Ageing Well Brighton and Hove is a programme of activities, services and support for people aged 50+. It is jointly commissioned by Brighton and Hove City Council and Brighton and Hove Clinical Commissioning Group led by Impact Initiatives. It is delivered through a partnership of ten local organisations.

**AGEING WELL’S CORE AIMS:**

- Increase health and wellbeing
- Reduce loneliness and isolation
- Promote good health and wellbeing
- Prevent ill health
- Enable older people to live independently as long as possible
- Make services and activities easier to access
- Ensure a wide range of volunteer opportunities

Our services are designed and delivered in line with the World Health Organisation’s definition of Healthy Ageing, which define healthy ageing as:

The process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables wellbeing in older age. It states that functional ability is about having the capabilities that enable all people to be and do what they have reason to value.

This includes a person’s ability to:

- Meet their basic needs;
- Learn, grow and make decisions;
- Be mobile;
- Build and maintain relationships;
- Contribute to society

There are currently over 38,000 people aged 65+ in Brighton and Hove and this is expected to rise by over 30% to over 50,000 by 2030. We want to support these people to live well in older age, enjoy life, and remain independent and able to contribute to their communities for as long as possible.

Ageing Well was designed to maintain and improve health and wellbeing and be accessible to all people aged 50+. This includes those identified as most at risk of exclusion, experiencing a decline in their independence and wellbeing, or of being socially isolated. These identified groups include:

- Those from the LGBTQ and BAME communities
- People aged 85+
- People living in areas of the city with high levels of deprivation
- People on low incomes
- People living alone

This report highlights the work and achievements during the second year of Ageing Well.

As of 1st April 2021 the nation was two weeks into the first national lockdown, imposed due to the outbreak of the newly identified coronavirus, Covid-19. The government and health professionals were clear in their messaging, older people were at greater risk of mortality from the virus; This was set to create greater isolation, and physical and mental health issues for many older people, particularly those already identified as vulnerable. This was unchartered territory.

The partnership met a week prior to the lockdown to develop a strategy to meet the existing and emerging needs of older people in this changing environment. A plan was devised through sharing ideas and information, alongside discussing how each could respond, share learning and resources. We navigated the restrictions, found new ways of working, and reduced the impact this pandemic had on our older population.

**Ageing Well was the safety net for 1,000’s of the City’s older people**

We are immensely proud of the Ageing Well partnership’s achievements this year. Teams worked together tirelessly to ensure older people’s needs were met. We supported 5,560 people during the year including reaching 742 who were not previously aware of the services.

Staff and volunteers adapted to new ways of working, each with their own personal challenges brought by the pandemic. Bereavements and loss of service users for some partners, particularly befriending services, were higher than usual as the impact of Covid-19 was laid bare.

We swiftly forged new working protocols with statutory services which led to enhanced support for vulnerable older people. This included developing shared use of a database which enabled swift responses by the right teams to enquiries and requests for support. Through referrals from the Community Hub and Carers Centre we were also able to fully understand people’s needs and connect people with services and activities often outside of the reason for the initial referral.

We now have the joint systems for identifying and putting support in place and have developed the processes needed to swiftly respond to rapidly changing landscapes. This will be taken forward to ensure the positives are used to benefit older people into the future.

“This is a real lifeline especially for those living alone. Having something to put in your diary is so important, rather than contemplating weeks of fear and emptiness.”

Hop 50+ Zoom activity participant
Whilst we continued to work to Ageing Well’s overall aims and objectives, it quickly became clear early on in the pandemic that we needed to meet additional practical needs for support. During the first few weeks of the lockdown, this support focused on communication of support available, and access to food and medication. As we were told to stay at home, avoid public places, and the news was dominated with stories of surges through care homes with large numbers of older people dying, anxieties around leaving the home for essentials grew. As a partnership and along with our statutory colleagues, we took a citywide coordinated approach to meeting this need.

In addition to practical needs, people living alone were more isolated than ever before. Ageing Well swiftly responded and adapted, finding innovative ways to continue to offer a variety of services, activities and one to one emotional support. During the first quarter of year two, the first national lockdown, Ageing Well services began transferring activities online and through telephone calls and post.

We utilised our existing volunteer networks and recruited new volunteers, ensuring older people had hot meals, their shopping delivered, maintained physical activity, and received social contact. We established referral pathways between Brighton and Hove City Council’s newly formed Community Hub and Adult Social Care, to ensure older people across the City’s needs were met. Digital inclusion became a focus as a valuable method of continuing to connect people alongside providing shopping options. There were however a significant number of people who did not wish to or were unable to connect online.

To maintain contact and provide support with this group we delivered weekly activity packs through the post, created telephone trees, conducted telephone tea parties and visited people on their doorsteps when permitted.

The second and third lockdowns announced for November and January involved less of a crisis response than during the first lockdown. We had gained knowledge skills and resources and were familiar with delivering online support. Information was widely available through our weekly distribution of directories, and people had become more accustomed to lengthy periods of isolation. The lockdown was however no less impactful on older people’s emotional and physical health.

Despite the number of challenges facing the partnership during the pandemic, we worked in synergy to solve common issues and fill gaps in service provision. Our single point of contact and information and advice services were a lifeline for many, as older people were left confused by ever changing government guidance and restrictions. Ageing Well’s steering of connecting people socially was vital at a time when older people needed it most.

Despite the pandemic, we brought exciting developments to Ageing Well during the year. We enveloped psychosocial services for people living with dementia and welcomed a new partner, Music for Connection. Whilst we aim for all of Ageing Well’s services to be inclusive for people living with dementia, this means, in addition, we now offer tailored activities and support to meet specific needs and wishes.
The single point of contact phone line proved to be a critical service for older people throughout the pandemic, particularly during the uncertainty of the lockdown periods. It quickly became evident that people required a range of information about which services and support were available to them and how to access this.

To address this gap in information provision, the team developed and produced a Service Directory. This included information about the ever-changing government restrictions, groups, activities, statutory services, and a separate section for Shopping and Help in Accessing Food. This was shared widely with both those in need and professionals. At the height of the first lockdown, the directory was updated three times a week to meet the fast pace in changes to services and government guidance.

The team adapted their work to support the City Council’s Community Hub with their Covid-19 food response, in particular supporting people over 50 who were identified as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV). People on the CEV list were given access to priority shopping slots and our SPOC team could facilitate this through access to a government portal. Information was provided over the phone around shopping delivery options, meal deliveries, volunteer support, accessing medication and reducing social isolation.

**Highlights**
- 954 calls (422 calls received in year 1)
- 660 referrals, including signposting to other services
- Developed shared working and protocols with statutory partners
- Produced a new directory of services, updated and distributed weekly
- Incorporated contact details in the City Council’s Covid communications
- Staff became Digital Champions to further digital inclusion

**Within the Memory Assessment Service, the Ageing Well documents and directories have been incredibly helpful to us and our patients. They help us all stay connected to the support offers and help keep our most vulnerable patients safe.**

Jason Wilcox, Memory Assessment Service Manager, Here

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This service provides a wealth of information and advice on a variety of issues including legal, financial, access to health and social care and employment.

**Successes for the service this year included securing £583,254 worth of benefits for people**

Successes for the service this year included securing £583,254 worth of benefits for people. This enables people to live more comfortably, reduces financial pressures and narrows the gap in wealth inequality. Enquiries about redundancies from work increased as the economy felt the repercussions of lockdowns. Additional sessions such as Rethinking Retirement were offered through the service.

The service was able to continue to use two volunteers to provide much needed information and advice. This year the service was delivered over the telephone as face to face appointments were not possible with restrictions in place. This could take 2-3 appointments as opposed to perhaps just one, particularly when form filling was involved.

In addition to Information & Advice, Age UK’s Brighton and Have Covid response included a temporary telephone befriending service, telephone welfare checks, food parcels and volunteer led shopping deliveries.

Age UK secured some additional funding for a Warm Home service, identifying people in need through their Information & Advice service. Specific sessions with clients were available to maximise income, look at alternative energy providers, carry out home energy checks and fit equipment to make the home more cost effective to heat.

**Highlights**
- Provided a service for 1040 individuals
- 766 people had not previously used the service
- Secured £583,254 worth of benefits for people
- Additional services developed to address needs

**It is really good news, as I have been awarded the enhanced rate Care & Mobility PiP! I did not think I would get the latter, but I am quite sure it was because of the case you sent me that went to the higher tribunal...**

Age UK Information & Advice customer
Connecting with other people through social activities and community programs can keep your brain active and help you feel less isolated and more engaged with the world around you.⁴

Restrictions during the lockdown periods prevented groups from meeting face to face. One-to-one support provided to group members increased as services recognised the need to ensure people were coping both practically and emotionally.

Partners focused on improving digital inclusion and literacy for group members to enable people to connect online. Community development partners HKP and TDC re-focused their work on meeting the needs of their local communities, particularly around access to food and medication.

In addition to running their women’s 50+ group online, Brighton Women’s Centre developed a 50+ Helpline in response to the pandemic. They also provided care packages for women in their group.

HKP supported the local Multicultural group and other 50+ groups to get connected online. Facilitated online workshops were held to equip groups with skills in setting up online activities, writing Covid risk assessments, fundraising, and when the time came, returning to face to face activity. HKP and Together Co worked together to set up a befriending group in Hanlestone and Knoll, targeting the most isolated and vulnerable residents. During the year, HKP carried out telephone needs assessments with 450 residents aged 50+ and were able to refer people on to other support.

During the first lockdown from March onwards, Impact’s Hop 50+ created a weekly timetable of Zoom activities. This included Strength and Balance classes, Pilates, Seated Yoga, Desert Island Discs and Coffee and Conversation sessions. New sessions were added throughout the year based on customer’s interests, such as a Bollywood dance class. On average up to 60 people attended weekly. The programme provided a combination of opportunities to maintain both physical and emotional health through maintaining vital connections with others.

An activity pack was created by the Hop 50+ team and up to 200 were delivered each week by post. The activity packs and Zoom schedules were shared widely including through seniors housing schemes, numerous statutory teams and Ageing Well partners, who then cascaded to older people they were working with.

TDC continued their support of local community groups in the West of Brighton, including Woodingdean Men’s Group and the Winter Warmers Reminiscence Group. They supported groups to create and maintain telephone trees in order to connect members. They also worked closely with residents of Ravensbourne Court seniors housing to offer support for residents to become more digitally connected. TDC’s support of a BAME 50+ group led to the group securing additional funds to purchase IT equipment. This meant that a loan scheme could be offered for those who did not have online access.


When I think of being in the woods, I feel like liquid sunshine has been injected into my veins.

Switchboard group member

I didn’t have a clue how to switch a PC on, now after several one-to-one sessions I have really got the gist of it. I cannot go out much due to my medical condition and this has given me the skills I need to shop and to manage my accounts...I would like to say thank you.

Member of TDC’s 50+ group

As guidelines changed over the course of the year HKP and TDC supported groups to navigate guidance in meeting face-to-face again. Woodingdean Book Group met outdoors over the summer and were supported to use Zoom during the colder months. As restrictions eased, all groups made good use of green spaces. The Hop 50+ Café was able to re-open during the summer months as restrictions eased.

Switchboard’s group, who were particularly vulnerable to social isolation, met monthly online and when able to, they ran trips to a woodland area, making use of Impact’s Ageing Well transport. The group also met for seafront walks when weather and restrictions permitted. This has proved to have a positive impact on mental health as people were able to socialise outdoors, engage in arts and crafts activities, and be amongst nature.

During the second and third lockdowns, the Hop 50+ was able to remain open to accommodate support groups, in line with government guidance. They accommodated up to 6 of their most vulnerable and isolated customers from Monday-Friday, providing a hot and healthy meal for people who otherwise may not have seen anybody in any capacity.

There have been some positives to take from the pandemic in terms of group activities and this learning will be taken forward. New communities have emerged with people who have not previously been able to attend social groups or activities due to mobility or other issues. To ensure people are not left behind as we return to face to face delivery, a hybrid approach will continue to encourage inclusivity. This was successful at the Hop during this year, with some people participating at the venue and others joining online.

Highlights
• Over 1000 groups, activities and one to one interactions each month
• Average of 300 group activities each month
• Extensive program of up to 30 weekly online activities set up
• Successes in digital inclusion and literacy with over 300 people receiving support

When I think of being in the woods, I feel like liquid sunshine has been injected into my veins.

Switchboard group member
Befriending is a mutually rewarding friendship between a person and volunteer with similar interests, connecting people and generations together who might not meet otherwise. Befriending is proven to be mutually rewarding and directly reduce isolation.

570 new people accessed befriending services

The increased loneliness and isolation imposed by the pandemic led to a dramatic increase in demand for befriending services. During quarter three of this year Together Co reported a 40% increase in referrals compared with the same quarter the previous year. Both providers adapted their offer to telephone befriending and ensured volunteers could be recruited through efficient online recruitment and training processes. This was vital in order to meet the need.

Telephone befriending meant that some volunteers could befriend more than one scheme member which enabled the services to reach more people as is reflected in the number of people accessing services. As restrictions eased, volunteers were able to do doorstep visits or meet in outdoor spaces, where possible. Befrienders also filled a gap in practical support through collecting shopping and medication.

“Pamela does so much for me, I don’t think people understand how volunteering is very much a two-way thing - I feel she helps me more than I help her. Because of my (South Asian) family heritage, I love the older generation - hearing her stories and what she’s gone through really puts things into perspective for me, and helps me feel a little bit more grateful for what I have. I think my generation needs that a lot.”

Shapla, Volunteer Befriender, Together Co

“I can’t believe the difference it’s made to have a weekly call from someone I can talk to and how talking to a complete stranger can make me feel so much more fulfilled.”

Vera, age 89, Time to Talk Befriending scheme member

Time to Talk Befriending developed telephone befriending groups which were introduced towards the end of the year. This enabled people to socialise in groups and connect with people who lived locally. They increased their links with external organisations such as, BUPA, Brighton College and American Express to broaden their volunteer network including identifying volunteers speaking different languages. Together Co worked with Hangleton and Knoll Project to establish their befriending group which was aimed at the most vulnerable residents of the community.

Highlights
- 1079 people were matched with befriender volunteers (422 during year one)
- 570 new people accessed befriending services
- 1004 volunteers provided befriending
- 513 were recruited and trained
Many older people with frailty are at risk of malnutrition and poor health, yet there is evidence that improving nutrition and weight loss can reduce frailty.2

The service delivered by Impact Initiatives offers one to one and group support around undernutrition; how to prevent undernutrition and referring to appropriate services when someone is identified as under nourished. During the beginning of the pandemic the focus shifted to ensuring people received healthy meals and the Nutrition Worker supported the city-wide effort and SPOC to meet the need.

We continued to offer ‘Eating Well as You Age’ training for professionals and delivered 3 online sessions for 31 participants. This is delivered by a qualified Nutritionist. Although this had been designed to be delivered at Brighton and Hove Food Partnership’s Community Kitchen, Zoom breakout rooms were used to ensure optimal interaction between participants.

We recognised that limited face-to-face contact with older people could lead to missed signs of under nutrition. To address this training focused on how to sensitively ask people if they were getting the nutrition they needed to remain healthy and solutions to offer if people were not.

The training was really informative and useful. It gave me some very practical ways of talking to clients about nutrition and simple suggestions which I felt could be used if I was working with a client and they were concerned about eating well.

Participant at Eating Well as You Age training session

NUTRITION SERVICE

up to 4000 older people in Brighton & Hove suffer from undernutrition

FOOD SERVICE

Access to food was a significant issue for older people during the first lockdown. As people were advised to stay at home, anxieties rose around going to supermarkets. Ageing Well partners collectively responded to this need in a variety of ways.

Our single point of contact service team worked to find solutions in terms of identifying local options for delivery and in securing online shopping slots, including how payments could be made for those with limited access to their bank or cash. We worked jointly with BHCC’s Community Hub to develop information sharing protocols to take referrals for those identified as clinically extremely vulnerable who were advised to shield, enabling access to the supermarket’s priority online shopping slots via an online government portal.

Brighton and Hove Food Partnership played a pivotal and leading role in the citywide emergency food response through setting up food hubs in various venues including the Hop 50+, schools, restaurants, cafes and churches. Ageing Well partners played a key role in the emergency food network, utilising their connections, skills and resources.

Highlights

• Age UK carried out shopping for older people using volunteers, with 128 shops carried out per month from April to June

• Food Partnership provided 50 Growing Kits to facilitate home gardening projects. These were distributed with Age UK’s food parcels, which averaged at 50 per month for the first quarter of the year

• Hangleton and Knoll Project formed part of the emergency food response. 15 volunteers supported a food hub from St Richards Church with 397 food parcels delivered to some of the area’s most vulnerable residents

• Impact’s Hop 50+ Café transformed into a food hub, with hot meals prepared and delivered by 8 volunteers using the minibus. 90 meals were delivered each week during peak of first lockdown

• Time to Talk Befriending delivered 75 weekly care packages including fresh meals through donated food. Between April and August 2020 approximately 3000 hot meals were delivered to people’s doors

• Together Co’s befrienders delivered on average of 120 monthly shopping deliveries to scheme members

Between May and August 2021 Ageing Well partners facilitated:

643 shopping deliveries 1,203 hot meal deliveries
One of the quality standards endorsed by NICE is that “people with dementia are supported to choose from a range of activities to promote wellbeing that are tailored to their preferences”.

An exciting development during year 2 of Ageing Well was the introduction of psychosocial services for PLWD. Although all Ageing Well services are inclusive for people with dementia, this meant we could now offer tailored services and activities to meet specific needs and wishes. This element of the contract commenced half way through the year, any data below is from 1st October 2020 – 31st March 2021. Throughout this period Ageing Well worked with 206 PLWD.

We know that PLWD and their carers have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. The closure of centres and face to face groups and activities led to reports from carers of declines in cognitive and overall health, as people were left increasingly isolated.

Upon commencement of the contract we formed close working relationships with the Memory Assessment Service (MAS), delivered by Here. Together we established referrals between each service. SPOC staff were trained by MAS clinical staff to identify signs of cognitive impairment and in completing the referral form. MAS refers people directly to Ageing Well activities in order to maintain or improve overall health and wellbeing.

Impact Initiatives recruited a Dementia Support Worker so people have one place to go to for information about activities and services available to PLWD. 48 PLWD accessed this service from 1st October to 31st March 2021.

Music for Connection (previously Open Strings) continued their classes for PLWD on Zoom. Whilst there were challenges in engaging PLWD online, they noticed meaningful connections between people who began to recognise one another during sessions. They provided online music and movement classes to 60 PLWD and carers.

A focus of their work was to equip carers with tools needed to use music and movement with those they care for. They developed a Carers’ Music Champions Scheme which brought Music Champion volunteers into a training programme.
ACTIVITIES AND GROUPS

Brighton and Hove Food Partnership maintained contact with their gardening course participants through telephone calls and garden visits, including, creating garden boxes. They continue their offer of 12 week gardening programmes and Cook and Eat sessions for PLWD and their carers.

Impact Initiatives’ Hop Stop is a dedicated day each week for PLWD and their carers. People can engage in activities such as Ignite sessions, designed to evoke memories and improve wellbeing, attend physical exercise classes, or simply come along and have a drink and a bite to eat. It also provides carers with an opportunity to connect with one another. The Hop Stop supported 44 customers since the contract commenced in October.

Age UK’s D-MOB peer support group for PLWD moved online during the pandemic. They worked with 11 PLWD and 12 carers to provide invaluable support. A challenge they found was delivering peer support online for PLWD as they found that often carers would speak on behalf of their cared for. To overcome this and to meet greater need, Age UK will be setting up a second group which we hope will be able to meet face to face.

ENHANCED BEFRIENDING

Time to Talk Befriending further developed their enhanced model of befriending for PLWD, providing a training programme for volunteers and staff to encourage meaningful connections, this included Use Your Marbles, Ingredients Cards and Bereavement and Loss. Befriending was offered to 50 PLWD.

MAKE EVERY CONTACT COUNT (MECC)

Making Every Contact Count (MECC) is a national Public Health initiative encouraging and helping people to make healthier choices to achieve positive long-term behaviour change by providing ‘very brief interventions’.

With health services over-burdened it was imperative that Ageing Well services made effective use of MECC in our interactions with people. To improve confidence in the use of MECC amongst frontline Ageing Well staff we held a meeting to share experiences and case studies in using MECC effectively. All Ageing Well staff were encouraged to undertake the council’s training.

In addition to MECC through one to one interactions and activities, information was provided through newsletters, activity packs and other general correspondence.

3,857 Make Every Contact Count contacts were carried out

“I now want to move forward with my life after last year and I am feeling much better in myself. I have stopped smoking, I want to lose weight and get healthy.”

Hangleton & Knoll Project group member
People involved in voluntary and community activities are reported to have higher levels of subjective wellbeing.  

Volunteers were crucial in a variety of roles not previously included in Ageing Well services. More volunteers were recruited and trained (mainly online) and supported Ageing Well through cooking and delivering hot meals, shopping and medication, became music champions, and above all, offered a friendly listening ear and opportunities to connect with others in group settings. Almost one third of Ageing Well’s volunteer network was aged 50+. We saw a high increase in the number of younger volunteers as they stepped forward to meet the practical needs identified above.

Volunteer training was streamlined through use of online platforms, which is another positive legacy of the pandemic. Online training developed enables higher numbers of volunteers to be recruited and trained, as well as providing additional training sessions for existing volunteers. This is reflected in the high numbers of volunteers recruited by Ageing Well services this year, particularly the befriending services as they had significant increases in referrals to meet. Online peer support for volunteers was also offered by both befriending services.

- 1,113 volunteers supported Ageing Well services
- 530 new volunteers were recruited
- 334 volunteers were aged 50+

"Not only have I had enriching conversations with my befriendee but also have been blown away by the heart of the organisation itself. I’m so grateful for the level of support you provide us with and was amazed when I attended the bereavement session and the dementia training. You managed to take topics that have always felt so dark and helpless before and put new hope, light and a fresh energy onto them."

Time to Talk Befriending Volunteer

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VOLUNTEERING

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STAFF TRAINING

Ageing Well staff and volunteers participated in a wide range of training throughout the year, making good use of accessibility from new online offers. A benefit of the partnership is the ability to share skills and deliver training across staff teams. Specific sessions included Under Nutrition, Alcohol and Ageing, and Removing Racial Barriers in Community Engagement. All Ageing Well staff and volunteers were encouraged to become Dementia Friends.

SUPPORTING THE VACCINATION PROGRAM

Ageing Well partners have trusted relationships with many older people who would otherwise be hard to reach, as well as being in many relevant networks so were able to cascade information on how and where people could receive their vaccine. Staff were provided with scripts and FAQs to relay Public Health messages in newsletters, one-to-one contacts, and groups. In addition, we were able to transport people to their vaccinations.

WHAT NEXT

- As we look to year three with cautious optimism, our focus will be on supporting older people in their emotional and physical recovery from the pandemic. The longer-term effects of the pandemic and the isolation and anxiety it has brought are unknown.
- We do know that many older people are still very cautious about going out and socialising again and we are working to reconnect people with services and connect with new people. Ageing Well is now an established service and well known in the city, we will maximise on this by improving our reach to people identified in the most vulnerable groups.
- Our blended approach to service delivery will ensure that our offer is inclusive and diverse. During year three we will work with community leaders and inter-faith networks to ensure that Ageing Well is welcoming to the diverse communities within Brighton and Hove.
- We will continue to work closely with our statutory partners to ensure that this effective joined up working is not lost. Working alongside the newly appointed Age and Dementia Friendly public health specialist we will ensure Ageing Well services and services across Brighton and Hove are as dementia friendly as they can be.
- Our Ageing Well Festival will return after a year’s hiatus and we will ensure older people are given opportunities to have fun, socially connect and contribute.

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1 Brighton and Hove JSNA
Knowing about Ageing Well is great as it opens a lot of avenues to go down.... Without your input I would never have known about such a service .... I’m going to send the details to a Reminiscence group I used to run, and it will help the new organiser.

TDC East Group Member