

To: Scrutiny Committee
Date: 5 December 2017
Report of: Head of Community Services
Title of Report: Preventing Elderly Isolation

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To update the Scrutiny Panel on provision of activities and work towards reducing elderly isolation.
Key decision:	No
Executive Board Member:	Councillor Dee Sinclair, Culture and Communities
Corporate Priority:	Strong Active Communities
Policy Framework:	Oxford City Council Corporate Plan
Recommendation(s): That the Scrutiny Committee resolves to:	
1. Note and comment on the report	

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Information for 'Dance for Parkinson's' programme
Appendix 2	Museum of Oxford Reminiscence project leaflet

Introduction and background

1. The Scrutiny Committee requested a report to update them on the current provision of activities to tackle isolation and loneliness amongst older residents in the city.
2. According to the Office of National Statistics mid-2016 population estimates, there are 39,400 people over the age of 50 living in Oxford. This equates to nearly 25% of the population of the city, compared to nearly 37% of the population aged over 50 across Great Britain. The Oxford figure will be skewed by the high student population which means the proportion of the settled community in this age range will be higher than this.
3. According to Age UK, 10% of those aged 65+ in the UK say they are always or often lonely. Loneliness also increases with age with 17% of all those aged over 80 often lonely and a further 29% lonely 'some of the time' (Tackling Isolation and Loneliness (UK), Age UK, March 2016).
4. The World Health Organisation recognises that:

“Loneliness, social isolation and social exclusion are important social determinants and risk factors of ill health among older people. They affect all aspects of health and well-being, including mental health, the risk of maltreatment and the risk of emergency admission to hospital for avoidable conditions, such as severe dehydration or malnutrition.” (www.euro.who.int 2017)

Provision of Older People Services in Oxford

5. The County Council is responsible for adult social care which they deliver through supporting carers, helping people to stay in their own home, provision of their community support service, support and advice on keeping healthy and other services.
6. The Community and Voluntary Sector plays a key role in reducing isolation amongst older people. Organisations range in size from large national and county-wide organisations such as Age UK and the 50+ Network to very local provision by independent groups such as coffee mornings, learning groups or physical activities.
7. Age UK Oxfordshire work within communities to support older people to stay independent and live life to the full by providing services including information and advice, ‘Phone Friends’, their physical activity service ‘Generation Games’, and the Community Information Network which provides easy access to information on local support services and activities, money matters and social care.
8. The Oxford 50+ Network aims to consult, inform and involve residents of 50 years and over on issues which are relevant and of concern and interest to them. The City Council commissions Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action (OCVA) to administer the 50+ network while they develop their capacity and volunteer base to become self-administering and sustainable.
9. There are many smaller local groups supporting older people in the community, from local charities such as the Clock House and the Archway Foundation to coffee mornings, support groups, bingo clubs and faith groups, often run by volunteers and all delivering essential support to prevent isolation in older people.
10. Oxford City Council seeks to support this provision through effective partnership and complimentary work. There is no officer or team holding specific responsibility for older people and isolation, but all Council services try to design and deliver services which meet the needs of all of our residents, including older people.
11. This means that within our core business we strive to ensure our services are as accessible as possible and work closely with partners to increase wellbeing and build capacity amongst older people in order to support strong, active communities. Doing what we can within our resources to support the battle against isolation and loneliness is key to achieving that.

Localities Team

12. Locality Officers work in the regeneration areas of the city to address the multiple inequalities which exist in these areas. Officers collate extensive quantitative and qualitative data to agree local priorities with Ward Members, often these priorities fall outside of the direct remit of the Council and we work hard with partners to deliver against them.
13. Cutteslowe, Wood Farm and Northway all have priorities which specifically refer to working with other agencies to reduce isolation amongst older people and most

have a health and wellbeing priority which includes work towards supporting older people and preventing isolation.

14. In reality, this means utilising Council assets, knowledge and resources to support community and voluntary organisations and targeting Council activities to be as accessible as possible to older people.
15. For example, in the Leys the team has supported *FriendLeys* coffee morning to increase their membership, advised on outreach (including taking their session to one of the sheltered housing schemes in the area), referred them to OCVA for support in writing their constitution and directed the Chair to scam awareness training which he has fed back to the group.
16. *FriendLeys*, an older person's coffee morning in Blackbird Leys, and the Leys CDI Clock House older people project were both invited to Leys Festival to promote their organisations to the community and both have had healthy cooking workshops from Good Food Oxford, funded by Oxford City Council.
17. In Rose Hill we undertook a survey with older people who attend an existing coffee morning at a sheltered housing project and those that attend a weekly group for older people at the Community Centre to explore what new courses or activities they might be interested in taking up. As a result of this a seated bowls session has now been started at the Community Centre.
18. In Barton the Locality Support Officer has been working with Barton Community Association to support the continuity of the Older People's lunch club in Barton Neighbourhood Centre and Northway by helping with promotion of the club, and referring them to OCVA to help attract new volunteers.
19. As part of the Barton Healthy New Town project we funded the 50+ network to organise a Barton Older People's day in February 2017, replicating the annual Older People's day hosted in the Town Hall. The event saw around 25 different organisations and activities throughout the day.
20. In Wood Farm, as result of a concerted partnership effort by members of the Communities Team, Tenancy Management and Age UK, the residents of Atkyns Court sheltered accommodation unit report being far happier with their links with the City Council and the community as a whole. The long running coffee mornings have been extended to include regular activity sessions including Hoy (a form of bingo) and weekly visits to the nearby Fran's Cafe.
21. As part of our on-going support to the *Silver Shakers* Dance Group we recently negotiated their successful migration from Wood Farm primary school to the more affordable and suitable Bullingdon Community Centre. The group are now benefiting from funding and other support from the Clinical Commissioning Group to focus on 'Dancing for Health' as a project.
22. Other activities the Localities Team has helped to initiate and support in Wood Farm include a creative writing course, a community choir, a Fix It Group and Gadget Drop in.
23. The Locality Officer supported Northway Lunch Club when the service which delivers their food ceased without notice and the club now produce their own lunches onsite. Earlier this year we provided the Friday Club with new sports equipment to replace that lost to the youth club when it relocated.

24. In Cutteslowe the Council has funded a community bus service to enable people with mobility issues to reach clinics, the hospital and doctor appointments and to visit shops in Summertown and Oxford City Centre .The service has run on Tuesdays and Thursdays since September 2016 and provides a bus service for concessionary pass holders as part replacement for the number 17 bus. To date 63 people have registered with the project and 'on board' monitoring suggests that there is an average of five people on each journey.

Grants Programme

25. The grants and commissioning programme benefits many older people living in Oxford.
26. In 2016/17 the advice centres, part-funded by the commissioning programme, provided advice to 3,418 people aged over 50 and 1,042 people aged over 65.
27. The grants programme has supported the Archway Foundation that supports people suffering from loneliness, and many of their clients are older people. £7,500 was awarded in 2016/17 and a further £2,500 was awarded this year through the small grants programme towards social events and activities.
28. Other work targeted towards older people that the grants programme has funded recently includes:
- Funding the Leys CDI Clock House to deliver subsidised activities for older people living in the Leys (£7,000 in 16/17 and £7,000 17/18)
 - £500 awarded to the Cheney over 50's Club through the small grants programme this year to contribution towards speaker's fees to attend their weekly sessions.
 - Cutteslowe Seniors Group (£1,000 in 2016/17 & £500 2017/18) for subsidised adapted transport to enable members to go to social events and sessions.

Sports and Physical Activity Team

29. The Sport and Physical Activity team work on supporting and developing a range of sports, physical activities and facilities in the city; offering a range of programmes, projects and events to help Oxford's residents become more active and live happier, healthier lives.
30. The team work hard with partners such as the Oxfordshire Sport and Physical Activity Partnership, Sport England, National Governing Bodies of Sports, schools, clubs, charities and the voluntary and community sector to ensure sport and physical activity is accessible to everyone.
31. Through these partnerships the team supports delivery of a range of physical activities aimed particularly at adults over the age of 50 are on offer.
32. There are regular health walks in six areas of the city. These walks are aimed at anyone interested in starting or returning to gentle exercise and are typically attended by people over the age of 65.
33. The team supported a local volunteer to set up a weekly *Silver Joggers* session in Bury Knowle Park, offering an opportunity for people over 50 to learn to jog in a fun and safe environment. The sessions build up gradually and some participants have even gone on to take part in a 5km run at *Park Run* after 10 weeks.

34. Nordic Walking utilises special poles to support the upper body and propel the walker forward. It is a fantastic form of exercise for anyone suffering with joint problems as it eases the pressure on the back, hips, knees and ankles.
35. Social Nordic walking, supported by the team, now takes place in Cutteslowe, Bury Knowle Park and Shotover Park as well as an informal group of Nordic walkers over 50 years old who meet up sporadically to walk together socially. 2017 also saw the first annual 'Nordic Walking Festival', held at Cutteslowe Park to celebrate the activity and encourage more people to take part.
36. Following on from *Ping! Oxford 2014* a weekly session of Over 50s table tennis was set up with Oxford and District Table Tennis Association (ODTTA) to support people over 50 to return to paying table tennis or have a go for the first time. This session is still successfully running at the Temple Cowley United Reform Church.
37. The team has also successfully established Boccia (a form of seated bowls) as a regular activity in the Leys, with FriendLeys, Clock House and Longland's Care Home all regularly playing.

Arts and Culture Team

38. The City Council develops and invests in cultural experiences that enrich people's lives, delivering and supporting a range of arts and heritage activities in Oxford, including dance, music, theatre, literature, film, digital art, the Museum of Oxford and the city's archives.
39. We are committed to providing and supporting opportunities for all of Oxford's residents to engage with arts and cultural events and activities and within this there are several activities targeted specifically towards older people.
40. *Dance for Parkinson's* offers people with Parkinson's, their carers and family members a high quality artistic and engaging dance activity. Weekly dance classes provide a creative and artistic opportunity for participants within a supportive and social environment, in addition to providing positive benefit to physical and mental health and wellbeing.
41. This group was featured on the BBC programme 'Inside Out' last year and the BBC has committed to keep the programme on the iPlayer permanently due to the impact it has had. You can see the programme here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b072xkcz/inside-out-south-parkinsons-the-funny-side#> (see appendix 1).
42. The team provides further support to the *Silver Shakers* dance a social group to deliver creative dance workshops which are fun and social as well as offering health benefits to participants like increased stability and balance, lower blood pressure, weight loss and falls prevention.
43. The Museum of Oxford Reminiscence project (MOOR) has provided an outreach service from the Museum of Oxford to groups of older people for the past 8 years. The groups visited include day centres, care homes, interest groups, lunch-clubs and sheltered housing schemes. In 2016/17 844 older people received this service in 77 separate sessions (see appendix 2).
44. There are also on-site Museum groups for Older People: Memory Lane and Memory Lane Movers and Shakers. In 2016/17 404 people attended these groups at 12 separate sessions. Many of the participants live alone and cite the social

element of the group as important to them. The sessions are free and no booking is required.

45. Activities provided by both the Sports and Physical Activity Team and the Arts and Culture Team are promoted through a number of means including the Oxford City Council website and partner websites; newsletters, posters and flyers distributed to community notice boards, community centres, libraries and GP surgeries; community newspapers; press releases; via partners such as Age UK and the 50+ Network and through direct contact with existing older people groups throughout the city. Often the best form of publicity for these activities amongst older people is word of mouth.

Tenant Involvement Team

46. The Tenant Involvement Team work to empower tenants and leaseholders to develop, monitor and scrutinise the Council's landlord related services, working with teams across the Council to facilitate this to happen.
47. Earlier this year they worked with residents at all 10 sheltered blocks in the city to undertake a review of the House Keeping service. A common theme across the Sheltered Blocks when carrying out the Housekeeping Reviews, was that residents were unclear what services they should receive from OCC and when.
48. The Tenant Involvement Team is going to put together a 'Local Offer' for each of the sheltered blocks, outlining what services the Council will provide and enabling residents to monitor whether we are doing what we say.
49. The team will be returning to the sheltered blocks in early December with a draft version of the Local Offer for the residents to review. This will also provide an opportunity to consult with residents on the use of communal lounge areas, which could then be included in the final version of Local Offer.

Diverse Communities

50. According to the 2011 census, of 36,739 people aged over 50 living in Oxford, nearly 10% (3,550) identified as an ethnicity other than white European and 19% (6,970) identified as an ethnicity other than white British. On the whole there is a lack of clear data on the ethnic diversity of participants across the range of older people activities and groups which we support.
51. However, there are several instances of us supporting groups specifically focused on working with older people from a diverse range of communities.
52. For example the *My Journeys* project (part of the Journeys to Oxford exhibition) engaged with 5 older people over 80 years old who live alone, all of whom were born outside of the UK. They were all photographed and oral history accounts were recorded of their Journeys to Oxford. This material was on display in the exhibition, is being disseminated via Memory Phones during Christmas Light Festival weekend, has been shared with the Migration Museum in London and may be used by Oxford University Museum of Natural History in their *Settlers* exhibition.
53. In Rose Hill the Nepalese group of around 40 people which meet at the Community Centre for English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) classes is primarily attended by people over the age of 65 and in response to health data which indicates that the Nepalese community faces a higher risk of suffering a stroke, the Locality Officer has linked them in with the Stroke Association who will be providing an awareness session for the group.

54. Nonetheless, these snapshots do not give a full view of how well activities to prevent isolation are reaching older members of diverse communities across the city and we must work with partners to understand this better in future and to increase access.

Looking Forward

55. Oxford City Council's role will continue to be a preventative one, keeping people active, happy and healthy. We will continue to support the community and voluntary sector by working with them to provide high quality activities to combat isolation and liaise with them to ensure that the services we provide are accessible to all, with the County Council targeted to support those who need more help.

56. The City Council needs to increase its knowledge of the diversity of participants in some activities and increase engagement with older members of diverse communities whilst also supporting existing activities to become more accessible.

57. The Council will continue to work hard to ensure that services are accessible to all members of the community.

Summary

58. There is a huge amount of excellent work undertaken in Oxford to prevent isolation and loneliness amongst older people and Oxford City Council plays a role within a multi-agency approach.

59. The Council works with partners to support groups to provide physical activities and social support groups and to increase their reach and capacity. We provide cultural experiences which enrich people's lives and demonstrate the valuable contribution older people make to the city and we are working with residents of sheltered housing blocks to agree a local offer to meet their specific needs.

60. There is more work to be done to understand how we are preventing isolation amongst a diverse range of older people and how we could better do so in future.

61. It is important to recognise the limitation of the City Council's role in providing services for older residents - we provide preventative activities and ensure our core services address the needs of older people. Other agencies, predominantly health and the County Council provide targeted support.

62. The City Council will continue to use its resources as effectively as possible to support the sector, adding value wherever we can whilst continually challenging ourselves to ensure we are providing the best service possible.

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Background Papers: Scrutiny Committee Report: Activities for older residents and preventing isolation. February 2015.	

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