



Agewell Magazine

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Agewell members have been discovering the benefits of hydrotherapy at the Portway Lifestyle Centre in Oldbury.

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Welcome

Welcome to our Winter issue which is packed with all the latest news from Agewell.



What a superb year Agewell has had! There is so much to report on since our last magazine, with new contracts won, new initiatives launched and our first ever Showcase Event and AGM.

We were pleased to welcome so many familiar faces, as well as a host of new members, to our AGM in October. An impressive line up of speakers all spoke highly of how our services are making a real difference to local people and explained how they share in our vision. Have a look at our special feature on the centre pages.

A real highlight this year has been the findings from our independently commissioned Social Value Report. This showed the Social Return on Investment (SROI) and value for money of using Agewell.

Looking at just three of our services - Local Forums, Befriending and Home-based Exercise - the report confirmed that we provided added social value of over £1 million and created potential savings to the public sector of over £825,000!

A new service which has really taken off recently is Edna's Army. Agewell Chair, Edna Barker, is leading a team of hospital befriending volunteers and the service is expanding all the time. Find out more on page 9.

This isn't the only new Agewell initiative. We have been selected to provide Sandwell Council's Community Offer in two areas - Great Barr, Yew Tree and Newton, and Blackheath, Cradley Heath and Old Hill. As a result, we're working with a range of partners to launch many new services to improve

the health and wellbeing of older people. These include the return of our very successful Healthy Passport scheme.

It's also meant that four new members of staff have been appointed - two Older People's Champions and two Postural Stability Instructors. See page 11 to find out more.

Now we're working on other funding applications along with a new 3 - 5 year Business Plan which outlines where we are heading and how we plan to get there!

I'm pleased to see that over the past year, our membership has continued to grow and it currently stands at over 1,800. Our members are very special to us and we were all saddened when Lynn Boatman, Chair of Oldbury Forum, passed away in November after a short illness.

Because our members are so important, we're always keen to hear how you think we're doing as an organisation. Please spare a few minutes to fill in the enclosed questionnaire with your views.

And don't forget to come along to your monthly Local Forum. From January the time and venue for the West Bromwich Forum has changed - see details on page 5. Check out the **Diary Dates** section on our website for details of all forthcoming Forum meetings.

Finally, I hope you all had a very happy Christmas and the Agewell team sends its very best wishes for the New Year.

Deb Harrold, Agewell CEO

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE



Agewell member, Tony Griffiths is so impressed with Suzi Haywood, the Postural Stability instructor at Lodge Road Community Centre, he asked if we could feature her in this issue.



When Tony first joined the falls prevention group in West Bromwich, little did he know that a decade on he'd be limbering up as one of its longest-standing members!

Today, going to the weekly session is far more than just a chance to keep himself on his feet.

He says: "I have Parkinson's Disease and the exercises certainly help with my strength and co-ordination. "However, it's also a bit of a social club as well. It's a chance to meet up with friends and to share a bit of fun and laughter in between the hard work!"

And Tony, aged 77, who lost his wife earlier this year, says one of the reasons he has stayed with the class for so long, is the instructor who runs it.

He explains: "I have known Suzi Haywood for several years now and she is such a pleasant lady. She is so kind and helpful both to any new recruits to the class as well as to us old ones who've been going for years!"

"We all do what we can in terms of the exercises and I certainly feel the benefits myself. But Suzi always makes

time for the social side of things too. She has time for everyone and she really makes the class what it is."

Suzi has led the group since 2006 and is delighted that so many of its members have been coming for so long.

She says: "Older people are more likely to have a fall for many reasons, such as deteriorating eyesight, less strength and balance, medication and poor mobility.

"Agewell runs a number of community-based falls prevention groups for older people who have suffered a fall or who are at risk of falling. The aim is to encourage members to 'stay steady, stay safe' by learning exercises which are designed to strengthen their muscles and improve their balance.

"Many of the members of the Lodge Road group have been coming for six or more years and I can remember Tony being there when I started.

"We do simple strength, balance and endurance exercises and we always start and end the session with a cup of tea or coffee and a biscuit. We always have a party at Christmas too!"

"I always say the class is a bit like the Lodge Road social club. For some members, it might be the only thing they get out to each week, and to me, that's what it's all about."

To find out more about Agewell's gentle exercise and falls prevention classes, contact Agewell on 0121 289 3038. And don't forget to get in touch if you know someone who goes the extra mile and deserves to be featured in our next issue. ●



Get Active!

If you know an older person who lives in Bromsgrove, why not suggest they head along to the Ryland Centre? Brand new weekly activity sessions for people aged 50+ have now started following a successful Awards for All Lottery Bid led by Agewell.

Choose from gentle exercise sessions, line dancing, tea dances or multi-activity mornings. Matt Hill, Activities Co-ordinator at the centre, says: "The aim is to give local older people a varied, stimulating and rewarding programme of activities."

For more details, call the Ryland Centre on **01527 575387**.

Future Proof

Watch out for 'Future Proof' Agewell's new online resource.



Fellow social enterprise, Citizen Coaching, has helped us to re-brand our award winning Midlife Planning Course and individuals of any age can now complete four modules at their leisure by watching thought-provoking video clips and answering questions.

Topics include staying healthy, managing finances, thinking about relationships and planning leisure and relaxation time. There's no time like the present to start planning for the future.

Beside the Seaside!



More than 70 Agewell members had a day out to remember at Weston-super-Mare.

The sun shone as two coach-loads of members from all six Local Forums headed to the popular seaside resort on 10th September.

Clive Atkins, Chair of Agewell's Rowley Forum, who organised the trip and secured funding from Sandwell Council's Community Chest, said: "Everyone had a fabulous time. The weather was beautiful and we saw all the sights before finishing up with a fish and chip supper!"

And the day proved extra special for Rowley Forum member, Gladys Probin and her husband, Stanley.

Gladys, aged 81, said: "We found out that someone was bringing along one of Stanley's cousins, Violet, who lives in Wednesbury. It was lovely to see her. She's 94 and we were able to sit on the seafront together and have a good chat!"



A Stitch in Time



The impressive talents of Rowley EKTA Group were on display at Agewell's first AGM.

Agewell has been helping the group of Asian ladies to plan and arrange their own activities. Having completed a series of yoga sessions, the ladies chose to move onto arts and crafts and the results are stunning.

Members have hand embroidered beautiful colourful cushions which were exhibited at the AGM for everyone to admire.

EKTA is a Hindu name which means 'unity' and the group provides a safe environment for around 15 Asian ladies from Rowley, Blackheath and Cradley Heath to meet once a week and enjoy a variety of activities.

Award Shortlist

For the second year running, we were shortlisted in the Social Enterprise West Midlands (SEWM) Social Enterprise Awards.

We were up against six others in the Social Enterprise Profit category which recognises social enterprises with a commitment to grow.

A major benefit of being a SEWM member has been the opportunity to network locally with other social enterprises. We've recently joined Social Enterprise UK, the national body for social enterprise and are looking forward to networking even further afield.

Members Know Best

Who Knows Best? That's the question which Agewell members are helping researchers at Birmingham University look into during a two year project.

Agewell has been selected as the local partner for the 'Who Knows Best' project which is using the experiences and views of older people and their carers to understand and prevent avoidable hospital admissions.

An older people's reference group comprising Agewell members who have experienced an emergency hospital admission, and their carers, has been created to learn from their stories and look at other alternatives for care.

So far members of the group have taken part in interviews about their experiences and this feedback is now being used to create a survey for hospital patients. They've also looked at fictional case studies of older people being admitted to hospital to discuss what alternative action could have been taken.

The research team is now getting ready to start patient surveys at three hospitals across England in the New Year.

The aim is to identify ways in which the high levels of emergency hospital admissions could be reduced so that more funding can be invested in community-based alternatives. A good practice guide will be created based on the results of the research project and will be sent to all hospitals across England.

Forum Change

Please note that from January, the time and venue for the West Bromwich Forum has changed.

It is now taking place in the morning from 10.30am - 12.30pm at the Wesley Centre, High Street, West Bromwich. This is just a five minute walk from the bus station. Check out the **Diary Dates** on our website for details of all forthcoming Forum meetings. ●

WHAT AN ENJOYABLE EVENT!



Agewell's inaugural Annual General Meeting & Showcase Event took place at the Portway Lifestyle Centre in Oldbury on 9th October.

The day kicked off with a showcase event where an impressive line-up of speakers took to the stage, endorsing the fact that Agewell is highly regarded at the most senior level within the health and social care services.

Andy Williams, Accountable Officer for Sandwell and West Birmingham CCG, discussed the benefits

of working in partnership with Agewell. He explained that as the NHS faces increasing demand on services and budgets, it is important to forge links with organisations such as Agewell to reduce hospital admissions and improve mental health and wellbeing.

Toby Lewis, CEO of Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Hospitals Trust, talked passionately about Edna's Army, our new hospital visiting service, which the Trust is giving its full support to.

'Keeping Active in Sandwell' was the title of **Paul Slater's** presentation. The CEO of Sandwell Leisure Trust reminded delegates how many different activities are on offer for older people – from Community Tai Chi to 50+ fitness classes and free swimming.

Cllr Yvonne Davies, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care at Sandwell Council talked about the



Far left: Agewell Chair Edna Barker and Agewell CEO Deb Harrold with Toby Lewis, Paul Slater and Andy Williams. Above: Edna Barker presents Toby Lewis with his very own Agewell t-shirt, Andy Williams enjoys reading his copy of the Agewell Annual Review, Cllr Yvonne Davies in full flow, and exhibitors and delegates get to know each other better.

new Community Offers initiative launched across the borough in October, two of which are headed up by Agewell.

Delegates were also able to chat over lunch to a broad range of exhibitors about the activities, help and support they offer for older people. ●

Taking Action

Delegates had lots of questions for Toby Lewis and were keen to find out more about plans for Rowley Hospital and the new hospital in Smethwick, so we're taking action! We've invited Toby to meet with Agewell members at a special health-themed Forum in the New Year. Watch out for details!

Thank you to our exhibitors...

- Dr Gallimore (Rivation Ltd)
- ARCHA (Action Research Centre for Healthy Ageing)
- Black Country Care
- Black Country Homeforce
- BUDS (Better Understanding of Dementia for Sandwell)
- Cares Sandwell
- Crossroads Care
- Healthwatch
- Mytime Active
- Sandwell Leisure Trust
- SCVO (Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations)
- West Midlands Fire Service

IN THE SWIM!



Agewell members have been discovering the benefits of hydrotherapy at the Portway Lifestyle Centre in Oldbury.



An hour-long session on Friday mornings is always well attended.

Hydrotherapy involves using water for pain relief and therapy. Benefits include loosening tight or tense muscles, improving skin and muscle tone, boosting the immune system and stimulating blood supply to the internal organs.

Eighty-one-year-old Gladys Probin and her husband, Stanley, aged 85, have been going along to the hydrotherapy pool every Friday for several weeks.

"I have osteoarthritis in my knees and hips and I find it very relaxing," she explains. "The water is lovely and warm and it's not too deep so it's ideal even if you're not a strong swimmer. I'd never been in anything like a hydrotherapy pool before but I really enjoy it."

The benefits of the hydrotherapy pool can be enjoyed at other times too. Early morning and late evening Relax sessions cost £3.80 or the pool can be hired out for a group booking for £47 an hour. GPs can also make referrals for certain medical conditions.

To find out more about the hydrotherapy pool at Portway Lifestyle Centre, please contact Agewell on 0121 289 3038 or visit Sandwell Leisure Trust's website at www.slt-leisure.co.uk

TACKLING FLU HEAD ON



Each year when flu season starts Agewell gets straight to work, making sure as many older people as possible get their free flu jab to avoid this potentially serious illness.

Since September Agewell has been working with local health hub, Regis Medical Centre.

afternoons phoning patients who had not yet had their flu jab and encouraging them to come to the next surgery.

Word is certainly spreading that Agewell means business. Agewell Manager, Pauline Withey, explains: "Another twelve GP surgeries in Sandwell and West Birmingham have also asked for our help with getting patients to have their flu jab, which is great news."

Thank You!

Thank you to our members who've helped with the flu campaign: Mandy Winning, Clive Atkins, Joan Atkins, Margaret Colledge, Janet Hawthorne, Edna Barker, Cliff Poyner and Margaret Everson.

During the flu drop-in surgeries held on four consecutive Saturdays, Agewell volunteers helped patients to fill out their vaccination forms and directed them to the nurses. They also spent two

EDNA'S ARMY IS OUT IN FORCE!

A hospital stay can be a lonely time for older people, but Edna's Army has been helping to brighten their day.



Agewell Chair, Edna Barker, and a team of Agewell volunteers (some of whom are pictured above) offer a listening ear and a bit of company, which can often prove a life-line for patients.

Sporting purple t-shirts, the hospital befriending volunteers visit patients across Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust.

The service was originally launched for patients on the stroke ward at Sandwell General Hospital and on one ward at Rowley Regis Hospital and Leasowes Intermediate Care in Smethwick, along with support at City Hospital in Birmingham. But it's already made such a difference to patients that it's now been extended to four wards at Sandwell General Hospital and all other wards have been told they can also refer to the service.

Referrals are made by hospital staff to the Agewell office and volunteers are matched up to patients who would benefit from a visit.

Edna says: "There's nothing worse for someone in hospital than being the only person without a visitor. Our aim is to help combat loneliness and isolation for people in hospital.

"We started by only seeing patients who rarely get visitors, but we found that many other patients

have families who can only visit at the weekends and they get lonely during the week. So we've now broadened the service to give these families peace of mind, knowing someone will be visiting their relative while they're at work. Our visits also give patients' friends and relatives a much-needed break."

Agewell volunteers also offer a range of support to help patients re-connect socially and remain independent for as long as possible when they return home.

Jo Thomas, Acting Senior Sister on Newton Four stroke and neuro ward at Sandwell General Hospital, says: "Agewell's volunteers arrive on the ward full of smiles and enthusiasm. They meet and greet patients and chat to them to build up friendships and make our patients' day that much brighter.

"The patients really look forward to their visits. We are so privileged to have this service."

Toby Lewis, Chief Executive of Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust, is a firm supporter of the new service. He says: "Hospitals are isolating places. Folk get cut off from their home and friends. However good the care we provide, often someone just wants a chat.

"Edna's Army offers that chat, and the chat carries on once someone goes home from hospital in that vital first few days. If we can tackle isolation together, we can help people to stay well at home for longer. That is good health and great care."

Agewell is looking for more volunteers to help meet the growing demand. Volunteer befrienders are provided with a full induction, on-going training and support and reasonable out of pocket expenses.

If you are interested call Agewell on 0121 289 3038 to find out more.

AGEWELL DELIVERS COMMUNITY OFFERS

Agewell has been selected to lead on two of Sandwell Council's Adult Services Community Offers which means lots of new services and activities for older people are being launched to improve their health and wellbeing.

Applications were invited from voluntary and community sector organisations for six projects across the borough, all involved in helping to prevent or delay older people needing more acute health and social care services. Agewell's excellent track record in supporting older people led to us being awarded two of the six projects as lead organisation and a partner in the Oldbury and Langley scheme. The Community Offer went live in October and is a 12 month initiative with Sandwell Council.

So, what does this mean for local older people?

Great Barr, Yew Tree and Newton

In these areas, we're particularly focusing on helping older people to become steadier on their feet.

Our newly appointed Postural Stability Instructors are providing home-based exercise sessions, as well as community-based classes to improve muscle strength, balance and co-ordination.

Doing regular exercises at home and taking part in community classes led by qualified instructors can reduce the risk of having a fall by more than 50%.

Other initiatives on offer include:

- Mytime Active's Walk From Home initiative which helps people to regain their confidence in getting out and about.
- Postural Stability classes at Yew Tree and Tan House Community Centres in the spring.
- A range of services for older people with dementia. These include BUDS clubs, befriending, bowling buddies and carer support.

Blackheath, Cradley Heath and Old Hill

Don't miss our acclaimed Healthy Passport initiative which has just been launched in these areas.

Sign up today and stay healthy and active by taking part in local activities and initiatives such as having a health check, getting a flu jab and doing voluntary work.

You'll earn 'healthy points' for each activity, which can be exchanged for a £5 voucher redeemable at local market stalls and shops including a florist, card shop, sweet shop, optician, pharmacy and wool shop.

Keeping your body and mind active can help to prevent or delay diseases and can make you feel great too!

Other initiatives on offer include:

- Taster sessions and courses from Mytime Active on how to lead a healthier lifestyle.



- Carers training in your own home or in the community from Crossroads Care Sandwell.
- A range of services for older people with dementia. These include BUDS clubs, befriending, bowling buddies and carer support.

To find out more about the new initiatives in your area, call Agewell on **0121 289 3038**.

Meet the New Recruits



Two Older People's Champions and two Postural Stability Instructors have been taken on by Agewell to help deliver Sandwell Council's Community Offer. All four will be familiar faces to Agewell members as they've been involved with us for some time.

Deb Harrold, Agewell Chief Executive, says: "We wanted to hit the ground running with the Community Offer so we decided to recruit people who had knowledge and experience of how Agewell works and were passionate about our aims."

New Older People's Champions, **Karen Allen** and **Steve Simcox**, will be the 'Tour Guides' for the new Healthy Passport scheme, encouraging older people to take part in as many activities and initiatives as possible. Karen has a strong background in caring and support, and is a member of our Wednesbury Forum, along with her elderly mother. She says: "I'm keen to promote

a healthy lifestyle and to empower people to make choices and to feel valued as they move into their older years."

Steve, a retired military physical training instructor and physiotherapist, has been involved with Agewell for a number of years on a voluntary basis. He's an active Agewell member and has been a volunteer befriender for some time.

He says: "I'm so pleased that my volunteering has led to a job with Agewell. My aim is to show older people what's out there in the community to keep active, meet other people and generally improve their quality of life."

Postural Stability Instructors, **Alison Pickering** and **Farzana Mahmood**, will be helping Agewell to run classes in Great Barr, Yew Tree and Newton. Both have already been Sessional Workers for Agewell, running postural stability classes in the community.

Now they've been taken on to provide home-based exercise sessions as well as new community-based classes.

Farzana says: "Often when people come out of hospital, they may have lost their confidence and feel frightened of falling again. We help to build their confidence and their muscle strength so they become more mobile."

Alison is currently setting up classes at a number of sheltered housing schemes and community venues. She says: "Our work is quite intense so it's important to motivate people to keep at it so they can see the difference the exercises can make. We want to help make day to day living that bit easier for them." ●

New Classes!

New 12 week Postural Stability (falls prevention) classes are already up and running at Braeburn Sheltered Housing Scheme on the Yew Tree Estate and at the community centre in Birchfield Gardens.

If you'd like to take part or know of other venues or groups who would be interested in setting up a 12 week programme, please get in touch.

Contact Alison on **07736 295852** or Farzana on **07736 295851**.

New Portway Lifestyle Centre

Newbury Lane, Oldbury, B69 1HE



NOW OPEN



- 114 Station Gym
- 50 Weekly Fitness Classes
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