



A call for evidence on

## **Local Government's Response to an Ageing Society**

### **North Norfolk District Council**

Nationally, according to the 2011 census, approximately 17% of people are aged over 65 years. In North Norfolk District Council (NNDC) area approximately 33% of the population are aged over 65 which is nearly double the national average.

There are often negative stereotypes about elderly people and growing old. Older people are often portrayed as, and made to feel like they are, a burden to other people and society. However, NNDC doesn't share this view and instead recognises the positive contribution that many older people make within their local communities. Older people tend to contribute significantly to the local economy, either because they are still working or are retired and mortgage free with higher levels of disposable income than younger working age people.

The majority of the District, Town and Parish Councillors as well as the thousands of volunteers that support the third sector in North Norfolk are older people. Their knowledge and life experience is an invaluable resource.

Within families, people in their sixties or seventies often take on caring responsibilities for elderly and frail parents, their own partner or provide child care to grandchildren which enables their parents to work.

NNDC does recognise however that there is still a percentage of older people who due to age, illness or disability have become vulnerable or frail and need additional support to remain independent in their home. A range of services and support is offered either directly by the Council or deliver on our behalf by a third sector organisation or increasingly as part of a multi-agency partnership

Whilst NNDC does not have a statutory responsibility to provide medical or social care services it is committed to ensuring that the services it does provide support, protect, improve and enhance the physical, mental, social and economic health and wellbeing of the district, local communities and residents.

The North Norfolk Health Strategy 2011 – 2015 identifies how the Council works proactively to improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities. The Council ensures that where ever possible its services align and reflect national and local priorities of key partners such as Norfolk County Council, local health services and voluntary and community groups.

The key priorities for the Council identified in the Strategy are:

- Localism of health delivery – this is a key feature of the NHS Norfolk Strategy and offers increased opportunities for organisations at a local level to work together to improve and achieve health outcomes.
- Prevention of ill health and promotion of healthy lifestyles -this is the key recommendation from the Marmot Review on health inequalities where the Councils can play an active and successful role

- Maintaining activity, independence and support for older people – this priority arises directly from the demography of North Norfolk and, if successful, will have an immediate effect on other health priorities.

The Strategy is currently being update to reflect changes within the Council, the district, local population and the impact of new legislation relating to health and social care such as the formation of Clinical Commissioning Groups, establishment of Health and Wellbeing Boards and the transfer of the Public Health responsibility to Norfolk County Council.

The Strategy will identify a range of the actions the Council will take, to ensure that despite challenging economic times and increasing demand, wherever possible services are aligned and able to respond to current and emerging needs with the aim of improving health and wellbeing outcomes for all residents. This could include reconfiguration of existing, alternative or innovative ways to deliver services, accessing external funding, partnership working with statutory and voluntary organisations as well as communities and individuals to encourage and empower them to recognise the role they have and what they can do to improve health and wellbeing for their communities and themselves.

A key feature of the new Strategy will be actions to reflect the recent commitment by NNDC to become a dementia friendly Council. There are a significant number of people living in North Norfolk with dementia and this is set to increase. Many of these with support are able to live within their communities. Maintaining activity and engaging with their local community may help delay or reduce the impact of this illness and it is important to ensure that staff are trained and services provided by the Council are able to the respond to the needs of people with dementia and their carers. NNDC is working with the Norfolk & Suffolk Dementia Alliance and Age UK Norfolk and will also engage work with Town and Parish Councils to encourage and promote dementia friendly communities.

As requested examples are given of NNDC led services that look beyond traditional “care and support” and aim to improve older age quality of life, and proactively support people to maintain and improve their health, wellbeing and independence :

**North Norfolk Activity Referral Scheme** - a partnership between NNDC and North Norfolk Clinical Commissioning Group. This enables predominantly older people with specific conditions to be referred by their doctor to NNDC leisure services for a 12 week low cost, supportive programme of activity aimed at improving their health. In some cases this has delayed or avoided further medical treatment or surgery. Evidence shows that a significant number of people become members of NNDC sports and fitness centres after the Activity Referral programme has ended as they recognise the benefits to their physical, social and mental health and wellbeing.

**Mobile / Community gyms** – the rural nature of North Norfolk, combined with a challenging road infrastructure and poor public transport means access to services is often a reason why older people in particular become social isolated. The community gym project has used local village halls as a base for mobile gym sessions. The majority of users of the gyms are older people. In some communities when the gym was due to move to another location the Council has supported local people to apply for grant funding and set up their own community gyms.

**Volunteering** – NNDC offer volunteering opportunities at its green flag country park. It has also been successful in securing lottery funding for a number of projects including a walking project and a conservation project. Whilst open to all it is predominantly older people who access these services. When the funding ended, NNDC supported both projects until they became sustainable and they are now run predominantly by older people as community organisations. The walking project in particular has responded to members' views and community need and also offers tea dances and other activities.

**North Norfolk Older People's Forum** – NNDC provides support to the North Norfolk Older People's Forum. The Forum works to ensure that the Council and other organisations are aware of the concerns and issues raised and faced by older people. The Council is also able to use the Forum as a way of consulting and engaging with older people.

In summary, this report provides a brief overview of some of the ways NNDC seeks to proactively support through direct service provision or by working in partnership with other organisations, older people living in North Norfolk.

12<sup>th</sup> November 2014