

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

**CARE AND INDEPENDENCE AND HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

28 March 2024

Report of the Older People's Champion

This is my second report as the Older People's Champion. This role is all about raising the profile and the 'voice' of older people so that the issues that matter to them in their communities become and remain a priority on the agendas of local decision makers.

We are still living with the impact of Covid19, and with how its dampened older people's enthusiasm to engage in a way that seemed so natural previously. We also know, as our Director of Public Health rightly continues to emphasise, that the virus is still out there, and we must now continue to learn to live with it.

A key priority still remains "how can we help make older people's representative groups more self-sufficient, more active and more independent ?." The role is about helping to empower older people so that they can live their lives independently with full trust in those around them.

North Yorkshire Council (NYC) has always wanted there to be a strong and proactive independent voice and representation for the full diversity of older people living in all parts of the County and NYC needs to listen, understand and be responsive; creating a trusting, positive, proactive and mutually beneficial relationship; and gaining local and countywide perspectives on the needs of older people and the Council's capacity to meet them.

Events and Activities Over the Past Year

**Yorkshire & Humber Pensioners Convention 'Campaigning for Outstanding
Bus Services,' 17th June 2023**

This group has an active transport group that campaigns around transport issues particularly the crisis in bus services. Before the pandemic they had published a transport manifesto 'Better Bus Services: good for people, good for the planet.' The day was opened by the Shadow Secretary for Transport and closed by Rachel Maskell MP for York. It was an interesting day with workshops on Rural services, Climate change, Accessibility and Equality. The £2 bus fare was discussed and agreed this needed to be extended as it allowed older people to get out and about and not feel isolated. Conclusions of the day were around affordability and reliability with public transport for all with good accessibility and Disability designed transport. This was a conference funded by Associated and retired members of various Trade Unions. Transport is one of the most talked about subjects.

Age Friendly Network & Communities

Community First Yorkshire and the Age Friendly Network continue to provide fantastic resources and support to the County with invaluable information and links to useful articles. The two most recent bulletins can be found below:

[Age Friendly December Update](#)

[Age Friendly January Update](#)

We are developing links in Filey/Scarborough/Whitby to look at how age friendly can support with work around coastal rejuvenation. Coastal areas often have a higher proportion of older people with concerns around transport, housing and accessibility.

Voice and Representation of People 50+ Network and Growing Old in North Yorkshire survey

Community First Yorkshire (CFY) continue to develop this piece of work with the voice and representation of older people in North Yorkshire at the heart of the project. Since my last report CFY have been busy establishing many of the fundamental aspects of an inclusive, age friendly network for the whole community, which has seen this initiative really start to take shape.

A steering group is now in place, made up of stakeholders and partners, with links to key figures in local government and organisations. They meet on a regular basis to discuss strategies, and monitor progress, purpose and opportunities for the project. The findings of the resident's survey carried out have now been analysed, published and widely distributed amongst key stakeholders, and can be viewed on the CFY website [here](#).

Alongside this strategic work, our 180+ members were given the opportunity to vote in a poll to 'name the network'. The working title has now been replaced with a permanent name; '**Age Friendly Network – a voice for North Yorkshire.**' Following this milestone, CFY have developed a marketing strategy for the network which includes a bright new logo, updated webpages and communication material to increase awareness, connect with older people in the community and ultimately increase the reach of the network and membership numbers. A regular newsletter is now circulated on a bi-monthly basis with additional news 'bulletins' where information is of a more timely nature.

CFY have continued to develop the infrastructure of the network and recently facilitated a well-attended workshop to help shape policy development around the network and exchange ideas and insights of a people's charter and citizen's assembly - both of which are key factors in the stability and continuity of the network going forward. The event was facilitated by the network Co-ordinator and a guest speaker from The Good Practice Mentors attended, alongside network members, representatives from local government and key organisations such as Age UK, CFY and NY Libraries service.

CFY will continue to develop this project, using a collaborative approach and raising awareness of the network through engagement, participation and open discussion

around the topics and themes that matter to the residents of towns and villages throughout North Yorkshire, aligning the purpose of the network with tangible actions towards fostering a supportive environment where people of all ages can connect, learn from each other and contribute to their communities.

Intergenerational Social Action

In March 2023 I attended an event at Sherburn High School where a company called The Linking Network had brought together Year 9 Health and Social Care students from the school and older people from the Sherburn area who met to explore social action together, in an intergenerational project. They met over three sessions to talk about issues important to them, made collages in small groups together to explore these issues and find out more about one another and also discover what they had in common. They produced a self-published magazine that showed the issues they explored:

- Our local community and improving where we live
- National and global issues
- Supporting our mental health

It was interesting to hear of the journey they had taken, and it was good to see the friendship that had grown between the pupils and the older people.

I think this is something we can look further into, to possibly replicate in some of our care homes and local schools

Harrogate Older People's Forum:

I attended their meeting in May where Carly Walker, Public Health Manager, HAS, presented some of the findings from the Over 50's consultation. There was also a presentation from Healthwatch about the work they are doing in North Yorkshire. This is a well-attended Forum that has lots happening, Richard Webb, Director of HAS, is attending their next meeting, they have a Lunch Club, organise trips out. It was good to be included in their meeting.

One thing that was flagged up to me was Yorkshire Water's Water support, this is for those people who are on Pension credit with savings of less than £16,000.

[Further detail available here](#)

Rights of Older people

The parliamentary Women and Equalities Committee launched an enquiry into the rights of older people, and we asked older people to share their views which fed into the enquiry. Feedback from older residents in North Yorkshire includes concerns about organisations relying on digital technology to communicate rather than face to face/paper; concerns about closures of banks, post offices and move to on-line banking;

Lots of examples were shared about ageism and how older people can be stereotyped. Suggestions for action included promoting more positive images of older people; training for staff; intergenerational work; involving older people in everything that affects them; flexible working; support at work for carers and age friendly recruitment practices.

North Yorkshire Citizens Advice and Law Centre covers York and North Yorkshire. They provide free, confidential and impartial information and advice on a range of issues including money, benefits, housing and employment, and campaign on big issues affecting people's lives. Their goal is to help everyone find a way forward, whatever problem they face. They are an independent charity and part of the Citizens Advice and Law Centre networks across England and Wales.

The most recent annual report can be viewed [here](#)

Pension Credits

Linda Porritt heads up the Income Maximisation Team in Health and Adult Services. The aim is to increase a person's weekly income by identifying welfare benefits entitlement; the outcome is to assist people to live independently for longer with potential for reducing or delaying the reliance on statutory services and improving a person's financial health and wellbeing.

Helen Richardson worked with Linda to launch a Pension Credit campaign in the next few weeks. Local calculations estimate that 6,000 North Yorkshire residents are not accessing Pension Credit which equates to around £20million unclaimed funding. It is hoped that the campaign will encourage over 65's to check whether they are eligible. 26,000 flyers were received from Independent Age which went in the Household Support Fund letters, also received 2500 A5 booklets so far – 2000 have been dropped with libraries and 500 to NYFRS. A further 1000 were expected – 500 for Citizens Advice and 500 for NYC use.

Further details can be found [Here](#)

Dementia Strategy Refresh

As you know we are refreshing the Bring me Sunshine dementia strategy. We held a series of engagement events in the summer which were well attended and provided helpful feedback.

The main issues being highlighted through the engagement are:

- Concerns around delays in people being diagnosed with dementia and long waiting lists. People can wait up to 2 years and even longer for young onset. Covid has contributed to these delays but there are also increasing numbers of people coming forward
- The need for more specialist training for professionals, particularly in care settings
- Stronger links to primary care
- Support for carers and in particular access to short stay respite
- The need to restart work on the dementia friendly scheme where businesses/organisations sign up to demonstrate they are dementia friendly
- The importance of working together in partnership to take this work forward

Dementia Forward launched their U&Me campaign to raise awareness of young onset dementia with 24th October being designated as young onset dementia awareness day each year. (#YODA)

This year, to mark the day and as part of their U&ME Campaign 'To Create a Voice' they released a special track, which has been written and performed by Scott Quinn. It is inspired by the words of Jonathan Beardsworth (who is living with young onset dementia) and also features him on guitar.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i78ovqdilm4>

Falls Summit

The purpose of the event was to share what is happening now and what is new and to identify gaps and opportunities to help shape a future vision; and bring together a range of agencies who have an interest in falls to share ideas and good practice. It was a day packed with information with some very good presentations. Why is Falls prevention important? This quote made me think:

'It takes a child one year to acquire independent movement and ten years to acquire independent mobility. An old person can lose both in a day' – Professor Bernard Isaacs in *The Challenge of Geriatric Medicine* 1992.

Discussions are ongoing about actions following the Falls Summit. A report has been produced and a series of recommendations have been made. In particular there is a need for a more joined up approach to falls across the county. Physical activity is one of the most protective factors in reducing falls is physical activity.

Falls prevention - Following the falls summit pathways are being developed so that there is a clear and co-ordinated approach to falls prevention and how we respond to people who have fallen. We are mapping what is available which is helping to identify gaps in provision and working with partners to look at solutions.

We also received some care home falls capital funding from the NHS so are looking at how we can target this at care homes where the need is greatest to prevent falls.

Older People and Sport

Physical Activity for adults and older adults has several benefits, these include:

- General Health benefits
- Improved sleep
- Healthy weight maintenance
- Stress management
- General quality of life improvement

Leisure and Sport Working Group

I was a Member of this working group that undertook a series of visits to facilities across the County, from all operators, including community owned/managed facilities. The group participated in workshops and a number of meetings to assess and challenge the emerging model and recommendations. This was a very interesting and worthwhile review underpinned by wider engagement with communities and key stakeholders.

The review is built on the principle that sport, physical activity and opportunities to move more should be accessible to everyone. The new service is an inclusive one

which aims to inspire and enable everyone to be more active and address the barriers that prevent people from being as active as they would like.

The recommendations going forward from the working group were:

- The new delivery model for the sport and active wellbeing service be approved.
- That Members support the phased transition over the next 4 years to a single in-house management model for the service. As part of this that the Selby services transfer to the in-house service from September 2024 when the current contract ends.
- That Members support the undertaking of a Leisure Investment Strategy.

I look forward to seeing the future sport and leisure provision develop with the inclusion and welcoming of the older person.

Loneliness and Social Participation

We all need someone to talk to, but not all of us are lucky enough to have someone. I hear from some older people, especially those with complex health conditions, that they have struggled to return and re-adjust to a fully active life since having to isolate.

On Friday 23rd June I was invited to raise the Armed Forces Veteran Aware Flag at the Friarage, this was followed by a tour of the hospital and saw at first hand the fantastic additions to the hospital and the site where the new operating theatres will be constructed.

What is going on in the Community ?

Danceathon

I was delighted to be asked to join Richard Webb and Cllr Michael Harrison to judge the 'Come Dance with care providers services.' The theme was 'Bring Me Sunshine,' there were many hilarious entries which made it very difficult to choose, submissions came from all over the County. It was something that was enjoyed by residents and care providers, and I am hoping this will become an annual event. Who would think you could do the conga with a zimmer frame!

International Day of The Older Person

Building on successes in previous years it is the intention to increase the number of events throughout the County.

Seasonal Health Partnership Conference 2023

This was held on 14th September 2023 with delegates from many areas including North Yorkshire Council, North Yorkshire Citizens Advice and Law Centre, Dementia Forward, Healthwatch North Yorkshire and NHS Humber and North Yorkshire ICB amongst others. The conference focussed on :

- Winter Health Planning – winter preparedness and resilience for the health and care system including vaccinations
- Warm Spaces – guidance on setting up warm spaces in local communities
- Seasonal Health Strategic Partnership – sharing good practice by organisations across North Yorkshire to deliver the North Yorkshire Seasonal Health Strategy 2021-2026

- Reaching Eastern European Communities – supporting and engaging with eastern European communities.

NHS Healthchecks

The NHS health check programme has recovered well since the covid pandemic with 40.1% of those invited accepting an appointment. The health check is targeted at residents aged 40-74 and helps identify whether a person might be more at risk of certain diseases such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and kidney disease. For people over the age of 65 it covers symptoms of dementia to look out for.

Vaccinations - Uptake of COVID and Flu vaccinations is monitored throughout the vaccination period, and we target comms and vaccination to low uptake areas/cohorts, such as care homes, GP surgeries etc. Overall, our uptake for COVID and Flu in over 65s is good. (85.7% in 22/23 compared to 79.9% in England).

We plan to look into increasing uptake of the shingles vaccine as although we are higher than the national average, uptake was only 55.7% of our population.

Warm and Well, Winter Health & Fuel Poverty

The team have worked with comms to get a winter landing page prepared to bring together all of our winter messages. The Season Heath partnership agreed key messages this year to prevent duplication and dilution of messaging.

To help reduce fuel poverty there are schemes to support eligible residents with energy efficiency improvements. E.g., Home upgrade grant.

The warm and well single point of contact provides advice about energy efficiency, fuel poverty and cold homes. The latest quarterly report highlights that 17% of the 1195 residents supported were over the age of 65.

IT Accessibility

Work is underway with Stronger Communities around good practice across the County and ensuring alternative forms of information are available for those not digital. There is a plan to set up a subgroup of the older people's network to champion this work.

AbilityNet provide free in-home technology advice and support, enabling disabled and older people get the most from their computer, smartphone or tablet. All volunteers are DBS checked. Further details can be found at www.abilitynet.org.uk

Or call 0800 048 7642.

Safeguarding

The most recent number of reported safeguarding concerns in quarter 3 was up by 24% (328 concerns) year on year and there continues to be a significant and sustained increase in concerns.

Analysis of activity data has highlighted two issues that have been key factors in increasing the number of concerns:

- A rise in the number of people whose safeguarding issues have been raised by more than one person or agency. The concerns raised by individual

agencies, practitioners or family members will often be linked to a single referral for further action; and,

- A change in recording practice, which is more accurately capturing work that has been triaged or screened out appropriately as part of the process. This is now recorded as a safeguarding concern.

Whilst these issues both increase the number of concerns being recorded, they do not indicate an increase in the number of safeguarding incidents. Case file reviews indicate that concerns are being raised appropriately and that the subsequent referrals are being progressed and investigated appropriately.

In the meantime, I encourage members to take the opportunity to bring any issues up with the Chair of the North Yorkshire Adults Safeguarding Board when the Committee reviews the Board's annual report.

Chris Witty Visit

Sir Chris Witty visited Harrogate in June and I was pleased to be invited to the meeting. He visited a number of projects including Extra Care, a community shop, Dementia Forward and integration work with health to highlight how we support an ageing population in a rural area. He fed back that "I learned a lot and was very impressed by what you and your teams are doing." In fact, this year's annual report is on health in an ageing society and was launched on 10th November. There is a chapter featuring North Yorkshire in the report highlighting the work we are doing in a rural area. The report includes recommendations for Government and local areas. The report can be found [here](#).

North Yorkshire (Scarborough in particular) was highlighted in the report as an area that will see a much bigger increase in the older people's population compared to other areas in the country and we need to make sure that we plan services in readiness for this increase.

Priorities and Concerns for the Year Ahead

Housing

This year marks the 20th anniversary since the first Extra Care development opened in North Yorkshire. The Orchards, in Brompton, near Northallerton, became the first Extra Care scheme to open in the county in 2003. Since then, developments have been built in towns and villages across North Yorkshire, providing an invaluable resource in social care while allowing residents to keep what is so important to them – their independence. The schemes offer both purpose-built housing as well as care and support for residents and some developments also host a local library, a shop or a café and some also have hairdressers.

There are now developments in locations including Tadcaster, Bentham, Settle, Leyburn, Richmond, Harrogate and Knaresborough as well as Filey, Scarborough, Bainbridge, Castleton and Easingwold. Twenty years ago, the original plan was for 20 sites to be opened by 2025, although that figure is now expected to be as high as 30 schemes. A total of £9 million has been invested in Extra Care facilities in North Yorkshire in the past few years alone.

Not only are these housing schemes vital to ensuring that we can provide the support needed for older and disabled people, but they are also key to reducing the impact on a stretched NHS by allowing people to remain in their own home as their health and care needs change.

Housing Strategy

The Housing Strategy consulted with key partners and stakeholders and its vision is to ensure good quality, affordable, healthy and sustainable homes that meet the present and future needs of all our communities. This focusses on 3 themes:

- Our People
- Our Places
- Our Homes

I will be keeping a focus on this in relation to its relevance to older people with my position on the Care and Independence and Housing Committee.

Transport Infrastructure for Appointments

Feedback from older people in our recent survey highlighted that the most common concern was the frequency and timings of bus services e.g., irregular return bus times, buses stopping at a certain time which prevents people from accessing some activities, health appointments or using the bus for work. “Without a car it is virtually impossible to access and health care facilities” Many also fed back that there were no or limited services where they lived. There were numerous comments about the impact that this was having on residents, in particular relating to isolation and loneliness with areas highlighted where there was no public transport.

Appreciation

I would like to place on record my thanks for the support received from Health and Adult Services Directorate and Public Health, Corporate Services and from Stronger Communities. I have always been able to rely on strong support from my fellow Councillors – especially those on this Committee. Finally, I want to thank all the volunteers whose contribution so often goes under the radar.

“There’s a wealth of knowledge and experience in the world of ageing and age friendly communities, and a strong culture of sharing. Learning from one another can help us make ageing better a reality in our communities.” – Centre for Ageing Better

We may be getting older but that does not mean we have to be boring and act our age!! 😊

A parting thought:

“Don’t get all wound up about getting older, our age is merely the number of years the world has been enjoying us!”

‘Middle Aged Human’

Cllr Caroline Dickinson

Older Peoples Champion

County Hall,
NORTHALLERTON

March 2024

Background Documents – Nil