

Older People are the Key Partners Better Government for Older People

Better Government for Older People (BGOP) is a UK-wide partnership in which older people are the key partners. Its role is to ensure older people are engaged as citizens at all levels of decision making and shape the development of strategies and services for an ageing population. Scottish Co-ordinator Pat Scrutton details the history of BGOP and explains its approach.

Better Government for Older People began in 1998. For the first two years, it was a UK-wide action research programme, testing out innovative and imaginative approaches to public services with older people at the heart of partnerships. The 28 pilots included three in Scotland; in Scottish Borders, South Lanarkshire and Stirling.

The active engagement of the older people who were involved in the pilot sites in influencing and enabling change locally was not initially replicated at the UK level. In 1999, they put this right when, at a conference at Ruskin College in Oxford, they took over the planned agenda to establish the UK Older People's Advisory Group (UKOPAG). Now based on representation from the three devolved nations and the nine English regional development areas, this is one of the two elements which were sustained after the pilot phase.

The other element is the network. During the early years, other interested organisations joined with the pilot sites to share their experience, interesting practice and ideas for future development. These opportunities were very much valued.

As Scottish Co-ordinator, I therefore have a dual role: supporting the Scottish Older People's Advisory Group (SOPAG) and both developing new networks and making links between existing networks.

In some ways, it is easier to define BGOP by what it is not than by what it is. We do not campaign or lobby; rather, we seek to influence; to engage in dialogue, in partnership and in collaboration. We do not see older people as a sum of their health and social care needs, as unaffordable burdens, or as victims; our view of older people is as among our most active citizens, full of potential, and contributing in innumerable ways to their families and friends, to their local communities, and to society at large.

Active ageing is something we can all engage in throughout our lives. There is a growing body of evidence that remaining – or becoming – physically and mentally active as we age has a huge impact on our health, our well-being and our quality of life.

John McKnight talks about the five determinants of health: our personalities and lifestyles; our family and social networks; our physical environment; our financial status; and health services. He argues that the first four are all significantly more important than the provision of services, necessary though these are at times.

If there is one thing we could change, it would be to “invert the triangle of care”; to invest substantially in opportunities for lifelong learning, physical activity and volunteering; in improving housing and tackling the root causes of poverty and isolation; and, as people become more frail, in therapy and in support with gardening, shopping, and help with simple household tasks. The resulting savings in acute medicine and in long term care would more than cover the cost.

BGOP is an agent for change; but change will only happen when government and society listen to, and recognise the value of, their ageing population.

Pat Scrutton, Scottish Co-ordinator

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Health in Later Years – the Voice of Older People

Last year, at national level we saw the publication of 'All Our Futures: Planning for Scotland with an Ageing Population'. This strategic document was a result of a wide ranging consultation process prompted by the recognition that 21st century demographic changes would lead to a vast increase in the older population in the western world. Recent estimates suggest that the number of people over 50 will increase by 28%, and those over 75 by 75% by 2031 (All Our Futures: Summary and Action Plan p3). Key themes for older people emerged from this strategy – improving opportunities, improving links between the generations, improving the health and quality of life, and improving care, support and protection for those who need it.

This issue illustrates how this work is moving forward though we recognise that a huge range of activity is taking place across the country that both involves older people in planning for new opportunities and brings together people and organisations from the different sectors to work in partnership.

The contributions from Better Government for Older People and the Health in Later Life Programme highlight how it is possible to make a difference at national level. The article from the Senior Studies Institute provides an example of how lifelong learning has progressed in academic circles in recent years. Our examples from the Borders, Perth & Kinross, Dundee and Castlemilk clearly define how increased opportunities and choices at local level can positively impact on the day to day lives of the people who get involved. The Government can take heart from some of the messages that are coming from the local scene reflecting the principles contained in 'All Our Futures'.

- ✕ “...the opportunity is there for older people to use their skills and be valuable and valued members of their communities.” (Elder Voice)
- ✕ “...this project has revitalised those who take part with a sense of achievement and worth, in some cases revolutionising their outlook in life.” (Healthy Communities Collaborative)
- ✕ “...the group now hope to go on and develop intergenerational projects aimed at breaking down the barriers between older and younger people with the aim of reducing fear of crime.” (Celebrate Age Network)

I'm sure readers will agree that these are good examples of improving opportunities, improving links between the generations, improving the health and quality of life, and improving care, support and protection for those who need it and most of all, community engagement!

Andrew Gardiner, CHEX-Point Editorial Board



Skilling-up for community engagement – Perth and Kinross Healthy Communities Collaborative (see page 3 for more details)

CONTENTS

PG1	Health in Later Years	PG5	Equality and Quality of Life for Older People
PG2	Scottish Borders Elder Voice	PG6	Learning Later, Living Longer and Feeling Healthier
PG3	Healthy Communities Collaborative in Perth and Kinross	PG7	CAN do - Celebrate Age Network Dundee
PG4	Older People Stay Active in Castlemilk	PG8	Older People are the Key Partners

Equality and Quality of Life for Older People - Health in Later Life Programme

The aim of Health Scotland's Health in Later Life programme is to identify and encourage factors that facilitate and promote healthy ageing, and to promote equitable services and policies across the population. Mental Health and well-being has been identified as a major priority within the Later Life programme and constitutes a main strand of the programme's activities. In this article, Fiona Borrowman details the work carried out to date.

The Health in Later Life Programme at NHS Health Scotland was established in 2001. Its aim is to promote healthy ageing, with mental health and well-being being seen as central.

The underpinning ethos is about working with older people, for older people. No one knows better how to improve the health and well-being of older people than older people themselves, and the Programme is designed to ensure their voice is heard.

The Mental Health and Well Being in Later Life Integrated Health Improvement Development Programme, produced in partnership with Age Concern Scotland and the Mental Health Foundation, was launched in 2003. The first three years of the Programme focused on:

- ✕ sharing learning from research to underpin health promoting activities with older people
- ✕ building older people's capacity to engage in activity at local, regional and national level
- ✕ developing education and information resources.

The Programme has been given extra impetus by the UK Inquiry into Mental Health and Well-being in Later Life, on which NHS Health Scotland worked in partnership with the Mental Health Foundation and Age Concern Scotland, and by the EU report, 'Healthy Ageing'.

The UK Inquiry report is based on views from over 900 older people and identifies five key factors that impact on their mental health and well-being: discrimination, participation, relationships, physical

health and poverty. The EU report summarises much of the research on older people and health to provide pointers for good practice.

Both reports, and indeed the Scottish Strategy for older people, 'All Our Futures', stress that projects on health in later life must involve older people in their design, delivery and evaluation.

Bolstered by the reports and the Scottish strategy, the Programme moved into a new phase in 2006/07 and 14 areas were encouraged to develop projects focusing on promoting the evidence and messages from the reports, through partnership working at local level. Five second-stage projects were subsequently supported to look more closely at the issue of inequalities.

The local projects used a variety of means to engage with and involve older people, including consensus conferences, forums and information leaflets. Each has been able to report significant progress on matters that really count for local older people. An external evaluation of the first phase found that the programme had worked effectively and was valued by older people.

NHS Health Scotland has also recently worked with the Care Commission on a project that looked at how older people in care homes understand the notion of health and well-being and what helps and hinders them in achieving it. The research report gives further backing to the engagement and involvement of older people in determining how their health and well-being can be maintained and improved. Similar work on supporting people with dementia and their carers is also ongoing.

NHS Health Scotland is now looking forward to promoting the combined learning from these experiences as a contribution to the development of the Scottish Government's emerging strategy, 'Towards a Mentally Flourishing Scotland'.

**Fiona Borrowman, Programme Manager
- Dementia, Mental Health and Older People**

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CAN do - Celebrate Age Network Dundee

Celebrate Age Network in Dundee is a project funded by the local authority social work department and NHS Tayside and managed by Dundee Voluntary Action. In this article, Co-ordinator Susan Gunn explains how the project works with older people to influence the way their services are planned and delivered.



North East of Scotland Chinese Seniors Group taking part in arts and craft activities funded by the Older People Engaging Needs Project.

A local forum representing older people has been set up, meeting regularly with service providers to give feedback about existing services and to contribute to the planning of new ones. The forum has three representatives on Dundee's Older People's Strategic Planning Group, which is a partnership group comprising of health, social care and housing professionals. The CAN Forum has recently taken the lead in developing the involvement strategy of the group and are hoping to attract funding for a project to engage with socially isolated older people and develop area based forums.

Other plans for the future include a resource pack and website for older people. Work is underway to gather information about services and activities for older people with an inter-agency group set up to manage the project. CAN Forum members have also participated in a Planning and Organising Your Website Training Day facilitated by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations and are currently preparing a brief for a web developer.

The project also works in partnership with agencies to organise consultations with older people. Most recently, over one hundred older people have contributed to the planning of new accommodation with care services in Dundee. This has included a major consultation event and public vote, focus groups with black and minority ethnic elders, the deaf and blind communities and the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.

Community Safety has been another area addressed by the forum. Members have taken part in a pilot peer speaking project organised by Help The Aged Scotland. Volunteers were trained to give talks on the subject of bogus callers and delivered presentations in communities across Dundee.

The group now hope to go on to develop inter generational projects aimed at breaking down barriers between older and younger people with the aim of reducing the fear of crime.

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CAN Forum member George Tadden giving a talk to a community group about bogus callers.

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Learning Later, Living Longer and Feeling Healthier

Returning to education in later years can be immensely rewarding for many of our older citizens. For many individuals, continuing within higher or further education in their youth would simply not have been an option open to them. However, the benefits of lifelong learning can reach far beyond the realms of mere 'unfinished business', as Brian McKechnie from the University of Strathclyde's Senior Studies Institute reports.

There is lots of evidence from research into health during retirement that people who retire early live shorter, less healthy lives than those retiring at 65 or later. Many people find this surprising, supposing that not having to work daily means that their lives will be less stressful and, consequently, more enjoyable. However, having a purposeful and active lifestyle in later life will positively and significantly impact on an individual's health, overall quality of life and longevity.



Brian McKechnie
Senior Studies Institute

Nowhere in Europe is this demonstrated better than at the University of Strathclyde's Senior Studies Institute. The Institute was established to provide a range of lifelong learning opportunities for older adults, aged 50+. From five initial classes in 1987 with just over 200 students, the programme has steadily expanded over the last 21 years, and now has more than 250 classes and 4,000 students, with growth continuing.

Located in the heart of Glasgow, the Institute - part of the University of Strathclyde's Centre for Lifelong Learning - caters for every taste, with courses in art, health and fitness, information technology, literature and many other subjects. Most of the Institute's students have never attended university or college before, and find that learning with other older adults means that classes are conducted at a pace and in a manner that makes the experience of learning really enjoyable.

The Institute was established to meet the increasing demand from older people for learning which matched their interests, aptitudes and needs. From small beginnings, the Institute has grown to become a centre of excellence in the provision of lifelong learning for older people. The Senior Studies Institute is unique in Scotland, and is internationally recognised for the quality of its educational programme and its expanding role in advising policy makers and business on age-focused issues.

The development of the Institute has played an important part in the University of Strathclyde's mission to advance a knowledge society by providing high-quality education opportunities to all students, regardless of background, inspiring them to develop their abilities to the full.

SSI has 4 main areas of work.

- X Lifelong Learning: encouraging continuing personal growth and intellectual development of older learners through a wide ranging programme of daytime classes, seminars and other learning opportunities.
- X Useful Learning: providing opportunities for people over 50 to use their learning and life skills in a range of socially valuable contexts – as family members, citizens, volunteers, in employment or enterprise.
- X Widening access to other university courses and expanding opportunities in the community. This is achieved by working with local partners in encouraging learners to participate from all communities.
- X Initiating and supporting research into later life issues and sharing knowledge about the human resource value of the older population.

For more information about courses at the Senior Studies Institute, contact: Senior Studies Institute, University of Strathclyde, 40 George Street, Glasgow G1 1QE.
Tel: 0141 548 4287.
Web: www.cll.strath.ac.uk



Healthy Communities Collaborative in Perth and Kinross

The Perth and Kinross Healthy Communities Collaborative is a community based health improvement project that aims to help older people in Perth and Kinross stay fit, active and healthy. Project Manager Jackie Doe tells us about their innovative approach.

The Perth and Kinross Healthy Communities Collaborative is uniquely led by teams of local older people working in conjunction with professionals and multi-agency representatives to impact on health related issues pertinent to their peers in their communities. Commencing in February 2005, two of the original three teams have extended to include neighbouring areas and a fourth team has been established.

The teams now have over 50 older people and 25 professionals from various agencies including health, local authority, private and voluntary sectors. This interagency working has enabled useful links to be established with people who are aware of the project and willing to progress the work. In many cases, this is due to the tenacity of the local older people who, due to local knowledge, know who best to contact within their area.

The success of the project has been due to the "Plan, Do, Study, Act" methodology used. Once a focus area is identified, the older volunteers decide what might work best within their community, someone comes up with an idea, this is tested out, the results are examined and the team consider how it can be improved and try again sharing their successes with the other teams.

In year one, the focus was raising awareness about falls risk – particularly looking at footwear, vision, environment, medication reviews and exercise. Following this in year two, the teams concentrated on ways to promote a more physically active lifestyle. Indoor Kurling, a fun activity suitable for all abilities, was introduced by the teams to sheltered housing units, lunch clubs, care homes and public events. Four Kurling groups are now established with about 55 people regularly taking part. Additionally, ten professionals and five community members qualified as chair-based exercise instructors through Leicester College. There are now 16 weekly groups in the area with over 100 attending and two groups are run by older team members for their peers. In the third year, the teams have voted Mental Health and Well-being in Later Life as the topic to focus on. Within this, they are addressing poverty, discrimination, physical health, relationships and participation in meaningful activity.

Team members have benefited in so many ways from being involved with the project. They have improved their skills, knowledge and capacity by attending courses and implementing what they have learned to improve their communities. They have also made great gains in confidence and pride including presenting to key Government Ministers. This initiative, jointly funded by Health and Local Authority, has raised awareness of potential fall risks, increased exercise opportunities for frailer older people and is now exploring barriers to mental health and wellbeing in later life. Team members have been inspired to spread the original topic and are constantly identifying new ideas resulting in impressive results. The lifeblood of concerned communities is committed local people and this project has revitalised those who take part with a sense of achievement and worth and, in some cases, revolutionising their outlook on life.

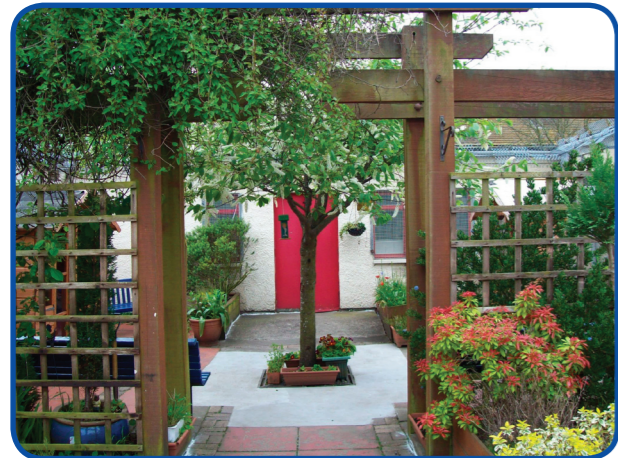


Indoor Kurling at the Lunch Club

Jackie Doe, Project Manager
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Older People Stay Active in Castlemilk

Since its inception in 1985, the Castlemilk Pensioners Action Centre in Glasgow has grown from a small club into a well known and highly respected organisation. Heather Roe tells us about the unique and popular spectrum of services and activities provided to local people by the Centre.



Castlemilk Pensioners Action Centre

Our Centre was established more than 25 years ago by members of the community who recognised the desperate need for recreational activities for our local pensioners.

One of our main aims is to encourage elderly people to remain independent in their own homes for as long as possible. Another is to address issues of loneliness, isolation and exclusion. By tackling the latter, we automatically make inroads into the former.

One of our main facilities is a community café. The café serves hot breakfasts and nutritious lunches and provides a warm, safe and welcoming environment for members to spend time with their peers. Nobody has to participate in anything but there are plenty of opportunities for those who do. As the costs are subsidised for members, a two-course meal costs only £1-10.

The Centre runs a 'Housebound Club' three times per week. Our staff (drivers and escorts) use specially adapted minibuses to collect the housebound members from home and bring them to the Centre where they can join in quizzes, classes, carpet bowls or just watch TV. The Centre was fortunate enough to secure 'Big Lottery' funding for a pilot programme called Pathways Arts Initiative. Our members get to

participate in organised trips and events to museums, stately homes, the ballet, theatre productions and other places of cultural interest. Again, at hugely subsidised prices and free transport, these outings become accessible to people who were never in a position to participate before. The first year proved so popular that we now have a full calendar for the next 6 months.

Regular classes are run from the premises in Art, Local History and Basic Computing and Internet. Our little cyber café offers access to the internet which further addresses isolation and offers e-mail contact with physically distant family and friends.



One of many activities offered by the Centre

The Centre has 11 full and part-time staff and an army of local volunteers, aged 18-80. Due to the local and caring nature of the organisation itself, there is a very low turnover in staff and the result, which was always our intention to achieve, is a mutual respect and rapport between staff and members and the feeling of belonging to a large, safe, extended family. One of the reasons for our on-going success is the dedication of the staff and continuing to offer a varied and interesting programme of activities.

Heather Rae, Fundraising and Admin
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Scottish Borders Elder Voice



Scottish Borders Elder Voice is a charitable organisation dedicated to the needs of the 50plus. It aims to encourage active ageing, good health and increase the influence of older people to effect change where it is seen to be necessary. In this article, Elder Voice Chairman Sheila Graham details the range of information services the organisation provides to the area including valuable outreach work and their popular newsletter.

The Elder Voice was developed from a Government initiative called Better Government for Older People and launched as the Elder Voice in April 2001. People of 50plus were invited to participate in conferences and talk of their problems and concerns.

Solutions to concerns were sought through "task-groups" addressing the problems and working in partnership with local council representatives and service providers on topics such as Health, Care, Housing, Transport, Learning, Leisure, Image, Money Matters, Ageism and Employment.

The Elder Voice aims to improve services for older people by keeping them informed on matters concerning the over 50s; meeting the needs of 50plus; promoting active ageing and a positive view of ageing; promoting social inclusion and recognition of the value of the 50plus; increasing membership and thus providing a representative voice of older people; increasing participation of 50plus by establishing area groups; increasing recognition of the value of 50plus by service providers, thus improving effectiveness; and securing sustained financial status and enabling development, efficiency and effectiveness of the Elder Voice.

Older people benefit from this organisation through receiving a free bi-monthly newsletter full of information relating to older people on topics of special interest. Through this newsletter, they also have a medium by which they can communicate with others. There are opportunities to meet, discuss with and question service providers. By offering their services to the running of the Elder Voice, the opportunity is there for older people to use their skills and be valuable and valued members of their communities.

This, in turn, improves matters for the rest of the community. If services are improved to suit older people then everyone benefits. Other members of society also know that the place of older people is being considered, their concerns discussed and their value noted. Society can call on the experience and

skills of older people through intergenerational events and communication, to widen understanding across communities.

The Elder Voice operates by issuing a newsletter; holding events across the Scottish Borders on topics of concern involving services; doing out-reach work across the Borders which entails visiting various groups of older people and either doing a presentation on a specific requested topic or variety of topics and providing panels of speakers to inform and answer questions from the audience.

At each meeting or presentation, an information-table is in evidence. This is furnished with information leaflets on topics such as pensions, health matters, tax, housing, elder abuse, safety, fuel costs, allowances, woodland burials and Fire and Police Services etc. Other organisations' leaflets are also on view e.g. Help the Aged, Age Concern, CAB, BIAS etc. giving those attending the opportunity to gather helpful information on topics and organisations of which they may not be aware.

Consultations with our members have shown that specific areas of concern as well as the above are the lack of rural transport; health services such as dentistry, podiatry and provision of hearing tests and hearing aids; the waiting times to see specialists and the difficulties in acquiring help from the caring services when age or disability makes one unable to care for oneself.

At present, the Elder Voice is arranging the coming season's outreach programme, constructing the development plan, considering any training needs necessary for volunteers and trying to marry the projected programme of work with funding applications by which to sustain it. Although the Elder Voice is supported in part by Scottish Borders Council, NHS Borders and donations, the main support for the work of presentations, surveys, events, task-groups and meetings, is grant funding. Since the Elder Voice is a Scottish Charity run by volunteers and has no paid workers, applying for funding is in itself a necessary and demanding part of the activities.

Sheila Graham, Chairman, Elder Voice

For further information, or to sign up to Scottish Borders Elder Voice, contact:- diana.findlay@btopenworld.com