

## **FOCUS GROUP: SENIOR CITIZENS**

**Composition:** Attendees of Lady Elizabeth Centre; Senior Citizens Open Forum for the Northern Parishes (SCOF); Age Concern

**Main Topics** – housing, support for the elderly, medical services, leisure facilities, transport,

### **HOUSING**

**1. Do you live in the sort of accommodation you really want?**

Mostly yes.

The quality of housing for all is very good.

Resident of council elderly persons bungalow in Sonning 'Very good and I am happy with the area'.

Resident Twyford council elderly person's bungalow 'Very good'.

All live in the area they want to. One resident lives with her daughter and family as the only council option may be to move out of the area but all family members happy with this arrangement.

Another lives with family.

Others live in own home.

**2. Is there a sufficient variety of housing or other accommodation for the older population in the village?**

The thought here was that there will never be enough as the population is ageing.

'We need more specific housing for older people to free up housing suitable for younger people'.

There was concern about having to move away from family and friends if nursing care is required. Most have seen friends have to move to other areas to meet nursing care needs i.e. going into a care home. The feeling is that Twyford (and surrounds) are well provided with own home living, council house living and sheltered housing but not care home provision.

'The council could be better at moving people around'. Meaning fulfilling local needs.

Council housing tenants are worried about the council selling their housing stock to housing associations as, apparently, has been considered. The group was far better informed than I on this subject.

**3. In particular, is there a sufficient variety of supported housing if you should need it?**

No.

As Above.

The two council provided sheltered housing sites Treacher Court and Polehampton Court both have on site wardens now but Polehampton Court was without for many months before the right candidate came forward which has been a concern to the residents.

The group are becoming very aware of other programmes of care available now to keep people in their own homes longer such as alarm neck pendants and home sensors which will alert a remote control desk of warning signs that a resident is in need of help eg lack of movement etc.

There is only one nursing home in Twyford. There is now the Sunrise home but all the group members believe it to be prohibitively expensive.

### **SOCIAL SERVICES AND HEALTH SERVICES**

**4. Do you get any support in your own homes?**

Yes.

'If you need help you only have to ask for it'.

'If you are coming from hospital you are taken care of and they (OTs, district nurse etc) make sure you are going to be alright at home'.

The group seems confident with the system as it is.

All said they would go to GP with a problem and expect to be referred from there.

**5. What other support would you welcome at home?**

'Can't get council help with a bit of gardening'.

'If you live in a council house you are given a list of contractors to contact yourself'.

The group agreed a list of reliable 'handy men' etc would be very helpful.

**6. Is it easy for you to get to the doctors/dentists/pharmacist/chiropractors/hospitals?**

Some thought yes but most thought no.

They generally rely on family and neighbours to drive to appointments or collect prescriptions.

Apparently you can have a home visit from a pharmacist and if you are over 80 a home visit from a GP.

The group are happy to phone the surgery and speak to a GP or nurse for advice.

Transport – There is an awareness of other methods of transport such as the Volunteer Drivers and special buses such as ASP and Readibus. The special buses are very expensive.

**7. What do you think about the health services available locally?**

'Marvellous'.

'No complaints'.

Then the group went on to talk about West Call and their experiences were not so good and inconsistent.

**8. Are there any changes or improvements you would like to see?**

'Satisfied'.

The group talked about positive experiences such as where District Nurse has gone out of her way to help.

## **CRIME**

**9. Are you worried about crime in the village or is it a fairly safe place to live?**

'Not really'.

'The kids do the same thing today as they used to do 30 years ago'.

There was a small concern about vandalism and one story was told about a group of boys throwing stones behind the library in Twyford and another member from Sonning said 'things are not too bad at the moment. There used to be mischief but not for ages, years'.

I asked specifically if any one was worried about violent crime or robbery and the answer was no!

One member, who lives in Hurst, told of a conman duping her into coming out of her house and he then took her handbag. This was a few years ago and now she is wary but was sure it does not cause her 'worry'.

## **LEISURE**

**10. Do you take part in any active leisure pursuits, such as keep fit, aerobics, Tai Chi, dancing, walking?**

Most things are not accessible/available to the ages in the group – mostly 80 +.

Some walk to the shops and Doctors to keep fit.

There are exercise groups just for the elderly and there are exercises most days at the day centre.

We discussed the issue that a lot of the group were just not able to take part in many things because of physical infirmity. 'I would like to try dancing but I can't'

**11. If not, is it simply that you don't want to participate in them or is there a problem such as lack of transport to them?**

There is a lack of transport and accessibility but mostly to do with physical ability.

## **TRANSPORT & ACCESSIBILITY**

**12. Are you able to get around beyond your home as much as you would like?**

No. Most are dependant on family and nieghbours to either drive them or run errands on their behalf.

Two members said they would like to go shopping (for food) but a relative does the shopping for them. 'I don't like to ask to go too because I am slow'.

**13. Are there any particular problems in getting around within the village e.g. narrow pavements, crossing at the cross-roads, dropped kerbs for wheelchairs?**

No. There are dropped kerbs.

Most of the group don't go out alone so are always assisted some don't go out to the village at all.

**14. Is public transport adequate for your needs?**

No. A bus to Woodley is needed now the Nationwide has closed.

**15. Do you use more specialised transport such as Readibus or Keep Mobile or the Volunteer Drivers?**

One member in the group, who is wheelchair bound, uses ASP. There are several members at the Age Concern Day centre who rely on specialized buses.

Some use volunteer drivers.

Some members used the ambulance service.

**16. Should there be more services like Readibus or Keep Mobile to more places and on more days?**

**I need to check with group members who use the services.**

**17. Are these specialised services advertised enough?**

No. There was a strong feeling the services should be promoted more not just for our group but for others in the community who may not know of their existence.

**18. Is there enough disabled parking around the village and is it in the right places?**

Yes.

**19. Do all the shops and other places like doctors and dentists have disabled access?**

Yes but no one had visited the new dentist yet. Some one had been advised by a friend to let the new dentist receptionist know if the stairs are a problem as some consulting rooms were upstairs.

**20. Is it easy to shop in the village?**

'Yes we only have one shop!'

More variety is needed to help prevent having to shop further afield.

A lot of group members rely on family to help with shopping as mentioned earlier.

**21. If you can't buy what you want in the village, how do you go about buying your goods from elsewhere?**

Again dependent on family, friends and neighbours.

One member shops for gifts on the television 'Bid up TV' etc.

**22. Will the loss of travel tokens for people in their 60's mean less rail travel for you?**

No.

Group members rarely use rail travel.

**SHOPPING**

**23. Would you like to have more shops and services in the village centre and if so, what?**

Yes.

Minature Heelas.

A cheaper supermarket.

An ironmongers such as Robert Dyas.