

London Borough of Barnet's Response to an Ageing Society

Thank you for this opportunity to describe to you how Barnet is responding to an ageing society. Of course, given the scale of changes which all public sector bodies, and indeed other organisations, need to make to respond appropriately to the changing demographic structure of our population, this is clearly a work in progress.

In Barnet, we recognised that the challenge is so significant that a key post – that of the Later Life Lead Commissioner was created. The ambition of the post was to ensure that the aspirations and expectations of our local residents for their future would be embedded in our visioning and strategic approach to key issues within the borough such as our huge regeneration programmes, our commitment to Barnet being the best place for a small business, developing innovative responses to the needs of older residents through close work with the voluntary sector and reshaping our adult social care offer through more emphasis on prevention and planning as well as integration with health partners. This approach has been so successful, that with older people firmly on the agenda, the Lead Commissioning roles have been reviewed and a new structure established which will give the Council greater freedom to choose how those aspirations will be met.

Our vision in Barnet is that older people should be able to age well, live well and stay well. We have developed a vision which has been depicted pictorially called the Barnet Store (available on request) and used to generate discussion where older people care able to live a full and active life, continuing to contribute their skills and expertise through access to a range of opportunities and services which benefit them economically, financially, socially and health wise. Although we have a very active Senior Assembly – a group of older people aged 55 and upwards who are funded and supported to meet regularly raising topics which are of key strategic interest but may not be being addressed elsewhere – we have wanted to focus on people who are still working and in their 50s. The Senior Assembly tends to attract people who are in their 60s and over. So we have also run focus groups on planning for later life, and engaged in extensive qualitative research which has enabled us to think about the issues that people aged 50+ are engaged with and identify those that enable people to plan and think about their future and those that stop people from planning. The focus groups also enabled us to recognise some of the challenges that the changing aspirations and expectations of different generations will bring and think about how we can, as a council, use both our influence and resources to change the landscape as a whole.

Planning for the future raised a number of interesting conundrums about when older age starts or when thinking ahead about older age should begin. The received wisdom is planning based upon aspirations of people in their 50's or even late 40's. However given that the average life expectancy is increasing and people in their 40s are likely to live well into their 90's planning 50 years in advance is a really big ask. However, we do know that people start to think about their future when encountering significant changes in their own lives – and indeed those of others. Experience has shown that the experience of caring for older parents does encourage women to plan ahead. And yes, we have discovered that there is a gender slant to planning ahead with women being more likely to think about the future in this way. Other triggers include children growing up and leaving home or the death of a “dependent “parent – giving parents the space to think about what they want from the

second half of their lives, and of course divorce, redundancy and retirement. Not all of these events lead automatically to constructs of lives that we have seen our parents experience but can often mean a new beginning and the fulfilment of long thwarted ambitions.

We also understand the triggers for adult social care. Recognising that it is no-one's ambition to be in receipt of social care we have developed initiatives and responses to those triggers – carer breakdown, unsuitable housing, poor health and social isolation.

Our approach to older people is encapsulated in a number of different strategies – e.g. our Corporate Plan, Entrepreneurial Barnet, Health and Well-Being Strategy etc and in the Council's 5 year commissioning plan which was developed over the course of 6 months with elected members. These have been informed by views of local residents and partners and will be subject to further consultation in the first half of 2015. We recognise that the challenges ahead require sign up from key partners and have a high level Strategic Commissioning Board chaired by our Chief Executive which enables the development of a partnership approach. We have also recommissioned our local infrastructure organisation service in order to identify the best voluntary sector and community sector partners to work alongside us in delivering the changes.

So what have we done:

Commissioning Plan

Barnet is proud to be a commissioning council and as such is developing a 5 year business plan which describes the key priorities and outcomes which the Council wishes to commission. This is attached at Appendix 1. This approach will enable us not to lose sight of what is important for our residents as we meet the challenges of the austerity measures, demographic pressures, increased expectations and a changing legislative and policy landscape. The priorities and outcomes also directly inform our approach to older people.

Planning

We have commissioned a Later Life planning service which enables older people to plan positively for their future – the service offers information, advice, signposting and practical support on all areas of life including financial support.

We are developing a retirement package (see below) and offering information and advice on housing which helps people plan where they want to live.

Employment – we funded Trading Times in its early days to develop alternative ways of employing older people who either wanted to work full or part-time or have a complete career change. The website acts as a sort of dating agency for employers and potential employees, and has gone from strength to strength.

We gave start-up funding to the Princes Trust to set up PRIME in the borough to support people aged 55 to set up their own companies. As part of our strategic ambition for Barnet to be the best borough for small businesses we will continue to offer information and

signposting to people who want to establish their own businesses as well as supporting businesses to be sustainable.

We have identified people aged over 55 as the next target group for apprenticeships, recognising that older people often want or need to take a different career path and require different supports (including financial reward) to enable them to take advantage of this.

We have signed up to key employment actions as part of the “Rethink, Rework and Act” project proposals underpinning “The Age of No Retirement” social movement.

We plan to establish a programme to support the transition to retirement in a way that enables older residents to both live a full and active life and also make an ongoing contribution to the success of the Borough.

We will also explore how to tap into the expertise of older/retired residents with business experience in providing business mentoring to local SMEs(e.g. through the business hub CIC).

Housing and Regeneration

We have built specifications into our regeneration requirements which will support inclusive communities and growing older through ensuring designs with communal space and focal points; improved transport links and retail facilities; ensuring that developments will be both age friendly and dementia friendly. We are moving away from just thinking about housing for older people as being in segregated congregate areas – our experience of existing regenerated areas shows that older people will choose to downsize if we offer good quality alternatives which they can buy and are capable of supporting people into later life.

We are strengthening our information and advice with Re – our strategic partner, and national organisations, to ensure that people of all ages can easily obtain advice and information about future proofing their home, if they wish to remain in the same property, or moving to a different location if that is their choice. We will build in advice about retiring or wintering abroad as we know this is an increasing lifestyle choice and indeed many residents have sons and daughters who have settled in other countries, ensuring that residents have access to good information before they make any decisions.

We have agreed planning permission for the first women’s co-housing for 25 homes in the north of the borough – in fact this was the first co-housing development for older people in London and remains the only women’s provision. Co-housing communities operate on a semi-communal model, with residents supporting each other in all aspects of life, Alongside reproviding some of our sheltered accommodation as specialist extra care built to HAPPI standards for older people, we are also commissioning a range of different models of housing including pepper-potting suitable accommodation in regeneration areas with a social care hub to enable people with social care needs to remain living in a mixed environment.

Leisure and Relationships

Barnet has a well –established ABCD programme, Better Together, focused on older people and local communities in 3 areas in Barnet – this is expanding to a fourth area in 2014-5. The programme supports older people to play a pivotal role in their local communities, both leading and benefiting from a variety of activities which broaden and enrich lives and develop social connections, firmly embedding older people who may have been isolated before.

Barnet has developed a social isolation toolkit which has identified that our most isolated older people are older women in the more affluent areas – the 4th Better Together area will target one of these areas to look at how social connections can best be strengthened for this group of people. Our voluntary sector partner ran a workshop looking at social isolation across the piece and is currently engaged in developing a collaborative response.

Barnet has commissioned the Young Foundation to develop the U in a different area in Barnet. This approach utilises the experience and knowledge of local people to identify venues and host activities which bring together people around a theme – again developing local connections.

Barnet has also commissioned the Casserole Club – volunteers cook an extra portion of food and deliver it to someone who lives locally. Older people are both volunteers and beneficiaries.

Barnet had a traditional day service offer for older people, revolving around two buildings offering lunch and some social activities. This service was remodelled with our lead provider Age UK Barnet, to be a local neighbourhood service offering a range of activities to people. The service has grown from strength to strength with skills based activities being the prime choice of older people rather than lunch! And numbers swelling by 30% in the first year of delivery of the new model. The transition was not without its difficulties but the benefits are significant!

Staying Well, Staying Independent

We have a wide range of prevention services such as telecare, and are currently strengthening our information, advice and advocacy. We will from 2015 be providing community navigators which will develop prevention plans, building on social networks and family supports, for older people on the cusp of care. We will also further develop and launch dementia friendly communities building on the dementia friendly approach that our library staff have embraced and widening this approach out to town centres and community organisations.

We have launched a leisure offer for older people in our leisure centres, including some free activities and have identified bespoke funding for people who want to set up their own leisure activities – Fit and Active In Barnet. Saracens run a Love to Move programme offering activities such as dance, touch rugby and pilates . We have developed marked and measured routes in parks so that older people can challenge themselves in keeping fit when they want to and 7 “al fresco” gyms.

We also plan to launch Every Contact Counts in 2015, fully utilising the knowledge and expertise of all those people who come into contact with older people, ensuring that key areas are checked and links to appropriate services made.

Most of our carers are older people, caring for partners – we are strengthening our carers offer – enabling carers to develop skills in caring for family members with long term conditions, offering specialist support to carers of people with dementia and enhanced support to people who continue to work and care for a family member.

For people with dementia and their carers we fund dementia advisors, cafes and singing for the brain and will use the dementia friends initiative to ensure that all suitable activities are dementia friendly.

We recognise that transport is an issue for many older people and this will be a priority in 2014/5 for our new Commissioning Director of the Environment.

Good Quality Health and Social Care Services

Like all local authorities we have also been thinking long and hard about what good integration looks like and how to achieve the best outcomes for our older people. Our situation is slightly complicated by the difficult financial situation of our local CCG. We do however have a well-established Joint Commissioning Unit which has worked well to develop an integrated vision across patients resident and social care service users.

We have developed an integrated approach to delivering health and social care which builds on existing initiatives and draws in expertise, not just from GP, clinicians, social work and OT practitioners but also from our prevention and carers officers. This approach looks at the person's situation and how services continue to maintain or recreate community connections rather than building service "walls." We will offer a new focus on self-management, expert patients and community based services, including expanding our enablement offer and thinking about how we can integrate intermediate care, rapid response and enablement when we come to procure in 2016.

We know that from an adult social care perspective doing more of the same is not an option. Alongside all the initiatives to keep people socially connected and well for longer, we will also remodel the social care offer, focusing more on community based opportunities and technology, a reshaped community based support offer based on outcomes and care for as long as needed and less use of institutional segregated provision such as residential and nursing care. We also need to offer more choices to help people financially plan for their social care costs and are working with private sector organisations to develop a suite of options so that people or their families can begin to save for this purpose.