

South Wales West Regional Committee

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Venue: North Cornelly Community Centre, North Cornelly, Bridgend

Title: Maintaining the Health, Well being and Independence of Older People: Putting older people at the centre of local planning 'Never Too Old Strategy for Older People', Bridgend County Borough Council

Local Authorities and partner agencies are fundamental to the delivery of key public services on which our communities are dependent. We recognise the benefits of sharing our experiences with other areas with the aim of improving and developing services for older citizens. Through the delivery of the aims of our local Strategy and the National Strategy for older people, we believe as a partnership we can demonstrate strong and effective examples of good practice that benefit the planning and commissioning of services for people over the age of 50.

This paper demonstrates some of the innovative practices in true participation and engagement and illustrates through examples what this way of working along with the developments locally through the Never too Old Strategy and the National Strategy for Older People in Wales, has been able to achieve – specifically tackling discrimination, enabling active citizens and independent living. Central to this paper is the corporate ownership of the Strategy for Older People in Wales and the development of Bridgend's Never Too Old Strategy for older people.

The early development of the Strategy for Older People in Bridgend was pioneering work that enabled us to develop the partnership structures that allowed us to take forward the targets and subsequent achievements from the Strategy for Older People In Wales. The development of the Bridgend Never Too Old 'brand' and the resulting directional change that the Strategy is taking in Bridgend ensures that we are equipped to jointly deliver upon the needs of older people and empower older people within their communities to have power and autonomy over their lives. This ensures that older people have active, independent and secure lives and that they are considered as valued contributors and citizens.

Promoting an active older community

Improvements in health and social care in Bridgend are major contributing factors to people living longer. However, of equal importance is enabling and maximising opportunities that encourage independence and social inclusion for older people as this promotes their potential and participation within their communities. As part of our prevention agenda, we recognised the need to plan services to appropriately support the growing numbers of older residents live life to the fullest.

This recognition led to the development of the local Never Too Old – Strategy for Older People in

2002. This was developed through a partnership that included the private, public, voluntary and community sectors.

The Never Too Old Strategy outlined our values and aims as a partnership to help ensure that older people have the right to live independently and with dignity and have services that are delivered at the right time, in the right place and right manner. The creation of the Local Never Too Old Strategy offers a framework to allow people who are concerned about, and involved with, older people to work together to improve service delivery for older people. Central to its development was not only listening to agencies and organisations, but vitally, to ensure that older people were at the centre and had the opportunity to affect any decisions made about the services they use. Older People have been directly engaged with the development of the 5 year Strategy and the subsequent monitoring and review of its objectives

The Five Year Strategy recognises the importance of connecting those specific delivery needs around health and social care to the wider implications of ageism, effectiveness and commitment to consultation, provision of information and social inclusion. As a result of this it was not only deemed important to have an action plan that demonstrated this importance, but a delivery agent that was able to take the issues forward.

Why we did it?

In Bridgend County Borough there are 128,244 residents of whom 45,828 (over 35%) are over the age of 50. It is clearly documented that losing independence is a major fear among older people in the community. It was also recognised that dependence or reliance upon others is a key feature to loss of control and autonomy. It was therefore deemed to be fundamentally important to ensure that in partnership we worked to actively support the independence for older people regardless of their levels of dependence

Central to the strategy and its developments, is the involvement of older people. It was accepted that no individual is in a better place to acknowledge the needs of older people than older people themselves. Empowering them to be active in the development of this strategy is critical, as older people have not only being consulted upon but actively empowered to be part of the process from the onset of partnership working.

In light of this there was a need for change and it was felt that the above provided that focus for change. There was a reorientation of service planning and delivery with a focus that proactively supported the health, well being and independence of older people in the community and also provided the means for integrated, short and long term services be delivered to dependent and vulnerable adults according to their needs.

How we did it?

From an examination and review of services and following consultation within the community the following messages emerged. There was a need to-

- promote social inclusion and quality of life
- provide information about services and how to access them
- involve citizens and users in the planning of services
- target services at those greatest in need
- support carers and families
- work more flexible and in partnership
- offer increased choice and more locally accessible services
- focus on prevention and rehabilitation

Ensuring older people were involved and engaged was central to the planning and development of this framework for service commissioning. A commitment was therefore made to change consultation and planning mechanisms in order that the views of older people were central to the driving forward of service design and change. This prompted the further development of the older person's forum at the time and they were involved in the subsequent design and delivery of the Never Too Old Strategy.

Role of the Joint Strategy Planning Team for Older People

The strategy for the development of services for older people in Bridgend is ambitious in its plans and targets. It was acknowledged early in the planning stages, that there was a need for a multi agency partnership approach to ensure its development and future sign up to the principles and aims within the strategy. The Joint Strategy Planning Team for Older People was the driving force behind the development of this strategy. In 2001 the planning team began to address the re-modeling of existing services, the re-investment from existing resources and the targeting of new resources. Using these methods, it was recognised that re-pooling resources would likely have short term consequences especially around pressures on existing service provision.

Membership

A multi agency approach was taken to ensure that membership encompassed all partners for change. These included

- Bridgend County Borough Council,
- Bro Morgannwg NHS Trust,

- Bridgend Local Health Board,
- Bridgend Carers Centre,
- Bridgend County Care and Repair,
- Age Concern Morgannwg
- Bridgend County Older Persons Forum and community members.

What difference has it made?

The development of the local Never Too Old Strategy enabled the Joint Strategy Planning Team for Older People to effectively deliver upon the National strategy's aims. As the aims and objectives of the two strategies are closely aligned it allowed the local partnership effectively deliver together. The development of the Never Too Old structure and brand ensured that we had the mechanisms and processes in place.

How has this promoted the role the older community?

Progress has been made over the last few years around ensuring that older people are involved and engaged in the planning of services for older people. Support has been given to the establishment and development of a re-modeled older people's forum SHOUT – the voice of the older community. This support has been provided to ensure that older people have a representative voice that can be heard at all levels of local planning and delivery of services. SHOUT have become the recognised communication channel for older people and have been successful in raising the profile on locally important issues and identifying opportunities for service improvement.

Other projects have developed from our direct empowerment, engagement, and involvement of older people, including:-

- Service directory for older people
- Help at hand directory for older people
- Website for older people
- Forum Development Grant for Older People
- Older Persons Champions (LA, LHB, NHS Trust)
- Independent Advocacy Service for Older People

- Carers Forum

Tackling discrimination

The Never Too Old Strategy recognises that older people should be treated with respect and dignity and should have equal access to services. The Local Strategic Partnership has taken age discrimination and prevention as priority projects. As such, the LA and partners have corporately signed up to commit to address issues of age discrimination within each member organisations – including scrutiny of all documents, policies and plans to ensure they are non discriminatory in any form. This has had clear benefits to older people. Coupled with the development and adoption of a Charter for older people, those accessing services locally now have the clear commitment of agencies to ensure that services are delivered to an agreed standard..

Other such projects have been developed around eliminating discrimination and raising the profile of the older person's voice.

- Independent Advocacy Service for Older People
- Task force 50+
- Development of Older Persons Charter

Enabling active citizens With the support from the I Never too Old Strategy Bridgend County Borough Council achieved Age Positive UK status which was awarded for our good working practices towards older employees (only Authority in Wales to receive this).

Promotion of positive ageing is an important feature of all policy and service planning for partners in the County Borough. Primecymru has been commissioned to promote the benefits of self employment as a choice for mature workers. Primecymru are also enablers to older people in making fundamental decisions around their future. Once a person retires, they can still have an active role to play in the community. Primecymru can

- provide the information and advice that a person needs to make a fully informed personal choice.
- help an individual develop upon a hobby or craft and set up a small business to create an income.
- contribute to the Local Authority's 'planning for retirement' training.

Independent Living

Maintaining independent living is an important part of our strategy. Various projects have been set up as part of Prolonged Independent Living – two exception linked examples can be seen through The

Bridgend Stairlift Grant and the Bridgend Bathing Grant which have been developed as part of achieving our aspirations and goals of the Never Too Old Strategy.

The Bridgend Stairlift Grant was introduced in 2003 to assist older disabled people to live more independently in their own homes. The scheme was designed to provide stairlifts within a target timescale of 4 weeks instead of 3-9 months, as had been the case historically.

The Scheme is cited by the Welsh Assembly Government as a Model of Good Practice.

The Bridgend Bathing Grant Scheme is currently being implemented under the same principles and is aimed at helping older people with mobility problems to remain living as independently as possible in their own home.

Future of the Never Too Old Strategy and Action Team

Bridgend has a long established Joint Strategy Planning Team for Older People where there are representatives from health, social care, voluntary / community and service users groups. In 2006, the Planning Team reviewed its work and its stakeholder involvements and the ability of everyone to participate in the processes. An older people's development day was held in partnership with groups representing older people and those interested in services for older people. The day was held with support from the Welsh Assembly Government and Wales Institute for Health and Social Care. The outcome of the day was to propose a more dynamic planning arrangement for carrying forward the action plans for the NSF for Older People in Wales and the National Strategy for Older People in Wales.

For older people, the Bridgend Partnership has now established a Never Too Old Action Team, out of which there will be two work streams. These two work streams will have priorities to work to, and engage stakeholders in task and finish groups that will deliver on the objectives of the action plans for older people. In this way we are striving to ensure the voice and views of older people are heard across the whole community of Bridgend.

Conclusions

The development of the Never Too Old Strategy has ensured that we have been forward thinking in the development of actively engaging with the older community. As a partnership we are continually attempting to identify new ways to engage with the older community to actively promote their role within society. Central to this process, is ensuring that the older community are actively represented upon the planning teams, and actively consulted upon throughout the process.

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