

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

To: Scrutiny Committee

Date: 3rd February 2015

Report of: Head of Service Leisure Parks and Communities

Title of Report: Activities for older residents and preventing isolation.

Summary

Purpose of report: To update the Scrutiny Panel on the current provision of activities for older people within the city.

Key decision: No

Executive lead member: Christine Simm

Report author: Vicki Galvin and Luke Nipen

Policy Framework: Oxford City Council Corporate Plan – Strong, Active communities

Appendices to report:

Appendix 1 – Case study – Silver Joggers

Appendix 2 – Examples of GO Active posters

Appendix 3 – Isolation project – Citizens Advice Bureau Client

Appendix 4 – Older peoples Day Feedback 2014

Background – The Scrutiny Committee requested a report to update them on the current provision of activities for older residents in the city and how through these and any other projects, we are tackling issues of isolation and loneliness often associated with older ageing.

Introduction

1. In response to the increase in life expectancy and the number of older people living in Oxford; Oxford City Council have established a number

of ways to improve the circumstances of the 50+ population and the associated issues around loneliness and isolation.

2. In October 2013 Oxford City Council commissioned a 'Needs Assessment for Older People in Oxford' in respect of employment and income, health and well-being, safety and security and access to information. This analysis is now being used in a multi-agency approach through the Ageing Successfully Partnership to guide the provision of older people activities in Oxford.
3. Oxford City Council acts as the lead agency for the Ageing Successfully Partnership (ASP). The ASP membership includes Oxford Citizens Advice Bureau, Age UK and the Oxford 50+ Network. The priorities for older people's work as highlighted through the Needs Assessment have been adopted as key areas for improvement by the ASP and a number of projects have already been funded to meet these needs.
 - Reduce isolation and loneliness.
 - Increase access and uptake of IT Skills, Information and Support.
 - Improve Health and Well-being of Older People.
 - Provide information and advice for older people on income and benefits.
4. The initial pilot projects have ranged from social activities to benefit advice. This year the ASP have built upon the best practice learnt from the initial projects and will now look to expand into additional areas of the city.
5. In addition Oxford City Council has also funded a Winter Warmth advice service through the Affordable Warmth Network (AWN) and delivers the county-wide Get Oxfordshire Active (GO Active) project across the city district.
6. Outside of the Leisure, Parks & Communities service areas further work is undertaken through organisations such as Age UK, Museum of Oxford, Community Associations, Housing Associations and the Women's Institute to also tackle isolation and loneliness.
7. These offer a wide range of activities/resources across the city especially for older people including:
 - Social activities – Bingo, games, gardening, singing
 - Community clubs - lunch clubs and coffee mornings
 - Classes and courses – Computer, writing, arts and crafts
 - Reminiscence – Museum tours, talks and Memory Lane group
 - Transport – Good Neighbour Scheme and Dial-A-Ride

Current Provision

8. **Oxford 50+ Network**

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. Oxford City Council has supported the Network by providing a meeting space free of charge and recently a small grant has been awarded to ensure sustainability of the organisation. The relationship between Oxford City Council and the 50+ Network has proven very successful in understanding the needs of older people in the city and finding ways to support them.

9. **Isolation Projects**

Oxford City Council has funded pilot projects to tackle isolation in the older population via the ASP for the last 2 years. The pilot projects have been led by Age UK (community activities – Risinghurst and Northway) and Citizens Advice Bureau (additional capacity for benefit advice – city wide). The projects complemented one another as referrals would come from Age UK activities to the Citizens Advice Bureau project which then used its additional capacity to undertake home visits.

10. This financial year (14/15) Oxford City Council have set aside £50,000 to progress isolation work within the older population. The proposed projects all go through the ASP prior to being funded to ensure they meet the needs of that area and will offer sustainability for the clients. Supported projects this year include, winter warmth outreach in West Oxford, older people activities in Littlemore and Isolated Older People outreach in Blackbird Leys.

11. This funding has given local communities an opportunity to diversify some of the provision on their area. This can be seen with the planned project in Littlemore. This will enable an older person's lunch club to take place, providing valuable links to local organisations and support, including Oxford Food Bank. One aspect which was requested by older people was increased ICT provision and as such there will now be more lessons available for those 50+ at the community centre.

12. The Citizens Advice Bureau has received £10,000 of isolation funding to continue their outreach to older vulnerable clients. Since this project has begun it has passed the £1,000,000 threshold in terms of additional income generated for clients. Other projects have been identified and Oxford City Council is currently looking to fund projects in Blackbird Leys, Littlemore and Wood Farm to tackle isolation.

13. Winter warmth advice has been offered by Oxford City Council through funding of the Affordable Warmth Network (AWN) who provide a free help line offering advice on energy efficiency measures, help changing energy suppliers and sign posting to other organisations that may offer the client additional support.

14. Oxford City Council has also continued to support various Low Carbon initiatives that support potentially isolated vulnerable older people.

15. **Grants**

Through Oxford City Council's grants programme a number of applications have been made to benefit older people. This financial year Old Marston Over 50's Club, Cutteslowe Seniors and Leys CDI – Clockhouse Project have received funding. Oxford City Council has also funded the UK Older Peoples day event held in the Town Hall.

16. The grants made available by Oxford City Council offer an opportunity for local communities to apply for funding for activities that they have identified as a need in their local area and also provide activities that residents may not usually have the opportunity to participate in. This has given community associations the ability to try new activities which will engage different aspects of the community. An example of this work would be the 2013/14 Social Inclusion funded project put on by St Lukes Church. Through links locally they understood there was an interest in history and as such used the funding to create a history group for older people to help engage those who may be isolated.

17. Grant funding has also allowed for the Leys CDI – Clockhouse project to provide weekly sessions (with half term & summer holiday breaks) in both Tai Chi and Yoga for people over 50 living on the Leys estate. These sessions are regularly attended by over 30 people.

18. **Physical Activity**

The physical health benefits of becoming more active are widely known; weight loss, lower blood pressure and reduced risk of heart disease and diabetes, but the impact on someone's mental health can be just as beneficial. Getting active at any age releases endorphins, known as the 'happy hormone' helping to improve someone's mood, confidence and self –esteem, but taking part in physical activity as part of a group can also help someone socially; reducing their feelings of loneliness and breaking patterns of isolation.

19. **GO Active**

Oxford City Council delivers a number of physical activity sessions for older people through GO Active which aims to engage more adults (16 years+) in sport and physical activity. The ethos of the project is around making physical activity affordable, accessible, sociable and enjoyable. As well as signposting people towards current opportunities; GO Active works to create more of these opportunities. This includes ensuring there is information and provision of suitable and accessible activities for older people living, working or visiting the city.

20. GO Active currently offer a range of physical activities aimed particularly at adults over the age of 50 and are detailed below. In addition, GO Active link into Age UK Oxfordshire's Generation Games

website which acts as a directory for older people activities across the whole county:

21. Health Walks

Tuesdays 10am; NOA Community Centre

Tuesdays 10am; Oxford Town Hall

Wednesdays 10am; Hinksey Park

Fridays 10am; Bury Knowle Park

First Thursday of every month 10am; Headington Hill Park

22. Oxford Health Walks were set up in 2010 and now offer four weekly walks and one monthly walk free of charge. The walks are aimed at anyone interested in starting or returning to gentle exercise and are typically attended by people over the age of 65. All walks are led by a trained volunteer Walk Leaders who have a range of risk assessed walk routes that they use; taking the walks at a pace suitable for all and where possible offering a shorter and longer walk option.

23. Currently walks are offered from Summertown, city centre, Hinksey, Bury Knowle and St Clements. As well as the physical exercise the walks offer various opportunities for socialisation. All the walks tend to end with a drink at a local café plus there is a summer picnic and Christmas 'Bring and Share' lunch organised to bring all walkers and leaders together.

24. A number of walk 'challenges' have also been organised over the years as an option for walkers to get involved in if they wish. These have ranged from a 'Walk a Marathon' challenge where walkers logged their distance each walk and tried to cover 26 miles over the course of the Olympics to an 'I-spy' challenge where walkers were given a list of things to spot whilst on a Health Walk.

25. *"The health walks are very beneficial on many levels – mentally, physically and socially. It is great to be in pleasant, cheerful company in lovely areas of the city. If they were to stop I'd be bitterly disappointed."*

26. *"I chose the Headington health walk because I needed some exercise and walking suited me because a formal exercise class would be too strenuous. While walking I find chatting to fellow walkers distracts me from my aches and pains. I enjoy the coffee at the end and I try not to arrange anything else in my diary for a Friday morning! I have encouraged others to walk as well."*

27. Silver Joggers

Thursdays, 10.30am, Bury Knowle Park

28. GO Active works with Run England to set up and support beginner jogging groups across the city. Volunteers are trained up through the Leadership in Running Fitness course and are then supported by GO

Active to set up a local group that engages with people new or returning to running.

29. Silver Joggers was set up by a local volunteer who was keen to offer an opportunity for people over 50 to learn to jog in a fun and safe environment. Often starting with a pattern of walk-jog-walk-jog the sessions build up gradually and some participants have even gone on to take part in a 5km run at Parkrun after 10 weeks.
30. The below comment is from a regular jogger who has enjoyed and benefitted from the group so much that he is now training to become a leader himself. Please refer to the Appendix 1 for his full case study.
31. *"There was a general feeling this morning, after the Silver Joggers run, that we were all feeling the benefit of having started jogging with Keith. I seem to be less breathless and recover faster after the runs. This as an introduction to jogging is a gentle and effective way to get people started on the road to fitness."*
32. Social Nordic Walking
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.
33. GO Active currently supports an informal group of Nordic walkers over 50 years old who meet up sporadically to walk together socially.
34. Over 50's Racketball
Tuesdays 10.30am; Ferry Leisure Centre
35. Initially a five week pilot of Racketball coaching; this session has continued as a social session for people over the age of 50 years to come along and play together. Equipment is supplied by England Squash and Racketball and the courts are donated in kind by Fusion Lifestyle.
36. Over 50's Table Tennis
Thursdays 10am; Temple Cowley United Reformed Church
37. As part of the 'Play on' opportunities from Ping! Oxford 2014 this session was set up with Oxford and District Table Tennis Association (ODTTA) to support people over the age of 50 to return to paying table tennis or pick up a bat and have a go for the first time.
38. Some informal coaching is available if desired, but the main emphasis is on social play with breaks built into the session to ensure players take some rest.

39. All GO Active sessions are promoted in a number of ways across the city; however the best method for engaging this age group has proved to be word of mouth.

- Oxford City Council website ([Forever Fit webpage](#))
- [GO Active website](#)
- Partner websites if applicable (including [Age UK's Generation Games](#))
- Social media (Facebook and Twitter)
- GO Active e-newsletter
- Posters/flyers distributed to community notice boards, Community Centres, Libraries and GP Surgeries.
- Community newspapers
- Press releases if appropriate
- Via partners such as Age UK, 50+ Network and Clockhouse Project.

40. Fusion Primetime sessions

As our local Leisure Provider; Fusion Lifestyle offer Primetime swimming and exercise classes for members over the age of 50 years old. To further support older people in accessing the local leisure facilities there are also concessionary memberships available.

41. Volunteering opportunities

As well as simply taking part in an activity we also have a number of volunteering opportunities suitable for older people that support them in becoming more active within their community.

42. Free training and on-going support is currently available to become volunteer walk and jogging leaders, but there are also more informal opportunities within the wider Leisure, Parks and Communities teams that require no training just enthusiasm such as gardening in our parks.

43. UK Older People's Day – Old is the New Young festival

In partnership with the Oxford 50+ Network and Age UK; Oxford City Council have also led the way in organising an annual event locally to mark UK Older People's Day each October.

44. As well as an opportunity to celebrate the contribution that older people make within our community this event is also utilised to engage with older people regarding their needs and to promote the current provision available to them.

45. In its first year this event was a small scale Health Walk, but has developed into a day of activity taster sessions and information stands at the Town Hall and hopes to grow even further in the future.

46. *"I enjoyed the seated Yoga and it was good to have a fitness MOT; thank you!"*

47. *"I had a very enjoyable time today learning about different opportunities for over 50's. Please repeat!"*

Measuring Success

48. Grant monitoring

All projects funded by Oxford City Council follow a robust monitoring process where the projects update on the terms and conditions of their grant. Isolation Projects are invited to the Ageing Successfully Project to update on their progress and build better relationships with key stakeholders.

49. Monitoring of projects includes numbers of attendees, financial information, case studies (where applicable) and any specifics as per their grant agreement.

50. GO Active

Sport England requires that GO Active collect information regarding participation numbers and so far this financial year GO Active have engaged 448 participants and 14 regular volunteers over the age of 55 through our activity programme.

51. The increase of adult participation in physical activity can be seen on a wider scale through our Active People Survey results which show an 8.6% increase from 20.7% of adults taking part in regular activity in 2005/6 to 29.3% of adults taking part in regular activity in June 2014. This now places us in the top 10% of all districts in the country.

52. As well as gathering participation data to monitor how successful our sessions are we also look to collect participant feedback and comments to help shape our activities as well as promote them to others. Examples of comments can be found throughout this report and included in the appendices.

53. The best measure of success however is perhaps the sustainability and growth of these activities; in particular the Oxford Health Walks.

54. This programme has steadily grown over 4 years with high levels of retention as well as still regularly attracting new walkers. Sustainability has been achieved through regular recruitment of volunteer leaders and support leaders, many of whom come from the group themselves as walkers become keen to give something back. The Health Walk Leaders meet quarterly to discuss all matters and ensure the walks are continuing to meet the needs of the current walkers as well as potential new walkers.

55. The Oxford Health Walks are accredited through Walking for Health and have even been used as a best practice case study for other Health Walk programmes across the country.

Future Plans

56. Oxford City Council will continue to work through the ASP to ensure we are addressing the needs of older people within the city, as highlighted in the Needs Assessment.
57. As well as having ambitions for developing new projects, focus will also be placed on supporting the current resources in place and creating sustainability of these.
58. Community Partnerships in regeneration areas aim to have active older people subgroups ensuring older people have a voice on local issues. This subgroup can also shape how provision will look in the locality by influencing the key stakeholders involved at the wider community partnership.
59. Continue to help identify funding streams and support local organisations which aim to provide a activities for older people in Oxford. Building a more diverse provision across the city.
60. Some of these ambitions are listed below.
- To develop more physical activities in the city aimed specifically at over 50's and over 60's such as walking football, walking basketball, health walks, Nordic walking and table tennis.
 - To support the growth of the local event to mark UK Older People's Day 2015.
 - To set up older people subgroups in the city's regeneration areas in line with the 'Regeneration Framework for Oxford to 2026'. Each regeneration area has an older people element in the community plan ensuring that it is highlighted as a priority area.
 - To support more older people into local volunteering roles and train more volunteers to lead activities for older people in the city.
 - To develop closer connections with Public Health and encourage more referrals of older people into regular exercise programmes such as Health Walks to support their physical and mental wellbeing.

Summary

61. Oxford City Council is integral within a multi-agency approach to ensuring the provision of certain services to support the older population of the city as a whole, but in particular those at risk of loneliness and isolation.
62. Whilst a number of fantastic projects are already in place to tackle the issues highlighted through the Needs Assessment, further work and consultation will be beneficial to sustain these services and develop new ones so to continually meet local needs.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Case study – Silver Joggers – Jeff

Jeff is a recently retired medical research scientist living in Headington who after a lack of time and injuries stopped exercising 20 years ago. When Jeff originally moved to the area he was fairly active participating in triathlons, half marathons and the Teddy Hall Relay. Silver Joggers is a running group organised by Keith that meets in Bury Knowle Park every Thursday.

Running with Silver Joggers removed the worry over doing it by going too far too fast and provided a fantastic social opportunity to meet other people. Cycling to work on a daily basis Jeff would clock up 65 miles a week and 3 years ago cycled from Land's End to John O'Groats.

Jeff's main aim when joining Silver Joggers was to stay fit and keep the weight off as he knew his knowledge of keep fit meant that by keeping fit it would help him to sustain a long happy retirement. Since joining Silver Joggers Jeff has set himself the aim of participating in the Town and Gown 10k in May which he believes is fully achievable.

Jeff has enjoyed attending Silver Joggers so much that in March 2015 he is undertaking the LiRF (Leadership in Running Fitness) course to become a jog leader and assist Keith in the delivery of Silver Joggers. Three main factors influenced Jeff to undertake the LiRF course:

1. Ability to share the coaching for new comers to enable a faster and slower group to be formally established
2. See the benefits of regular exercise and to promote this to other for people to be fit to enjoy retirement and be healthy.
3. If Keith was unable to make a Silver Joggers session Jeff would be able to lead

Just getting back into running again Jeff identified Silver Joggers and GO Active as a group that encourages others and has a wholly positive vibe where the group supports each other.

The flexibility of having a constant group where faster runners can push themselves by running further and returning to the group has inspired Jeff to not only attend each week but push himself further.

Since Jeff has joined Silver Joggers he has noticed many physiological benefits such as not being out of breath and lethargic while also losing weight.

Silver Joggers has encouraged Jeff to join the gym and build up his core strength. Jeff identified his heart rate to be a harder work out than cycling with his heart rate significantly higher after running.

Jeff and his wife Anne found out about Silver Joggers from a poster displayed at the entrance to Bury Knowle Park and decided to give it a go. Both Jeff and Anne found Silver Joggers to be a really nice group where new beginners are always welcome.

The biggest achievement Jeff has recognised to date is the ability to run 4.5 miles plus which wouldn't have been possible without the structured sessions by Silver Joggers. Silver Joggers gave Jeff the confidence to undertake his first Park Run after only attending one session. Jeff now enjoys going out running by himself around Silver Joggers.

Jeff recognised the support GO Active gives Keith the Jog Leader because without it the jogging group wouldn't have taken place and Jeff wouldn't have started jogging again.

"I would say you don't think you can do it but you probably can. Those who started the course and kept coming have gone from walking round the park to now being able to run 5km. Come along and unleash incremental gains from small achievements."

Appendix 2 – Examples of GO Active posters

Silver Joggers
Ideal for over 50's

Slow paced jogging for those wishing to have a go at running for the first time...or the first time in years!

NEW 10 week introductory course starting 22nd January 2015, but beginners welcome anytime!

Thursdays, 10.30am
Bury Knowle Park
Meet at London Road entrance
FREE!

Health Walks OXFORD

Would you like to:

- start some gentle exercise?
- explore Oxford's green spaces?
- meet new people?

Then why not join one of our Oxford Health Walks?

All walks are led by trained volunteer leaders and are free to attend.
Walks are normally between 1-3 miles (30 - 60 mins) and are taken at a pace suitable for all.
A shorter walk (up to 1 mile) is offered every week as part of the Bury Knowle walk.

CURRENT WALKS

Countryside n Cobbles	Tuesdays, 10am. Meet at the Town Hall
Summertown	Tuesdays, 10am. Meet at NOA Community Centre
Hinksey Park	Wednesdays, 10am. Meet in car park
Bury Knowle Park	Fridays 10am. Meet outside Headington Library

For more information on Oxford Health Walks contact Vicki Galvin:
T: 01865 252720 E: vgalvin@oxford.gov.uk

ARE YOU UP FOR IT? Take the next step up from Health Walks and try these more challenging walks up to 3.5 miles.

WHEN: Every 1st Thursday of the month, 10am.
WHERE: Meet at the bottom of Headington Hill Park
www.getoxfordshireactive.org

Logos: RUN ENGLAND OXFORDSHIRE, OXFORD CITY COUNCIL, GO ACTIVE AT WORK, walking for health, GO ACTIVE AT WORK, OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

Appendix 3 – Isolation project – Citizens Advice Bureau Client

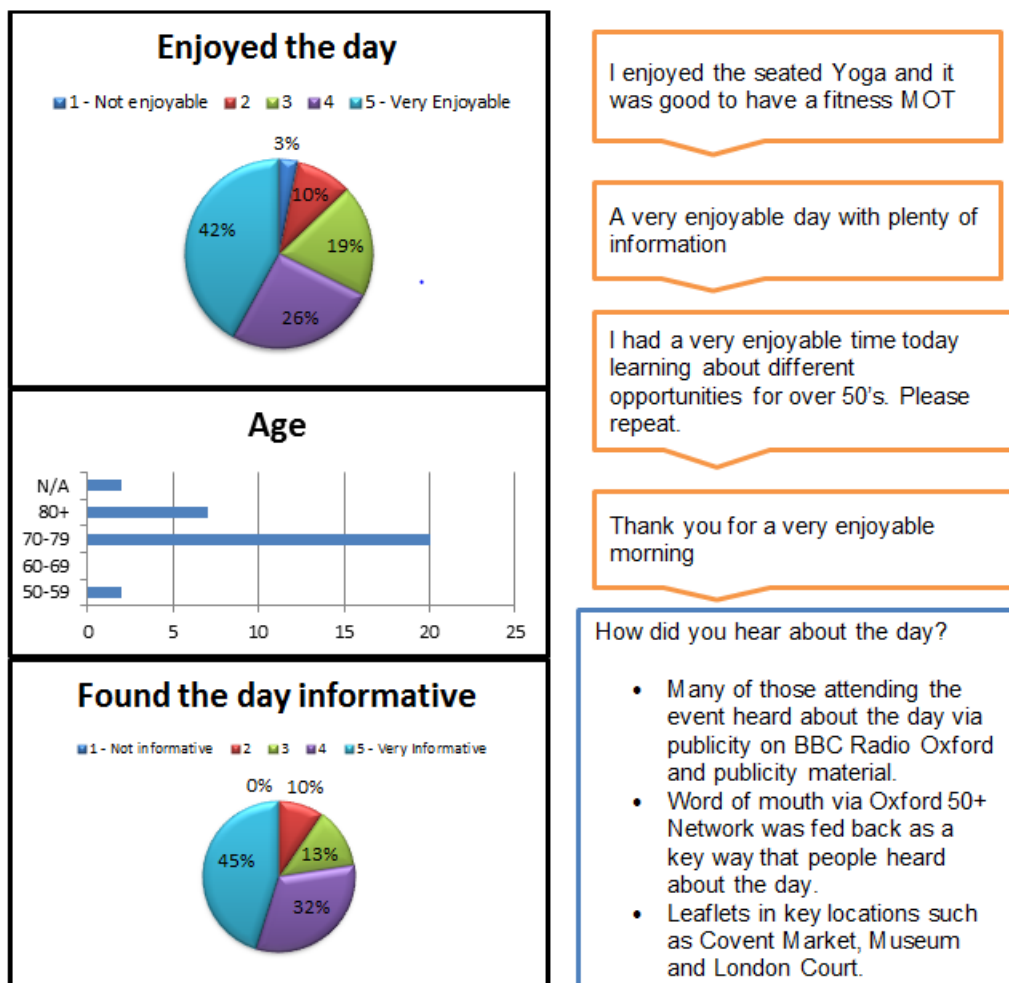
A couple, both pensioners needed a benefit check. She had long term health problems.

After a benefits assessment we found out that they might be eligible to a few benefits. Therefore, with our help they have applied for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction and also Attendance Allowance for the wife and the carer's allowance and a carer's grant for the husband. We also helped them with Blue Badge application. As a result of our help they have been awarded all the above benefits. The extra benefits we have helped them to secure, will amount to almost £10,000 over the coming year. The back-dated benefits allowed them to upgrade their vehicle to allow her more easy access to it.

Although her underlying health condition is severe, it is very much more bearable with the comforts that the extra income allows and she is able to visit her children and grand-children far more easily as well as accompany her husband on the weekly shop.

Appendix 4 – Older Peoples Day Feedback 2014

Older People's Day Feedback 2014



Next steps – The Committee is asked to note the report and provide comment.

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List of background papers: None

Version number: 1

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