FOOD FOR THOUGHT

A BRIEF REPORT OF FINDINGS 2017
Ageing Well Torbay is a 6 year Big Lottery funded programme, to reduce isolation and loneliness in people over the age of 50, who are living in Brixham, Paignton and Torquay. It was launched in 2015.

The programme was set up to run in 2 year cycles of activity across the 6 years, to test and learn from different approaches in dealing with the causes of loneliness and isolation.

7 delivery partners were commissioned for the first 2 years: Carers Aid Torbay, The British Cross, Mencap, My Support Broker, Torbay Age UK & Brixham Does Care and Torbay Community Development Trust.

The focus of the first two years has been:

**Supporting carers** - Carers Aid Torbay (Circles of Support) and Mencap (Growing Older Together)

**Helping people to manage their own wellbeing** - My Support Broker, Torbay Age UK and Brixham Does Care (Wellbeing Co-ordinators)

**Dealing with big life changes** - The British Red Cross (Torbay Navigators)

**Creating stronger neighbourhoods** - Torbay Community Development Trust (Community Builders)
From the end of 2016 until Spring 2017, Ageing Well Torbay held a number of events across Torbay, called Food for Thought.

The aim of the events was to find out what people over the age of 50 felt was and wasn’t working for them and to find out what could be done to make Torbay a better place to grow older in.

Ageing Well planned to use this information to fund new activities.

10 QUESTIONS WERE ASKED DURING THE EVENT:

• How can we change attitudes to and perceptions of ageing?
• What helps with ageing positively?
• What would help you fulfil your personal aspirations?
• What helps you feel connected to your friends and family?
• What would support you to feel your life has purpose and value?
• What would help you feel more connected to your neighbourhood?
• What would help you stay connected to your natural surroundings?
• What would age-friendly housing be like for you?
• What would age-friendly transport be like for you?
• What support services would you like to see available?

20 Events were held across Torbay
339 People participated in person
80 People sent feedback through other methods
THE RESULTS:

During the Food For Thought events people sat in small groups to discuss and answer the 10 questions that we had set for them.

A facilitator was based on each table to record people’s views and ideas.

Often the questions would promote wider discussions within the groups about what was and wasn’t working for older people living in Torbay.

We tried to capture as much of this information as possible, even if it did not directly relate to the initial question. We felt this would give a more realistic picture of living in the area.

MOST CONCERNING ISSUES:

The data collected from the Food For Thought events, postcards and web survey, revealed the biggest issues facing people over the age of 50 living in Torbay:

- Lack of activities
- Transport
- Being able to live at home
- Interaction with others
Housing was a key issue for many people. Particularly being able to stay at home instead of moving to residential care. 82% commented.

The financial and emotional impact of moving in later life was recognised and many thought adaptations and assistive technology, such as stair-lifts and wet rooms, as well as low cost, trusted DIY/gardeners/tree cutters/handy men should be made available.

Many residents in flats and sheltered housing said that despite living close to other, they felt isolated by the layout of their buildings. They wanted common rooms, shared gardens and more organised activities, to increase socialisation and feelings of belonging.

Others wanted more affordable care providers and care homes - with fees and costs causing worry and concern about the future.

There were different ideas about age friendly housing, ranging from people in later life not wanting to be housed with others their own age, to people saying,

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intergenerational housing doesn’t always work, especially if play areas or areas where younger people congregate are noisy and near residential areas.

Other ideas included lower cost lifetime pendants and also ‘wardens or a designated person they could go to or would check on them.’

“Mixed age housing - students with over 50s, or even people in their 50s with older generations.”

“Don’t isolate old people with older people, housing them in one site with limited means to get out and about”

“Social housing and supported housing, we need more options and support!”

Pet friendly accommodation

Live-in, warden controlled housing gives peace of mind, the cost of alarm and assistance devices are too expensive
Transport was identified by many of the Food for Thought participants, as an important way for people to stay independent and socially active.

Some participants said that they travelled on buses to reduce feelings of isolation and fill their days.

People recognised that some of the smaller bus routes might not be financially viable and suggested that they would be willing to pay nominal fares to keep services going rather than losing them.

“Car parking is very expensive and often the car parks are full”

“Cycle paths for mobility scooters would be a good idea”

“Better rail discounts for over 50s”

190 People wanted affordable and reliable transport

74 People thought accessible and adapted transport was important

42 People felt having access to low cost localised minibus transport was a good idea
Many of the older people we spoke to wanted to stay at home or remain as independent for as long as possible. They wanted ‘Person Centred Care’ in their own homes (including chiropody, shopping, cleaning, personal care) and felt there was a lack of home aids and support services.

However many able older people said they could be helping their less able neighbours, with tasks such as shopping, changing light bulbs, hanging curtains, turning mattresses, putting out dustbins or moving furniture.

Many people over 50 felt they were a crucial part of the solution to ageing positively; providing informal befriending and buddying, listening to and supporting others to join, or with the most physically able and fit doing neighbourly driving or helping others with maintenance or gardening to stay in their homes. There was understanding that lack of confidence and trying new things or doing things alone can be too daunting for people to begin with.

Or a misunderstanding of motives, ‘Would people think I was just being nosey?’ Often stopped them from acting and being more neighbourly or supportive.

People felt that worries about ‘red tape’ - ‘Would I need to be checked?’
There was recognition that people were not seeking advice because they often did not know where to go, or could not get to advice sessions. Some people did not realise that they might even be entitled to any welfare benefits or support for financial issues.

The need for better communication and assistance, especially after bereavement or changes in life courses were noted - retirement, redundancy, disability, caring, ill-health.

Help with using and accessing IT was also identified as a way of keeping in greater contact with family and friends.

155 people wanted IT, communications and technology help.
“WE NEED A SPECIALIST CLAIM FORM WRITER TO ASSIST WITH DISABILITY CLAIMS AND SUPPORT FORMS.”
People wanted a greater variety of activities, clubs and groups, and more available activities in the evenings and at weekends.

Limited public transport or parking, had an impact on accessibility.

People wanted more opportunities and welcoming places to meet in their local communities, i.e. community cafés.

Over half of people expressed their enjoyment of exercise, keeping fit and maintaining good health.

Affordability was raised as a possible barrier for people attending clubs. It was felt that £5 is the highest price an activity could cost before being too expensive.

Many people also said they would feel more confident attending activities if they had someone to go with.
Across Torbay very few people were concerned with...

People recognised that access to coastal paths, woods, the sea front and public parks, were good for their physical and mental wellbeing, but they felt that uneven paths, poorly maintained spaces, and the lack of public toilets, restricted their enjoyment and access.

However, many older people also offered their time and skills to help keep public places maintained, gardens weeded and planted, as well as picking litter up.

“Why close public toilets? Older people need to use them more frequently and it makes going out for longer times harder”

“The council shouldn’t be able to take pieces of land given to the people.”

LEAST CONCERNING ISSUES

- Bereavement Support Services
- Access to an NHS Dentist
- The Cost of Landlines
Next Steps

Food for Thought has shaped the future direction of Ageing Well Torbay. Our focus over the next two years will be to get more older people involved in making decisions about services and what matters to them.
We need help to write a Positive Ageing strategy to improve the lives of people growing older in the Torbay area. The Positive Ageing Strategy will look at the cultures, structures, and services, that inhibit or facilitates positive ageing, what contributes to social isolation and how far Torbay has come since the last Positive Ageing strategy.

Information from nearly 400 people has already been gathered through the Food for Thought events, but we want local people over 50 to work with us and health and social care professions to finish the strategy.

If you would like to be involved come to our next Big Event in September.

The Older Person’s Assembly will empower people over the age of 50

OLDER PERSONS ASSEMBLY

Ageing Well Torbay are working with older people and organisations across Torbay to create an Older Person’s Assembly. The assembly will be open to anyone over the age of 50 and will enable older people to have a stronger, collective voice in the area on matters that relate to them.

The assembly will work with Ageing Well Torbay and local organisations to create a more age friendly Torbay. If you are interested in joining the Assembly contact Jess Slade on 01803 212638 or by email jessslade@torbaycdt.org.uk

POSITIVE AGEING STRATEGY
We launched the Innovation Fund to support and enable local organisations and groups to tackle the issues older people told us were important to them.

The 3 key aims of the fund were:

1) To increase the range of affordable activities available
2) To increase the opportunities for people to benefit from the skills of older people
3) To create better access to affordable technology for information, as well as increased opportunities between generations to connect.

Ageing Well Torbay recruited a panel of older people to assess the tenders and make recommendations as to which projects or activities should receive funding. The successful projects will be announced in August 2017.

Older people told us that they wanted easy access to advice, information and support, particularly around entitlements, form-filling, finance and advocacy.

We want to make sure that older people get the services that they want rather than the services “we” think they need. Therefore Ageing Well Torbay is launching a Big Pot Commission, which will be used to fund a project that is designed with older people and will reduce financial hardship, as well as enable older people to know where and how to find support and information.

£175,000 will be available to fund a project for a minimum of 2 years.
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