



Yate Ageing Better Consultation

Final Report

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Prepared for Yate Town Council

Contents

Introduction	1
Ageing Better - the national context	2
Research methods	6
Findings from the questionnaire	9
Providers and facilities for older people in Yate	17
Recommendations	27
References and links	i
Appendices	ii

Introduction

Located on the South West edge of the Cotswolds, and a dozen miles from Bristol City Centre, Yate grew from a village to a sizeable town during the 1960s. This period of expansion was reflected in the age breakdown in the 2011 Census which shows that at the start of this decade over 40% of the population of the town was aged 30-59. The implication of this is that, as it moves into the 2020's, older people will represent a considerable proportion of the Yate community for the first time.

Table: An ageing demographic

0-19	20-29	30-44	45-59	60-74	75+
5301	2535	4338	4584	3459	1386
24.5%	11.7%	20.0%	21.2%	16.0%	6.4%

Figures adapted from the 2011 UK Census.

Aware of this, Yate Town Council commissioned the Learners First consultancy to carry out a six-month research project titled 'Yate Ageing Better' which would:

- Find out what provision is already available to older people in Yate
- Identify the extent to which older people are aware of this provision
- Identify additional provision that would meet their needs more fully
- Highlight the role that Yate Town Council could play in filling gaps to develop Yate as an age-friendly community.

This report presents the findings of this project based on data collected through five main methods:

- Familiarisation and asset mapping
- Participant observation
- Semi-structured interviews.
- Questionnaire survey
- Focus group.

Ageing better – the national context

The value of effective policies which promote the wellbeing and quality of life of older citizens is becoming an increasing priority throughout the developed world. Longer lives are one of our society's greatest achievements. In the UK, a person aged 65 can expect to live to 85 and over half of all adults will be over 50 by 2035.

However, not everyone can expect to live in good health. For those living in deprived circumstances, an accumulation of disadvantages means that they can expect 20 fewer years in good health than those who are better off.

Research by Age UK shows that loneliness is one of the greatest risks facing older people:

- The number of over-50s experiencing loneliness is set to reach two million by 2025/6. This compares to around 1.4 million in 2016/7 – a 49% increase in 10 years
- In 2016 there were 1.2 million chronically lonely older people in the UK.
- Half a million older people go at least five or six days a week without seeing or speaking to anyone at all
- Two fifths all older people (about 3.9 million) say the television is their main company.

These figures should be set against statistics that show that an increasing number of people, and over 51% aged 75 and over, now live alone.

Policies to support better ageing

Several agencies have pointed to the need for policies designed to promote better ageing. For example **Public Health England** prioritise five actions towards healthy ageing for all:

1. Put prevention first and ensure access to high quality services.
2. Create opportunities for older adults to contribute to society.
3. Ensure good housing and communities.
4. Narrow inequalities.
5. Challenge ageist and negative language and stereotypes.

Consensus on Healthy Ageing 2019

The **World Health Organisation** has identified eight domains to be considered by policy makers:

- **Outdoor spaces and buildings** – public buildings and the outdoor environment have a major impact on older people's mobility, independence and quality of life
- **Transport** – accessible and affordable public transport is a key issue for people in later life
- **Housing** – so that people can age comfortable and safely in the communities to which they belong
- **Social participation** – where older people can exercise their competence, enjoy respect and maintain or establish supportive relationships

- **Civic participation and employment** – so that older people continue to contribute, with options such as paid employment, voluntary work and being engaged in the political process
- **Communication and information** – information, accessible to older people with varying resources and capabilities, to manage life and personal needs
- **Community support and health services** – vital to maintain health and independence
- **Respect and social inclusion** – so that people from all backgrounds are valued and respected.

Government and NHS publications refer to the '**Five ways to wellbeing**' originally proposed by the New Economics Foundation. These are:

- **Connect** – social relationships are critical for promoting wellbeing and as a buffer against mental ill health.
- **Be Active** – exercise is essential for slowing age-related cognitive decline and promoting wellbeing.
- **Take Notice** – being aware of what is taking place in the present enhances wellbeing and can help re-affirm life priorities.
- **Learn** – continued learning throughout life enhances self-esteem and encourages social interaction and a more active life.
- **Give** – individuals who report a greater interest in helping others are more likely to rate themselves as happy.

The value of physical activity

Physical activity and exercise have been found to be key factors in healthy ageing. Research reported in the British Medical Journal shows that the sometimes drastic loss of ability that many older people experience is not an inevitable part of ageing.

The key message from this research is that

A concerted effort to provide support and opportunities for physical activity can help older adults maintain independence and lessen the burden of social care.

Older people need to improve four aspects of fitness: strength, stamina, suppleness and skill. There is growing evidence that recovery of these four attributes improves cognitive ability and reduces the risk of dementia, not only in midlife but also in the 70s and 80s.

Physical activity is any bodily movement produced by the skeletal muscles that results in energy expenditure – including gardening or walking. Exercise is physical activity that is planned, structured and repetitive.

The results of even small amounts of exercise can be remarkable. For example, people in their 70s, with below average ability, who improve this by 25% experience a reversal of a decade of decline. Those who are most frail can benefit most.

South Gloucestershire Ageing Better Plan 2019-2023

The challenge to provide a framework to promote better ageing has been taken up by South Gloucestershire Council in their *Ageing Better Plan* covering 2019-2023. It sets out a series of guiding principles that all organisations working in South Gloucestershire should commit to.

The Vision is that 'Older people in South Gloucestershire have a good quality of life, with access to support, information and services which help them lead the lives they wish to lead, making it a good place to grow older.'

The six outcomes of this vision should be that older people are able to say:

- 1 I am independent and make a positive contribution
- 2 I have access to good information, advice and advocacy to make the right choices at the right time
- 3 I am as healthy as possible with good physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing
- 4 I feel safe, I live in a home that suits my needs, in a vibrant community
- 5 I have financial and material security
- 6 I have access to good quality health and social care, when it is needed.

South Gloucestershire's plan is summarised in a six-point 'Older People's Charter':

Older people will be treated with dignity, respect and have a voice. They will:

- 1 Have control over their lives
- 2 Be supported as independently as possible
- 3 Contribute to their communities and public life
- 4 Be able to choose how they are supported and cared for as they get older.
- 5 Be protected from harm and neglect and feel safe at home and in their communities
- 6 Be treated with respect, courtesy and consideration.

The Centre for Ageing Better

The Centre for Ageing Better (CAB) is a London-based charity funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. Its aim is:

'For more people in later life to be in good health, financially secure, to have social connections and feel their lives are meaningful and purposeful.'

CAB is a central resource for information about ageing, publications and research. They can provide advice and information and help communities to share and learn from each other. They support the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities.

The National Lottery Community Fund also supports 14 local partnerships across England to make their city, town or community age-friendly. These partnerships range from large metropolitan areas such as Manchester to relatively small towns like Torquay, and to rural areas in Lincolnshire and the Isle of Wight. One of these partnerships is Bristol Ageing Better, based at Age UK Bristol.

Bristol Ageing Better (BAB)

Since May 2015, Bristol has benefitted from £5m of lottery funding to improve, develop and create services for older people in the city. In 2018 Bristol joined the global network of age-friendly cities and communities.

Both researchers for the Yate project have been involved with the initiative. Eddy is a 'Community Researcher,' part of a team of older citizens who help the University of the West of England (UWE) to evaluate the project; Anna is a producer/presenter of the radio show Babbers (on Ujima 98fm) which communicates and promotes BAB activities and successes across the city.

Bristol is a very different type of place to Yate, it is larger and much more diverse. However there are still lessons that can be learned from what Bristol Ageing Better have found to be effective. Those we would highlight are:

- **Activities centred around food** – especially cooking and eating together. There were three large projects; Talking Tables, Bristol meets the World (food as a tool to reduce loneliness) and Food for Health. Key learning from these was shared at a conference in October 2019.
- **Physical exercise** – a wide range of opportunities were made available at low or no cost.
- **Community Navigators** – offer signposting and support to people who want to get more from their community. They work with individuals to find out what they are interested in and help them get involved – even accompanying people to their first session if needed.
- **The Kickstart programme** – an asset-based micro-funding scheme for community development which ran for three years from 2016-19. This approach involves working with what already exists in the community to identify and strengthen existing assets, rather than setting up new things or bringing in new people. Kickstart offered funding for community groups to develop or initiate activities which they could access easily with little bureaucracy. BAB found it to be a successful way to get a lot of things started with minimal outlay. Over 140 projects were funded through Kickstart, ranging from covering the set up costs of a charity to take therapy dogs into care homes to paying for table settings for tea parties in libraries. Applications were reviewed by a panel of older people and had to:
 - be designed to be sustainable once funding ceases
 - involve local older people in the planning process
 - be new activities that didn't duplicate existing provision
 - be run by volunteers, using free venues wherever possible.

Research methods

The evidence presented in this report was gathered over a five-month period, from June to November 2019. We used five complementary methods to build a rounded picture of provision available for older people in Yate and identify what might be done to develop Yate as an age-friendly community.

The five methods adopted were:

- Familiarisation and asset mapping
- Participant observation
- Semi-structured and group interviews
- Questionnaire survey
- Focus group

Familiarisation and asset mapping

The purpose of this initial phase was to become more aware of the kind of community that Yate is and to find out the different ways in which the needs of older people are being fostered at the moment.

Despite living only 10 miles away, the researchers had never visited Yate. We knew that it had a large shopping centre and that it had experienced rapid development in the 1960s but nothing else. We embarked on a series of fact-finding visits that included driving round the town and residential areas. We noted the number of cul-de-sacs with very few people walking in residential area streets and hardly any local shops.

We explored the town centre, going to the shopping centre, library and leisure centre, and paying attention to facilities used by older people, such as the Pop Inn Café for over 50s, the Armadillo Venue and the Heritage Centre.

These visits meant we saw Council and other noticeboards, read local newspapers and collected leaflets about activities and services aimed at older people. In practice asset mapping continued throughout the project, as more facilities became known to us.

Participant observation

As members of the age demographic for the research we were able to take part in activities aimed at older people and experience them from the point of view of a service user. At the Pop Inn café, we spoke with both volunteers and customers and we attended the Senior coffee mornings/afternoons at the Armadillo. We participated in walks organised by Walking for Health and attended South Gloucestershire Older People's Forum. Throughout, we met and talked with older people in the community and heard about their lives in Yate, how they spent their time and what issues they faced. This allowed us to gain insight into perceptions and needs of older residents.

We attended events such as Yate Rocks, Yate Ministers Forum, South Gloucestershire Shopmobility AGM, the Pop Inn volunteers AGM and Yate and Sodbury University of the Third Age (U3A) open afternoon.

Taking part in these activities was also very helpful in raising awareness of the research, generating interest and gathering support for later phases – particularly the distribution of the questionnaire. Notes from every visit and meeting were written up and these records have informed the final report.

Interviews

We identified a number of key informants actively involved in work with older people. We carried out a series of face-to face and telephone interviews with these people to gain a more detailed picture of their provision and to find out what they believed should be done to make Yate an age-friendly town.

We also led a group interview with residents at Cambrian Green Court supported living in early October.

A list of the key informants and the protocol for telephone interviews is in the Appendix.

Questionnaire survey

The earlier research activities enabled us to design a questionnaire for completion by people over 50 living 'in and around Yate'. The purpose was *'To gather numerical data from older Yate residents which can inform the researchers in drawing up initial policy options for Yate Town Council'*.

The four-page questionnaire (considered the maximum people would be willing to complete) was designed to generate both quantitative and qualitative data. It was sent to the Council's Policy Group for comment and piloted with Pop Inn volunteers. Questions were loosely based around the five ways of wellbeing and divided into four sections:

- A Activities in Yate
- B What more would you like to have in Yate?
- C Getting around
- D About you.

Copies of the questionnaire were made available at premises such as the Pop Inn Café, the Armadillo, The Library and Poole Court and distributed through organisations we had already been in contact with including Churches, The Rock Choir, U3A groups, Men in Sheds, Yate Bowls Club and so on. A Freepost pre-addressed envelope was included so that they could be easily returned to Yate Town Council.

A total of 213 completed questionnaires were received. The questionnaire is presented in the Appendix.

Table: Demographic details of the questionnaire sample

Variable	Category	Number
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Age Group	50-64	32
	65-74	75
	75-85	80
	85+	9
Sex	Male	34
	Female	138
Marital Status	Married	103
	Single	15
	Widowed	53
	Divorced	26
Employment Status	Full time	11
	Part time	18
	Retired	134
	Volunteer	27
Health	Excellent	30
	Good	88
	Fair	72
	Poor	12

Focus group

The final step in the research process was a focus group held at the YMCA on Thursday 14 November which was attended by 10 delegates, selected as being able to contribute to the recommendations that would feature in the final project report. Its purpose was:

To test emerging findings and consult on possible recommendations.

The focus group gave an opportunity to present the main findings from our research, to check with participants whether they felt that these had validity and to invite suggestions for recommendations on actions Yate Town Council could take to move towards Yate becoming an age-friendly community.

Focus group members worked in pairs and small groups to come up with ideas and suggestions which they presented on flipchart. These sheets, together with notes taken by the Yate Town Council Project Officer, have helped to inform our recommendations. Councillor Penny Thoyts represented the Council as an observer.

A list of representatives at the focus group is in the Appendix.

Findings from the questionnaire

This section presents the main findings emerging from the 213 returned questionnaires from people aged over 50 living in and around Yate.

- We look first at the data from Part A of the questionnaire, which focussed on the activities used by respondents
- We then present the data from Part B, which asked these older people to tell us about other activities they would like to have available.
- This is followed by the findings from Part C about how older people travel in and around Yate
- Finally, we summarise the information from Part D which sheds light on respondents' experience of loneliness and isolation.

Opportunities available to older people in and around Yate

These 213 older people clearly engage in a wide range of activities. We have categorised them under four headings which represent the questions we asked and that reflect most of the ways of wellbeing: Social Contact; Physical Exercise; Entertainment & Fun and Learning and skills.

Social Contact

The common factor shared by the opportunities in this table is that they can all make a direct contribution to reducing social isolation and loneliness.

The Pop Inn Café Armadillo coffee & film	These were the most frequently mentioned and are widely used and appreciated
Townswomen's Guild, WI, Rodford Ladies, Mothers Union, North Rd Ladies	There are clearly a lot of well attended clubs entirely for women
Shireway 50+ club, Senior club, Monday club Friendship club at Cambrian Court	These social and activity clubs are fulfilling a real need in Yate and some provide transport. People who go to them are usually over 75.
Lunch clubs	The social aspect of a lunch club is what is most valued. No one mentioned the food!
CASAL	This support group was mentioned by a number of respondents
Probus	Men's club for retired professionals
The Heritage Centre	Mentioned as a place to make friends
Flying model aircraft	Mentioned by one respondent

Physical Exercise

Physical activity in the form exercise or sport is vital to healthy and fulfilling ageing. This table summarises the opportunities taken up by our sample.

Walking for Health, U3A, Southwold Ramblers, on own, Walking dog Park Run	Walking was the most frequently mentioned form of physical activity. There are a number of walking groups.
Table tennis, Badminton, Aerobics, Zumba, Pilates, Indoor kurling, Table tennis	Respondents valued these regular organised classes which take place at locations across Yate. Most are part of U3A, and some respondents just wrote 'U3A' as their answer.
Swimming	People who swim often travel to pools at Thornbury or Longwell Green that have 50+ sessions
Bowls, Short mat bowls Skittles	Bowling is popular but only takes place in the season. Short mat bowls is a year-round activity.
Seated Pilates, Tai Chi, Yoga, Osteoporosis group	These gentler forms of exercise are an important part of the offer to older people
Gym, Weight training	These were individual activities
Cycling	Cycling was cited by two respondents, always as an individual activity.
Gardening	It is important to recognise that home-based tasks can provide an opportunity for physical exercise
Golf, Refereeing	Each mentioned by one respondent.

Entertainment and fun

These are activities which respondents said gave them enjoyment.

Singing, Rock Choir, Yate Choral, Good afternoon Choir	Singing was reported as a way to make new friends as well as being a joyful activity. The Rock choir is particularly effective in this respect and attracts a wider age range (40+).
Dancing, Tap dancing, Country dancing Line dancing	Dancing is a social activity and provides physical exercise yet most respondents classified it in the enjoyment section of the questionnaire.
Music at Pop Inn, Jazz group	Listening to music was reported as a social activity as well as a personal pleasure.
Theatre group, concert group	Respondents valued opportunities to attend performances with others
Ukulele	There are 3 U3A ukulele groups in Yate
Poetry	U3A poetry group
Bridge, Whist	These activities can also be an opportunity to use skill
Men in Sheds	This was regarded mainly as an enjoyable, rather than a learning,

	activity so we have included it in this category.
Watching football, Sodbury players	Both mentioned by one respondent

Learning and using skills

This table lists activities through which our respondents engaged in new and used existing skills.

Craft group/knitting, Crochet, Sewing, Jewellery making, Wreath making, Flower club, Art class, Stained glass Calligraphy, Life drawing	A wide range of arts and crafts activities, many for people with existing skills and almost entirely female participants
Learn guitar, Concertina	It's common for people to take up new instruments when they are older
Spanish, Turkish, Russian	Languages have always been a popular element of adult education but many classes are expensive. U3A makes languages available to lower cost.
History society, Book club, Lectures and talks, Writing/creative writing course Family history, A levels, OU	These represent the more traditional 'academic' learning we often associate with adult education
Mindfulness & meditation, Computer Club, Bicycle repair, Cooking, Safeguarding, Referee course	Each mentioned by one respondent

How older people find out about existing provision

Question A9 asked residents how they find out about what is on in Yate. Their replies are summarised below.

Table: Information sources

	Boards Posters	Leaflet	Internet	Social media	Friends & family	News-papers	News-letters
Used	115 (56.7%)	103 (50.1%)	52 (25.6%)	41 (20.2%)	110 (54.2%)	110 (54.2%)	83 (40.1%)
Preferred	13 (11.3%)	13 (12.6%)	17 (32.6%)	11 (26.8%)	0	18 (16.4%)	6 (7.2%)

Two interesting features of these statistics are that:

- those older people who make use of the internet are quite likely to prefer it to other of information
- although many respondents mention friends and family as a source, none of them see it as their preferred method.

One respondent commented that it is:

Difficult to find out what's on in Yate – it's there but no-one knows where to look.

What older people would like to have available

Section B of the questionnaire gave respondents an opportunity to contribute to the recommendations from our research by suggesting new activities that could complement existing provision. These are again grouped under the headings of: Social contact; Physical exercise; Entertainment & fun and Learning and skills.

Social Contact

Respondents suggested ideas aimed at those who live alone and pointed to the social value of eating together.

Table at Pop Inn for people who go on their own More activities for single people Coffee mornings, Senior club – not bingo	Respondents felt that there is a genuine lack of provision for single people which makes it hard for them to meet others and make new friends. This is particularly true for men and is reflected in our loneliness data.
Sharing meals, Central lunch club – for non-drivers	Food is an important focus for social interaction. Most lunch clubs attract the older end of our age group. Getting to a lunch club can be an issue for some people.
Afternoon activities, Afternoon friendship club, Social teas, Tea afternoons with speakers. Social activities in evenings and weekends	Many activities take place in the morning and it is clear from responses that people want activities in the afternoon. People who identified as lonely particularly asked for activities at the weekend and in the evening
Memory cafe	Mentioned by one respondent

Physical Exercise

Respondents who made these suggestions would clearly like to see a broader range of physical activities which take account of the needs and capabilities of older people.

Swimming sessions for seniors, A swimming pool I can use, More activities at the pool, More Aquafit	Opportunity to swim was the most asked-for activity. Respondents feel that the pool doesn't meet the needs of older people and that activities such as Aquafit have to be booked by 8am a week ahead to secure a place.
Pop Inn walking group Organised walks, Organised walks on the common, Walks close to centre	Despite the plethora of walks available, there is a demand for shorter and more local organised walks.
Seated yoga, Gentle yoga Gentle exercise	A clear demand for more gentle forms of exercise suitable for the older body.
50+ exercise classes/keep fit, Daytime activities at the LC	Respondents think that the leisure centre in particular does not make an effort to provide for older people. Some over 50 classes are too demanding.

Indoor bowls/tenpin bowling, bowls	Respondents still miss the indoor bowls that used to take place in the leisure centre. They may not be aware of the indoor bowls at Shireway or that there is a bowls club in the town.
Gym club, Inexpensive gym	Some respondents would like a group gym session, rather than to go as an individual. A number said that charges at the Leisure centre were too high.
Walking netball, Walking football, Walking rugby	Each mentioned by one respondent. It may be that there is a lack of awareness because there are no walking sports in Yate, apart from indoor walking football.
Ping pong league, Self defence, Badminton, Taekwondo	Each mentioned by one respondent

Entertainment and fun

The activities suggested here imply a ready market for music & dance opportunities which take account of mature people's tastes and memories and of the depth of their pockets.

Older music for singing and dancing, Playing music, Live music, Movement to music in park.	Activities linked to music were overwhelmingly the most requested.
Musicals, Daytime music performances, Large community space for performances/show, Theatre visits, Dinner cabaret club, Concerts/gigs at Chipping Sodbury Town Hall.	Respondents want more live performances of all kinds in the area. They don't want to have to go to Bristol to see a show.
Dancing at the Leisure Centre, Tea dances, Dance at Pop Inn	Social dances would be popular, not just dance classes
Sing-along, Singing in the park	This is another suggestion for how that park could be used for a wider range of activities.
Cheap cinema, e.g. £5 for all pensioners, Silver Scene at Vue, Old films	Many respondents requested better concessions at the cinema in Yate, and screenings for older people, such as Silver Screen.
Embroidery afternoon, Coach trips, Bingo, Quizzes, Travel, Dog friendly activities.	Each mentioned by one respondent

Learning and skills

As one respondent put it 'You are never too old to learn'.

Art club, Craft club	May not be aware of the many existing opportunities or location and timing may not suit.
Computer club, Help to use mobile phone and tablet	There is no organised digital training and support for older people in Yate

	Both of these requests were from men.
Psychology, Health presentations, bridge for beginners	Each suggested by one respondent.

How people travel in and around out Yate

Section C of the questionnaire asked how residents travel to places. The results show that although many older residents are still able to get around on foot, but there are still a large number who rely on cars and public transport.

Table: Transport use

Walk	Cycle	Bus	Drive	Lift	Taxi	Community
120	40	105	128	35	20	13
57.4%	19.1%	50.2%	61.2%	16.7%	9.6%	6.2%

Respondents would like a local small bus service that goes in and around Yate and Chipping Sodbury, and residents are clearly unhappy about the change to a bus route that used to serve streets in North Yate. This has left people with no way to get to the shopping centre.

Loneliness and isolation

I live alone and it can be a bit lonely, and I am very friendly and love to meet new friends.

Divorced woman 75-85

We know that those older people who are most isolated and suffer most from loneliness are unlikely to have received and completed our questionnaire. Nevertheless answers to several of the questions asked in Section C shed light on respondents' feelings in this respect.

The table below shows that, although 84.0% of our sample have made new friends in recent years and 70.5% have relatives living nearby, 44.9% still experience some form of loneliness.

Table: Loneliness data summarised

	Total	%
Have made new friends	174	84.0
Live near family	146	70.5
Live alone	61	29.5
Never Lonely	114	55.1
Sometimes Lonely	68	32.8
Often Lonely	13	6.3
Most days	19	33.3

Evenings	17	28.8
Weekends	21	35.6

The next table emphasises that loneliness is most prevalent amongst those who live on their own, with the incidence rising to 78% for people in this situation.

Table: Living alone and loneliness

	Whole sample		Living alone	
	Total	%	Total	%
Never lonely	114	55.1	13	22.0
Sometimes Lonely	68	32.8	37	62.7
Often lonely	13	6.3	9	15.2
Most days	19	33.3	8	22.2
Evenings	17	28.8	14	38.9
Weekends	21	35.6	14	38.9

Written responses are also revealing. One divorced woman aged between 65 and 74 claimed to speak for many in a similar position:

Most of us are 'stuck in' in the evening.

. . . and one married woman who had retired and answered 'Never' to feeling lonely, anticipated harder times ahead saying: '*After retirement a sense of isolation can set in*'.

A slightly older divorced woman saw value in a neutral pair of ears:

Sometimes a person not related to talk to what appears as a problem can be cleared by someone else's opinion.

Divorced woman 75-85

One retired married man, yet to experience feelings of loneliness himself, made a plea that this consultation might result in action to prevent this happening:

Please combat loneliness among elderly people by offering more encouragement/opportunities for single people to meet and make new friends.

Married man 65-74

He went on suggest that reserving a table for single people could be part of the solution.

A relatively young female stroke survivor made a particularly poignant plea for support for people in her situation.

I am a stroke victim age 55 years young. I can do very little exercise. It would be nice to meet others who can do some sort of exercises to help.

She also asked for social activities that involve entertainment and learning:

Clubs for singing, dancing old film nights quizzes

I am very isolated but very outgoing. Just like meeting people to chat and learn.

You are never too young to learn new things.

She also clearly saw value in self-help groups:

Activities where the elderly can teach others sowing arts and crafts, knitting etc.

Yes being able to meet people like myself by passing on advice to others who are struggling on a daily basis.

Opportunities to meet new people decline with age and not everyone who wanted to meet new people declared as lonely:

The more social activities you create, the more people will find new friends.

and

Like many, I am a newcomer to Yate. So far, I have not made Yate 'Home'.

Providers and facilities for older people in Yate

Some of the services and facilities in Yate deserve a more detailed description and commentary. These include facilities owned by Yate or South Gloucestershire Councils, venues widely used for activities for older people and specific clubs and associations that play an important role in provision.

Pop Inn over 50s Café

The Pop Inn Café was established by Yate Town Council 17 years ago in a far-sighted move to provide a specific venue for older residents to meet. Clearly signposted from both directions, it is located on Yate Shopping Centre's West Walk and feels very much part of the town centre. Staffed by volunteers, the main room is light and airy and the prices are kept low at just £1.00 for a cup of coffee. In addition to normal café facilities there are also noticeboards giving details of local events activities and services, a second-hand bookstall and a collection of free-to-use jigsaw puzzles.

We made individual visits to the Pop Inn early on in our research and have visited again on a number of subsequent occasions. The café is clearly a popular meeting place for older people and we were struck by the groups of women occupying the larger tables in the middle of the room, with couples on the two-seater tables by the windows. Each time we visited we noticed a few single men sitting on their own.

Views on the Pop Inn Café

Item A 7 of the questionnaire asks specifically about use of the Pop Inn and attitudes towards it.

Many respondents go to the Pop Inn to meet existing friends, with the most common responses being :

Meeting friends

Having tea/coffee with friends

Some also appreciate the items on display:

Coffee + look at jigsaws/books for sale etc.

Married man 65-74

We asked why people chose not to go to this café. Some were not aware of its existence, but for most the reason was that they perceived it as being for the very elderly and felt they were 'too young' for it.

I'm too young! (I'm 57).

Married woman 50-64

Self confidence was an issue for some:

Afraid to go alone

Divorced woman 50-64

Not confident enough

Divorced man 65-74

Some were unimpressed by the welcome they received and two described it as 'clique-ish.'

Been twice, but I felt so unwelcome each time.

Man 65-74 Poor health

I've been in on my own and no-one talked to me

Widow 50-64

Not an inspiring venue. Went once and not very friendly.

Married man 50-64

This contrasts, however, with comments from a recent visitor:

Today was my first time (September 25th) been meaning to come for a long time. Lovely people.

Disabled cohabiting woman 50-64

Our own impressions

Our own experiences and observations confirm the impression of a less than inviting welcome at the café. We saw relatively few customers greeted by name and it appeared that new customers, like ourselves, were served without any special welcome.

One volunteer told us that people who come on their own 'feel awkward so they may bring a paper to read' and that 'No-one would speak to someone they didn't know'. Our overall impression is that the Pop Inn is somewhere people go to meet up with existing friends rather than to make new ones.

Recent changes at the Pop Inn

In 2018 Yate Town Council created the role of 'Venues Operations Assistant/Pop Inn Café Coordinator.' Although based at the Armadillo, she was given responsibility for overseeing the café and bringing about improvements after 13 years in which there had been few, if any, fresh developments. Some long-standing volunteers were resistant to any change, objecting to price increases, questioning the change to fairtrade coffee and opposing increasing the food options, such as toast. About ten of these stepped down. It is understandable that older volunteers who have been there for a while may be resistant to taking on new tasks when they had never been given a role description or any ongoing training.

However, volunteers we spoke to were positive about the changes, describing Brogan as 'very enthusiastic' and viewing her young energy as a positive force. They particularly liked:

- the new furniture and layout
- improvements to the notice board
- the introduction of a wider choice of tea.

Changes have resulted in takings doubling from £80 to £160 per day.

She was wise in choosing to make the initial changes about improving practical arrangements such as better furniture and layout. Her popularity with the volunteers

was clear at the Pop Inn AGM who were shocked and saddened when they were told that she would be moving on to a new job.

A recent survey of customers found that they liked most things but not the food choices and, while some volunteers welcomed plans to extend the kitchen area and add more food options, they were very clear that they 'couldn't possibly make any food as it would take too long when the café was busy.'

The Armadillo Youth Venue and Café

Those young women behind the counter are so friendly and welcoming. No one is left sitting on their own.

Visitor to the Armadillo Senior Coffee Morning

This is arguably the most successful initiative by the council, with the 60-seat cinema often full.

The Armadillo is positioned next to Yate Active Leisure Centre. Although primarily a youth venue, it serves as a resource for the whole community. On Thursdays it hosts two film showings specifically aimed at over 50s. This starts with a 'senior coffee morning' at which customers are served unlimited tea & coffee plus toast, crumpets or biscuits for just £3 before moving upstairs to the community cinema for a free viewing of a recently released film. This is repeated in the afternoon with a cream tea on offer instead of toast.

Views of people attending seniors events at the Armadillo

Question A 8 asked those who go to the Armadillo events to comment on their experience. Responses were overwhelmingly positive:

Highlight of our week.

Married woman 75-85 who is retired

Enjoy the afternoon showings with sub-titles! Nice tea and toast and friendly staff.

Married man 65-74 who is retired

Very good, great teas and company

Widowed woman 85+ years who is retired and works as a volunteer

The welcome provided by the staff comes in for particular praise, with many describing the staff as 'great'.

Great! Got a lot busier since summer – getting hard to get a seat now! Very friendly staff.

Married woman 50-64 who is retired

And it's value for money:

I like watching the films for £3.00 so close to home. The staff are great.

Married woman 50-64 who works part-time and as a volunteer

A significant theme is that these sessions are a chance to meet people and make new friends. It is clear that, in this respect, the Armadillo has a very different atmosphere to the Pop Inn:

As well as watching a film I have made friends when we have coffee.

Married man 75-85

Brilliant. Film and make new friends

Divorced woman 65-74

Our own impressions

Again we each made individual visits to the Armadillo on Thursdays. We were both struck by the strong contrast between the warm welcome and the relatively cool reception we were given at the Pop Inn. Staff made a point of going over to chat to anyone who seemed new to the event and the whole atmosphere was relaxed and friendly. Indeed questionnaires show that several friendships have been made at these mornings and afternoons.

On her visit, Anna met people who travelled into Yate on Thursdays specifically for these film sessions, one of whom was a single man from Coalpit Heath who had become friends with near neighbours solely through meeting them at the Armadillo. Staff noticed that Eddy, recovering from recent knee surgery, had mobility problems and made sure that he knew where the lift was and welcomed him on arrival at the upper floor.

It is little surprise that these sessions are frequently full. Some questionnaire respondents asked for them to also be available on other days of the week.

Yate Men's Shed

Men's social interaction comes through work or the pub. When they retire all that's left is the pub.

Trustee, Yate Men's Shed

Men's Sheds is an international movement providing space for craftwork and social interaction as a way to improve the health and wellbeing of older men. Yate Men's Shed started 18 months ago after Yate Town Council called a public meeting to which more than 80 came. There are currently 31 members; most are retirement age, or approaching 60. Some have significant health issues and several have mechanical backgrounds.

The Shed meets at the Parish Hall twice a week and at the Armadillo on Thursday mornings while the film is showing. Yate Men's Shed is now a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and annual membership is £12 with a fee of £3.00 a session but men can come to along for up to three weeks to see if they want to join.

On our visit we were impressed by members' commitment to the operation. They clearly valued the chance to feel part of a male environment again, to apply and share the skills they had used to make a living. They also enjoy long conversations on a wide variety of topics.

They advertise the Shed through posters displayed on the many noticeboards in the town centre and have a stand at community events. They use a buzzwire to attract interest because, 'If a grandson enjoys it, the grandfather might want to find out more'.

The Trustees have plans to expand and develop, eventually having four types of workshop; wood, metal, electrical and motor vehicle – apparently it's easier to get grants to buy equipment than to cover running costs. Their aim would be to own their own premises and for the Shed to be open 5-7 days a week.

Yate and Sodbury U3A

University of the Third Age Trust (U3A) is an international organisation founded in Paris in 1979. The UK's U3A was established in 1982 and the Yate and Sodbury U3A started in 2005.

Each country has developed its own approach with the emphasis in the UK being on participation by members rather than formally organised courses. This is very much how Yate & Sodbury U3A works where members share skills and interests and learn from each other. The branch was started by Sue Walker, a former councillor, who invited a small group of people to her home and started four groups based around her own interests; wine tasting, theatre group, reading and walking – the book group filled up quickly with a waiting list so someone else set up another one. Yate & Sodbury U3A now has over 1400 members and over 80 'interest' groups, listed alphabetically on the website.

Membership is important for insurance purposes. The annual membership fee is £8.00, but people can visit two groups twice before joining. Once someone is a member they have access to any group that has places available. However, some of the groups are full, notably many offering exercise.

It is clear that U3A is filling significant gaps in provision for older people in the area and the extent of the groups is impressive. Examples range from:

- Languages (French, German, Italian, Spanish)
- Physical Exercise (kurling 4 groups, pickleball, badminton, Zumba gold, dance)
- Literature (poetry, book club, play-reading)
- Science & history (Greeks & Romans, earth sciences, sciences, technology)
- Music (playing for fun, ukulele 4 groups, recorders)
- Craft (knitting, jewellery making, patchwork)
- Socialising (global diners, concert trips, theatre)

Members are invited to a monthly meeting at Chipping Sodbury Town Hall where they can hear talks by visiting speakers and receive a quarterly newsletter.

There are a lot of other U3A groups that interest me, but the way this has developed takes all of my time.

U3A Kurling Group Volunteer

U3A groups and activities make an unambiguous contribution to each of the five Ways of Wellbeing: they *connect* by making new friendships, *learn* new facts and skills, *stay active* through exercise and sport, *notice* through courses based on appreciation and *give* through the highly cooperative and volunteer nature of the organisation.

22 respondents specifically stated that they took part in U3A activities – almost always more than one – and 10 said they had made new friends through U3A. Of the 22, 17 said they never felt lonely. The remaining five were all widowed or divorced.

Churches in Yate

There are a number of churches in and around Yate. The denominations include Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Catholic and a number of Evangelical congregations. All are very active providers of activities and contact for older people. For example St Nicholas Family Centre in Abbotswood runs 'Fitness at St Nix' on Monday mornings. These sessions have become so popular that they now have two groups followed by a lunch club. These events are open to all and not restricted to Church worshippers.

Almost a third (30.5%) of questionnaires mentioned church membership and many of these respondents (70%) said they had made new friends through this. It is clear that for many going to church is an important part of their individual identity. Belonging to a church also provides volunteering opportunities with 60% of churchgoing respondents involved in activities such as helping at lunch clubs, with Messy Church, with bereavement support and as Street Pastors.

We spoke to Reverend Jo Hodge who now has pastoral responsibility for older people across the four Anglican churches in Yate and regards working with older people as a priority:

My heart is with older people. They shouldn't be left behind and should get as much attention and money as younger families.

She has a particular concern for recently bereaved men, who are often left out of provision, and would like to set up a bereavement group along the lines of one operating in Filton. She also advocates 'Messy Seniors' services as a parallel to 'Messy Church' for children.

The different church leaders keep in touch through regular Ministers Together meetings through which they share information and organise public events such as:

- Prayers for Christian Unity in January
- Prayers in the Park on the Sunday of the Yate Rocks festival in July
- A Remembrance Day walk of witness in November.

Brinsham Green School

The Wednesday Club for local senior citizens at Brinsham Green School is the only example of intergenerational work we found in the Yate area.

Now in operation for more than 20 years, the club is run on a fortnightly basis by 6th form students and forms part of the Enrichment offer alongside Duke of Edinburgh Gold and Young Enterprise. Students who have chosen it have found that it has boosted their confidence and that having the experience on their CV helps with job and HE applications. The students enjoy listening to and learning from the older guests who, in turn, take great interest in their studies. The Wednesday club was given recognition in the school's recent Ofsted inspection.

There are currently about 20–24 guests, virtually all of whom are female. Most are in their 70s and oldest is 98. Any older person who wants to join can phone the 6th form office and they will take details.

Every guest is phoned by a student on Tuesday to tell them what the following day's session will be about, to ask if they will be coming and check whether they need transport. Guests who need it are picked up from their homes in Yate and Sodbury by the school minibus which is driven by the teacher with student helpers on board. Some guests drive in from further away, such as Kingswood and Fishponds. For many guests it is their only chance to get out of the house in the week.

There is a rota of tasks that students sign up to which includes phone calls, making cakes, organising activities or going in the minibus. Each session starts at 1.15 and finishes by 2.45pm. Activities this term include:

- Film quiz with slides and music
- Craft session to make gifts and decorations
- Trip to Iron Acton garden centre to see Christmas decorations and shop
- Bingo (after speaker had to drop out)
- Christmas lunch at The Lawns.

Sessions in previous years have been:

- Young Enterprise students showing what they have developed and produced – and sometimes selling their wares
- Students performing in the school's production of Les Miserables coming to the group and singing some of the songs
- A Facebook session in which guests said where they'd most like to go on holiday and students photoshopped a photo of them at the location.

The club has also given 6th formers the chance to share some of their digital skills to their sometimes not so savvy guests. They have given help to them with things like tablets and they have shared and compared mobile phones.

Intergenerational work of this kind is gaining considerable national attention through television series such as Channel 4's 'Old People's Home for 4 Year Olds' which have shown that the chance to get to know younger people in a collaborative way can benefit both their morale and their physical well being.

Walking for Health & Stepping Forward

This is an extensive programme of walks, led by volunteers in South Gloucestershire, which regularly attract 30-50 walkers. Walks are at three grades. Grade 1 is 30 minutes on firm, flat surfaces and suitable for people who are looking to be more active or returning from injury or illness. Grade 3 walks are 1-2 hours long, more challenging and may include steeper slopes, uneven surfaces and stiles. Stepping Forward walks are more strenuous still and often available alongside a shorter walk. Walks nearly always start near a car park, are on a public transport route and offer an opportunity to socialise over refreshments afterwards.

Our own experiences

Anna joined a group which meets every Friday for a walk starting from Yate or Chipping Sodbury. Regular walkers are able to sign up to receive a friendly and witty email from one of the volunteer leaders which gives them more details of the route, conditions, weather, parking and the after-walk venue for refreshments.

On the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month there is a walk from Chipping Sodbury Rugby club that is suitable for people who are new to exercise or who may have mobility issues. People can walk for as long as they like around a firm and level path. This was ideal for Eddy, one month after his knee operation. The group is quite small, with only one or two regulars; it used to be larger but the group dwindled after the original leader retired. The volunteer leaders think it's a shame that there are no toilets or café at the Rugby club and that Kingsgate Park might be preferable although there are some problems with parking nearby. There also isn't a clear social prescribing system for GP practices to refer suitable older people to the walk. The team leader for Healthy Lifestyles at South Gloucestershire is trying to improve this situation.

People do make friends on the walks. In the pub after one Anna's walks, Mike, aged about 80, was having a meal with two younger women who he'd met through walking. He volunteers at Avon Valley Railway twice a week and got involved with the walks because some of them start there. However, Anna also met a woman who hadn't spoken to anyone on the walks.

No one at the Cambrian Green discussion was aware of the Walking for Health provision. They told us there used to be a regular led walk which was good because residents were picked up from home. When the group composition was changed to include adults with learning difficulties this was not felt to be a good combination.

Shire Way Community Association

We visited the Centre on Shire Way because questionnaire responses revealed it to be a major venue for daytime activities. Talking to Jodie Hood, the General Manager, we learned that most of activities and classes for older people take place in the Centre's function room, and many of them involve physical exercise. They are run by a range of 'user groups', such as U3A, who hire the facilities and promote their offer. The Association itself doesn't advertise the activities that take place in their building.

Examples include:

- Indoor Kurling 4 times a week, Tai Chi, Ukulele (all U3A)
- Pilates
- Gentle exercise
- Latin dance, Line dancing & Tap dancing
- Stroke club (Stroke Association)
- Senior citizens activities (25-30 participants)
- Smile (mixed age LD group).

The Association is on a bus route from the city centre and people also access activities by car and Green Community Transport.

Yate Active Lifestyle Centre

The Centre has had a big investment and makeover recently but the needs of older people have been neglected.

Male sheltered housing resident

Yate Active Lifestyle Centre (usually referred to as 'The Leisure Centre' by residents) is run by the social enterprise Circadian Trust. Facilities include a gym, activities space, swimming pool and cafe. On visiting the pool we noted that whilst the water was warm there were no accessible steps. We have since found that accessible steps are put in for the Aquafit sessions and will be provided if someone asks for them! Many questionnaire respondents and people we spoke to during visits criticised the lack of over 50s sessions (apart from a disabled swim on Monday afternoon) and the use of the pool for schools. However, it is often the case that only half of the pool is given over to the school, leaving the other half available to the public. The programme does not make this clear. There is a colourful online chart of use which was hard to read and not printable although apparently there are copies available in reception.

There are few activities in the Active Lifestyles programme for over 50s. There is 60+ Aerobics, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 60+ Recreation Thursday morning, Table tennis, badminton and squash. The website is confusing and covers the whole of South Gloucestershire. It is also inaccurate. For example, there are two walking football sessions on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons, but these are not on the website, nor do they feature in the Healthy Lifestyles Directory produced by South Gloucestershire Council.

Aquafit (all ages) is very popular with older people but you have to book before 8am a week ahead to secure a place. And it is the same with Pilates.

Yate Outdoor Sports Complex

Could more use of YOSC be made during the day for older people? Maybe outdoor sports such as archery, nordic walking, walking football.

Respondent to questionnaire

Ownership of this important asset has been transferred to Yate Town Council from South Gloucestershire. This international class facility does not appear to be available to local older people and we could find no advertised activities for them. We have heard reports that it is entirely run by volunteers. It was not specifically mentioned by any questionnaire respondent and conversations with longstanding Yate residents revealed that some are not even aware of its existence.

Yate and District Bowls Club

The club is based at Sunnyside which is owned by Yate Town Council and has a pavilion and tennis courts in addition to the bowling green. Bowling was mentioned as an activity by a number of questionnaire respondents, and requested by others. No respondent mentioned playing tennis.

Of the 95 members, all bar one are aged 55-95 and two thirds are men. About half are from Yate and surrounding areas. The season starts in mid-April and they meet

three times a week, and teams are doing well in the leagues. Recruitment is through adverts in the local press and by word of mouth and they have an open day at the beginning of May, shortly after the season starts. Membership costs £90 per year but the public can also use the green at a cost of £4 per game.

The committee would like to increase membership to 120 and to attract more younger players, yet some older people we spoke to had the impression that the club was full. The site is located close to Westerleigh Common and the chair is concerned that people don't know that there is a bowling green in Yate and feels that the club would benefit from a brown sign.

Yate Shopping Centre

The centre is owned by Crestbridge Corporate Trust which passes responsibility for management to a global Managing Agent who employ a Centre Manager. The centre charges retailers a service charge, which is used to pay for operating and maintenance costs. 25 employees work across the centre providing security, cleaning and maintenance services.

The shopping centre has good accessibility and an accessible risk assessment is carried out every two years. All staff have received dementia training. The Centre has also offered this training to all retailers but no one has taken it up.

The centre supports many community initiatives including offering storage space for the Food Bank and for South Gloucestershire Shopmobility – who they sponsor – and also pay for the electricity and the annual 'In bloom' displays in Chipping Sodbury. The manager offers vacant units to community groups for pop-up shops and fundraising activities. They sometimes get their staff to clear nearby areas outside the centre such as the riverbank and roundabouts in order to improve the overall appearance of the neighbourhood.

The shopping centre is home to a number of service providers:

- **South Gloucestershire Council One-stop shop** gives advice on housing, grants, heating, Council tax. Staff are only employed to help with South Gloucestershire Council related matters, although people come with a range of other issues. It is clear that some isolated lonely people use it in a way familiar to many GP practices

The service deals with a lot of older people, some of whom regard it as their first reference point when they have any problem. If they have time, staff also give help with digital issues, looking things up for people who aren't computer literate and allowing them use the computer terminal in the office. There are 'regulars' who go in all the time – the staff are very caring and get worried if they haven't seen one of these for a while.

- **Yate Town Library** is located on West Walk close to the Pop Inn and One Stop Shop and acts an information point for many residents, hosting a programme of events for all ages. Meeting rooms are for available for hire, for example the South Gloucestershire Shopmobility AGM was held there.
- **The Citizen's Advice Centre** is also located in the shopping centre, close to the One Stop Shop

Recommendations

We have identified seven priorities that Yate Town Council should consider in their plans to make the town a more age-friendly community. We make specific suggestions under each of these headings, which are:

- Raise the profile of older people in Yate
- Tackle social isolation and loneliness
- Encourage more opportunities for age-friendly exercise
- Extend the range of intergenerational activities
- Opportunities for older people to eat and cook together
- Encourage and support volunteering
- Make full use of the Town Council's assets and facilities.

Raise the profile of older people in Yate

Making a neighbourhood age friendly is about more than providing services and activities, or increased accessibility. An asset-based approach, which challenges stereotypes, is essential to promote positive images of older people and present them as a positive force in the community. This will become more important as the 60+ demographic bulge in Yate's population becomes more prominent.

Consider the following:

- Create an identifiable Yate Ageing Better 'brand' to position Yate as an age-friendly community and use this to bring together the diverse initiatives that exist in the town, and to raise awareness of new ones. Promote your intentions on local radio.
- Join the UK Network of Age-Friendly Communities, hosted by the national Centre for Ageing Better.
- Designate a member of the Council's staff as the key contact for issues affecting older people.
- Host a regular Celebrating Age Festival in the Town Centre, like the one held annually in Bristol. Involve as many providers as possible to showcase their offer, and include special events such as talks, meals or activities.
- Involve and empower older people in the community. Start by setting up a team of 10-12 Champions who will meet regularly with Council members to plan policy and promote the age-friendly agenda. Ensure the active involvement of older people in all initiatives.
- Establish Yate Ageing Better Awards for organisations and older individuals that make a positive contribution to the lives of older people or who inspire and help others.

Tackle social isolation and loneliness

Findings from the questionnaire show many older people in Yate experience feelings of loneliness. This inevitably underestimates the scale of the problem as, by definition, people in this position are unlikely to become involved in any consultation.

Consider the following:

- Produce a Welcome Pack for Older People moving to Yate. This would describe the facilities available to them, illustrated with case studies of older people with whom they can identify.
- Raise awareness of, and promote, the Befriending scheme available through Age UK South Gloucestershire, and consider whether community navigators could play a role in helping isolated people access services in the community
- Establish a network of 'Street wardens' or institute a Good Neighbour scheme to encourage residents to pay appropriate attention to the wellbeing of older people who live near them.
- Make greater use of the Pop Inn café for designated social events, including at evenings and weekends. Establish a table for people who visit alone and would welcome someone else to talk to. Encourage other venues in the town to follow this example.
- Mount social events where people over 50 can meet for 'safe' dating or companionship.
- Keep in touch with developments in social prescribing; GP networks are due to implement this next April.
- Support a free dog-walking scheme for older people who find it hard to get out and about, possibly as a way of connecting with younger neighbours.

Encourage more opportunities for physical exercise

Our research reveals a number of opportunities to provide more comprehensive provision in relation to this crucial area of wellbeing.

Consider the following:

- Support and promote gentle exercise sessions in venues such as Yate Active Living Centre, Shire Way Community Centre, the Pop Inn and Armadillo and in care homes.
- Introduce more walking sports such as walking rugby, walking tennis and walking netball. Use facilities at YOSC, Sunnyside and on the common. Seek support from local sports organisations such as Bristol Bears Rugby and Bristol Rovers Community Foundation who are already active in this field.
- Make more use of Yate Outdoor Sports Complex generally. The potential use of this major facility by older Yate residents seems largely untapped at the moment.
- Liaise with Yate Active Living Centre to promote times when older people can use the pool, and to make people aware of 'quiet' times.
- Support and promote the range of physical activities offered by Yate and Sodbury U3A so that more older residents can benefit.

Extend the range of intergenerational activities

Intergenerational activities have been shown to enhance the lives of both older and younger people. The family-based nature of the Yate community (almost three-quarters of our questionnaire sample have relatives living nearby) provides an ideal environment for nurturing such virtuous circles of engagement.

Consider the following:

- Examine ways of sharing the work of Brimsham Green School with other schools in Yate. Look at ways to build on their existing activity in areas such as sport (50+ students do BTEC in Sports Leadership) or cooking.
- The Isle of Wight is one of the 14 National Lottery funded partnerships and its population has many similar characteristics to that of Yate. Their 'Age-friendly Island' project has focused on building relationships between generations. Look at what they have done to explore lessons that might be applied to Yate.

Opportunities for older people to eat and cook together

Shared meals are a focus for social interaction and can provide older people, who frequently have reduced appetites, with up-to-date nutritional advice and information. Bristol Ageing Better Programme's projects centred around food have been successful in both reducing loneliness and isolation and promoting better health. Provision in Yate which addresses either of these is in its infancy.

Consider the following:

- A 'relaunch' of the Pop Inn, with a focus on healthy eating. A starting point could be the addition of new items, such as homemade soup, to the menu. It could be followed by phased introduction of an extended, nutritionally sound, lunchtime menu, initially for a trial period and only on specific days of the week. This could be an opportunity for recently recruited volunteers to be inducted into the Pop Inn team.
- Host talks on food, possibly combined with cookery demonstrations, with single or recently widowed elderly men a key target audience.
- Explore ways of promoting more shared meals across the town, including cooking and eating together.
- Offer talks on healthy eating to existing lunch clubs, to Yate Men's Shed and through Brompton Green School's Wednesday club. Produce short information leaflets on healthy eating linked to where to buy ingredients in Yate.
- Explore national and local opportunities to gain additional funding for elements of this policy. Bristol-based St Monica's Community Giving Team could be a fruitful line of enquiry as they extend into the Yate area. Applications for this year have closed, but there are indications then next year's round of funding will have an emphasis on initiatives centred around food.

Encourage and support volunteers

Older people make an enormous contribution to the economy and to their communities through volunteering. In Yate, As things stand, the bulk of provision for older residents depends on the enthusiasm and commitment of the volunteers who work for organisations such as U3A, the Pop Inn, church initiatives, Walking for Health and Yate Men's Shed.

Volunteering is valuable because it gives people a sense of self worth, keeps them active and helps them make with new friends. However volunteers need support and guidance if they are to retain their enthusiasm and engagement. It is also important to acknowledge and celebrate their achievements

Consider the following actions:

- There is no central point for older people to find out about volunteering opportunities in the area. The Council could host Volunteer Days to allow older to find organisations looking for their services. These events would also increase awareness of services for older residents.
- Help organisations that use volunteers in the locality to prepare and support them. Volunteers are not always given role descriptions or adequately trained and supported. The achievements and contribution of volunteers should also be recognised and celebrated and the Council could play a part in this.

Make full use of the town's assets and facilities

Finally, the Council is fortunate in owning or managing an impressive portfolio of premises that could play a fuller part in their Ageing Better initiative.

Consider the following:

- Carry out a detailed review of the use of all of these amenities to ensure that age-friendly issues are given appropriate priority.
- Parks and open spaces – for example for music events, and to help people connect through shared resting spaces.
- The Armadillo has a well equipped kitchen and could be used for food activities and events. It could also host intergenerational activities.
- The Pop Inn could offer so much more than hot drinks, snacks and a place for existing friends to meet.
- The recently acquired YMCA has great potential for new activities.
- Pay particular attention to the untapped potential in this respect of Yate Outdoor Sports Complex.

References and Links

Relevant documents

Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide: World Health Organisation, 2007

All the lonely people: Loneliness in Later Life, Age UK September 2018

A Consensus on Health Ageing, Public Health England and Centre for Ageing Better, October 2019

Ageing Better Plan: 2019-2023: South Gloucestershire Council 2019.

Age Friendly Neighbourhoods, a guide, Bristol Ageing Better 2019

Useful Internet Links

Community Navigators: www.communitynavigators.org.uk

UK Network of Age-friendly communities: www.ageing-better.org.uk/age-friendly-communities

Isle of Wight National Lottery-funded network: <http://agefriendlyisland.org/>

St Monica Trust Community giving: <https://www.stmonicastrust.org.uk/supporting-communities/community-fund>.

Bristol Bears Community Foundation

Contact Kris Tavender email: ktavender@bristolbearsrugby.com

Bristol Rovers Community Trust <https://www.bristolroverscommunity.org.uk>

Appendix

Interviewees

Attendees at YAB Focus Group

Example Interview Schedule: Peter Bowles Yate & District Bowling Club¹

Questionnaire for older people living in and around Yate

¹ These were adapted to suit the context of the particular interviewee.

Interviewees

- Pastor Martin Davidson, Elim Church & Chair of Yate Ministers' Forum
- Peter Davies, Yate & District Bowls Club
- Sue Harrison, Coordinator St Nix lunch club
- Reverend Joanne Hodge, Church of England Curate with pastoral responsibility for Yate Parish
- Jodie Hood, General Manager Shire Way Community Centre
- Adele Hooper, Golden Oldies
- Samantha Jones, Community Learning Development Worker South Gloucestershire Council
- Kim Lewis, First Contact
- Andrew Lowrey, Manager Yate Shopping Centre
- Andy Martin, Deputy Head Brinsham Green School
- Selina Nuttall, Resident on management committee of Cambrian Green Court
- Sue Walker, Former South Gloucestershire and Yate Councillor
- Reverend Ian Wallace, Lead Vicar Yate Parish
- Brogan Wilcox, Venues Assistance Yate Town Council
- Nigel Woodford (Yate Men's Shed)

Example Telephone interview schedule

Name: Peter Davies

Role: Contact at Yate & District Bowling Club

Why relevant: Season runs April to October. Regular weekend friendly matches and participation in the 'Bristol & District and Cotswold Bowls League'.

Tel no: 01454 261889

Hello, is that Peter Davies

My name is Eddy Knasel.

I'm phoning you because I'm doing research for Yate Town Council into services and activities for older people in Yate.

I understand that you're the contact person for Yate & District Bowling Club

Well, Yate Town Council are looking at how they can make Yate a better place for older people? And that's what I'm involved with.

I'm researching what's already going on in the town and what could be done to fill any gaps. We'll be making recommendations to the Council at the end of October.

So, we're doing a number of things to find this out, like visiting groups and we'll be sending out a questionnaire later. But a very important part of the project is talking to people like yourself.

I'd like to ask you a few questions, which will take between 10 and 15 minutes. Would you be happy to talk to me?

Could we find a convenient time – are you free now?

Questions

- Could you tell me a little about the kinds of people who come to the Bowls club?
- How many of them are aged 55 and over?
- How many men and women?
- Where do they come from?
- When do they play?
- How do they find out about it?
- How do they benefit?
- Have you had any feedback?
- Do you have any plans to extend or develop the club?



Yate Ageing Better

Attendees at YAB Focus Group

14 November 2019

- Sue Bird (Walking for health)
- Val Evans (Pop Inn Volunteer)
- Irene Fittal (Pop Inn volunteer)
- Reverend Joanne Hodge (Curate with pastoral responsibility for Yate)
- Barbara Perks (CASAL and Green Community Transport)
- Margaret Slucutt, Chair South Gloucestershire Over 50's Forum
- Christina Shinton (Townswomen's Guild)
- Alexandra Swatton (St Nix Family Centre: Community Development Worker)
- Cheryl Vavasour (Neighbourhood Coach for Bromford Housing)
- Nigel Woodford (Men's Shed)

In attendance from Yate Town Council:

Sally Johnston

Councillor Penny Thoyts