolated, to bring about acceptable and positive change
2. Working together in partnership with statutory and voluntary organisations to improve the quality of life for older people in the communities in which they live
3. Providing genuine empowerment of older people and giving them a strong voice

**Theme: Health and Well-Being**
1. Giving clear and comprehensive information in a sensitive manner particularly regarding diagnoses, interventions and side effects
2. Providing flexible services appropriate to meet the different needs of frail and vulnerable people, e.g., those who are rurally/socially isolated, mentally/physically ill, or people with disabilities
3. Treating people as individuals, and never based on assumptions
4. Providing support and help in the community to improve the quality of everyday life
5. Providing access to healthy living materials and programmes to enable people to make the most of their later years

**TOGETHER we will strive to PROMOTE:**
1. Equality of opportunity and access to services in the community with choices and alternatives
2. Genuine empowerment of older people and assistance to clarify any complexities involved in making decisions
3. Positive images of older people and the contributions that they make to society
4. An integrated and non-ageist community/society
5. Good practice regarding the dissemination and sharing of clear and accessible information
6. The well-being of individuals and active support to organisations that provide locally-based services
7. Robust and confidential systems, that are easy to understand, to encourage and enable older people to make complaints
8. Sufficient financial support to deliver equitable services across all parts of the county
Co-signatories to the above Charter include:

Suffolk Older Peoples Council Talkabout Report 20th September 2013- ‘Expecting the Unexpected’ Sharing experiences and suggestions on managing life changing events
Appendix 4 Age UK LifeBook

The LifeBook is a free booklet where you write important and useful information about your life, from who insures your car to where you put the TV licence.

Sometimes it is easy to mislay important documents and information, so, we developed the LifeBook to help you find exactly what you need without searching.

**Why should I complete it?**

The LifeBook will not only help you to be more organised but could also be invaluable to a family member or a friend if they need to find important information about you in an emergency.

**How do I use it?**

Follow the step-by-step instructions to fill in the various sections with your details, contacts and locations of important documents. You don’t have to do it all at once - just complete it at your own pace.

The LifeBook is available in a booklet or we can email you a copy to complete and store on your computer.

**Order a LifeBook**

To request a printed copy of a LifeBook or a version to be emailed for you to store and complete on your computer, call **0845 685 1061** and quote reference **ALL 721**.

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