

All Party Parliamentary Group for Ageing and Older People
Ageing Today: new approaches and positive steps

Monday 7th December 2015 4pm-5pm
Committee Room 3, House of Lords

Present:

Parliamentarians:

Baroness Jolly, Baroness Greengross, Rachael Maskell MP

Chair of the meeting:

Baroness Jolly

Guest Speakers:

Cllr Rachael Eden, LGA Health and Wellbeing Board/Reading Borough Council; Shelley Ames, Active Norfolk; Moira Pendlebury, Age UK Coventry

Apologies:

Barbara Keeley MP, Lord Lipsey, Baroness Masham, Lord Foulkes, Paul Flynn MP, Graham Brady MP, Paul Blomfield MP, Stephen Hammond MP, Huw Irranca-Davies MP, Margot James MP, Anne-Marie Morris MP, Kate Osamor MP, Emily Thornberry MP, Sarah Champion MP, Alan Whitehead MP, Alan Mak MP

Introduction:

Baroness Jolly welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the running order.

Guest Speakers:

Baroness Jolly introduced the first speaker, Councillor Rachel Eden, LGA Community Wellbeing Board member and Lead Member for Adult Social Care at Reading Borough Council.

Cllr Eden – Cllr Eden started by saying that older people were not a burden, were the glue that holds communities together and that Local Government was ideally placed to work with older people. She explained that the LGA were calling for more wellbeing and prevention services, which in the long run saved money. Cllr Eden explained that when a day centre closed in Reading, the next day a neighbourhood service was created, led by a former staff member, mostly employing retired volunteers. She added that recently older volunteers had organised a tea dance in a church, carols in the council chamber and a celebration for Older People's Day.

Cllr Eden explained that the council would soon be moving a day centre to an unused wing of a leisure centre, making access to gym equipment, indoor bowls and a swimming pool available. There would also be a separate lounge available for service users. She emphasised that councils needed to consult service users when designing service changes, treating older people as partners. She explained that in Reading she led an Older People's Consultation Group, where there were regular discussions about bus routes, budget consultations, etc.

Baroness Jolly introduced the second speaker, Shelley Ames, Physical Activity Development Manager at Active Norfolk, East Region and physical activity lead for the County Sports Partnership Network, supporting Sport England nationally to promote the success of the two Get Healthy, Get Active funded programmes in Norfolk.

Shelley Ames – Shelley explained that the Mobile Me project, designed to address barriers to participation amongst older people, is funded predominately by Sport England and is a three year programme. She said that the organisers don't set the activities, it was all about informing the participants, giving them choice through taster sessions and then letting them choose their ten week intervention. She added that the programme was developed in conjunction with the University of East Anglia who would be doing a robust evaluation; she gave the example of one participant who when she started wasn't able to lift her arm higher than the table, now, after eight weeks of bowls, she could lift her arm above her head. She explained that the programme was looking to challenge and influence local and national policy, and that sixty people had been engaged so far across four different sites, ages ranging from 58 to 103 years.

Shelley explained that the one of the biggest barriers with the project was convincing participants that they were not "too old" to participate. To help with this, the organisers meet the participants at coffee mornings before the programme starts to get to know them. She added that there have been some issues around "informed consent" with service users suffering from dementia. Age UK Norfolk and the Alzheimer's Society were also involved in the project.

The programme has adaptable equipment and activities like seated bowls and seated zumba, and having site wardens on board helped to promote the activities. Progress has been made more quickly than expected as some residents were getting out the equipment and doing the activities, even when the organisers were not on site.

Baroness Jolly introduced the final speaker, Moira Pendlebury, Director of Services at Age UK Coventry. Moira chairs the Age UK West Midlands Information & Advice network and Social Participation theme group for Coventry's Age Friendly City programme.

Moira Pendlebury – Moira explained Age UK Coventry's "No wrong door" approach, a joined up and holistic programme that guides service users to what might be most beneficial to them. It mostly focuses on prevention, helping to reduce the need for NHS/social care services. She went on to explain how this is delivered via "Wellcheck" - holistic, needs led, guided conversations with older people in their own homes, that signposts and refers service users and provides additional one to one support if needed. Moira talked about an example of a service user in his 60s who had recently lost his wife and was referred to the programme by his GP. During the conversation it was discovered that he had limited reading ability and wanted to improve this, so the programme helped him to enrol in an adult literacy group along with linking him to other services.

Moira explained that Age UK Coventry works locally in conjunction with the fire service, as well as being integrated in a new Hospital Acute Frailty Unit (funded by the Prime Minister's Challenge Fund) and a GP based care navigation pilot funded by the CCG. She commented that it had taken a while to build up a working relationship with the CCG and there had been some problems with GPs not being proactive enough in identifying people who could benefit from the services. She added that funding was patchy and uncertain.

Baroness Jolly asked the speakers in what way older people had been involved in designing the programmes. Moira Pendlebury explained that the Coventry Older Voices group had been involved and 2/3rds of Age UK Coventry's volunteers were older people, who were consulted as well. Shelley Ames explained that older people had chosen the logo for the project and that presumptions couldn't be made about people's preferences. Cllr Eden reiterated the input of the local Older Peoples Working Group and explained how they were involved in consultations and co-design. She explained that they often had sixty people at meetings and would break into sub-groups to ensure people's voices were heard.

Baroness Greengross asked whether any of the local authorities had thought about putting gym equipment in public parks for older people to use. Cllr Eden explained that there were a couple of

parks with these facilities in Reading and that they were popular. Shelley explained that outdoor gyms were available in Norfolk and made use of by other projects and Moira added that Coventry was moving towards becoming an Age Friendly City.

Rachael Maskell MP asked whether Active Norfolk were clinically assessing participants before and after joining the programme as it would be interesting to see if it reduced falls. Shelley explained they underwent functional fitness testing that was British Heart Foundation certified. She added that the programme used wiifit boards to measure balance before and after and that instructors built up a rapport with participants who were then able to signpost them to other services if need be.

In summing up, Baroness Jolly asked the speakers if there was anything the APPG could do in relation to what had been discussed. Cllr Eden suggested that approaches should move away from “crisis” and more towards “prevention”, or eventually services would not be sustainable. She believed that doing so would pay dividends in only a couple of years. Moira Pendlebury commented that Attendance Allowance was the single best solution to improving older people’s lives and keeping them away from statutory services and suggested that this should be protected. Rachael Maskell MP asked whether each programme’s evaluation could be shared with the APPG in six months time, this was agreed.

Baroness Jolly thanked the speakers and group for attending and for their input. There was no further business and the meeting was closed.