



# Agewell Magazine

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Meet the Agewell stars on page 8

Meet some of Agewell's founding members and other long-serving members who have received recognition for their hard work and dedication



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# Welcome

Welcome to the first issue of the new Agewell magazine.



**This is an exciting time for us as major change is underway. We're currently going through the process of becoming a social enterprise and, while there is still a way to go, we're pleased that everything is moving in the right direction.**

As you're all no doubt well aware, a lot of restructuring is taking place within the National Health Service. Up until now, Agewell has been wholly funded by Sandwell PCT but this will change by the end of March 2013 when all PCTs cease to exist.

Currently Sandwell PCT is part of the Black Country Cluster which will be formally taken over by the Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group next April. We've decided to take this opportunity to launch Agewell as an independent organisation and the feedback we've received so far from our members, staff, the Black Country Cluster Board and the Strategic Health

Authority is all positive. So, what's the next step? Our Expression of Interest has been approved by the Strategic Health Authority and now we've moved onto the next stage of developing and finalising an Integrated Business Plan.

Moving forward, we've agreed the following three core service areas for Agewell:

1. A direct voice for older people – our consultation and engagement work, including our monthly forums
2. Productive ageing – our work in enabling people to stay fit and healthy and to plan for their futures
3. Capacity to care – our work in supporting frail older people

Despite everything that's going on behind the scenes, it's still business as usual at Agewell and we're delighted to share with you some of our recent work in the following pages.

Good reading

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Deb Harrold".

Deb Harrold, Agewell Manager

## Do you know what's going on in your area?

**Join in the conversation at your local Agewell Forums and:**

- Highlight issues of concern to you, your community or town
- Hear about new legislation and developments which may affect you
- Join in discussions about your community

Forums are held each month in each of the six towns in Sandwell.  
**Want to find out more? Call Agewell on 0121 289 3038.**



# YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE



The saying 'Everyone can make a difference' is certainly an old adage, but it's true! We met up with Doris Strange to hear about the difference she's been making.



## **Life for patients in a Rehabilitation Centre in Sandwell has been made that bit more enjoyable, thanks to the tireless efforts of Doris Strange.**

A whole raft of items, including TVs, radios, fans, lamps and even a gazebo for the garden have been purchased for Leasowes Intermediate Care Centre in Smethwick.

Doris, aged 81, who is Vice Chair of Agewell, says she first became aware of the need for a fundraising effort while visiting friends who had been admitted to the 20-bedded centre.

She says: "I went round the centre when it first opened and it's lovely. There are 20 rooms which are all en-suite and the facilities are excellent.

"However, when I later went to see a couple of people who were patients there, I realised there was nothing at all for them to do.

"I think it helps people to get better if they have something to occupy their minds so I thought we must do something."

"I think it helps people to get better if they have something to occupy their minds so I thought we must do something."

Doris began her fundraising drive close to home by making and selling 200 jars of marmalade and making a whopping £200.

After realising just how big the shopping list for the centre was, Doris, whose late husband was a police detective superintendent, applied for a grant from West Midlands Police. She was delighted to be presented with the sum of £2,000 by Smethwick Police.

Doris says: "I started off by buying 10 TVs and 10 radios for the 20 rooms. Then the staff at the centre said they would really appreciate a big TV for the lounge.

"I also bought a gazebo so people could sit outside in the nice weather if they wanted to and also some fans and lamps for all the rooms and a few other odds and ends."

Doris says she still visits the centre regularly and will be keeping her eyes open for any other items which would boost patients' quality of life.

She adds: "I'm always happy to sit down and apply for another grant if there's something else they need.

"I think it's a fantastic centre and I'm very pleased indeed to support it."

**Do you know someone who deserves some recognition for their work in the community?  
Please give us a call on 0121 289 3038 ●**

# GOOD MENTAL HEALTH LEADS TO A LONGER LIFE

That's the view of Sandwell GP Dr Ian Walton, who says that looking after our mental health will have a positive impact on many other aspects of our lives, including our physical health, our relationships, our homes, our work and our daily living.



Dr Ian Walton

**The government's mental health strategy, No Health without Mental Health, published last year, says that good mental health is beneficial to people of all ages and backgrounds.**

It stresses that one of the best ways to tackle mental health problems is to prevent them developing in the first place and sets out a number of objectives, including fewer people developing mental health problems.

This will be achieved by ensuring people start well, develop well, work well, live well and age well throughout their lives.

## Social isolation

Dr Walton, who is the mental health lead for Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and chair of independent mental health charity, Primhe (Primary Care Mental Health and Education), agrees that good mental health is just as important for older people as for those starting out in life.

Around a quarter of older people have symptoms of depression, the most common mental health problem among the over 65s. In around one in 10 cases, these

“Older people with physical ill health, those living in residential care and socially isolated older people have a particularly high risk of depression, yet often these problems go unnoticed and untreated.

“Studies show that only one out of six older people with depression discuss their symptoms with their GP and less than half of these receive adequate treatment.”

Dr Walton says the consequences of untreated depression don't only affect the individual and their quality of life. Untreated depression in older people can

“Mental health is everyone's business – individuals, families, employers, educators and communities all need to play their part.”

symptoms will develop into a more serious clinical depression if left untreated.

Dr Walton says: “A lot of the problems for older people are that they are lonely and they don't feel part of the community.

increase their need for other services, such as residential care, placing an additional burden on NHS and social care services.

However, there are five simple steps people can take to improve their mental health.



Connecting with people is good for you...



... and so is being active.

The government's Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project says people of all ages, including older people, who want to achieve good mental health should:

1. Connect with the people around them – friends, family and neighbours
2. Be active – go for a walk or a run, play a game, do the gardening
3. Take notice – be aware of the world around you
4. Keep learning – learn a new recipe or language
5. Give – do something nice for someone else, volunteer or join a community group

"Often people are aware of how things like healthy eating affect their physical health but no-one teaches the general population about how their brain works," explains Dr Walton.

"There is clear evidence that if we are angry or upset or stressed it produces chemicals that are bad for us.

"Our mission is to tell people how to reduce their levels of stress and look after their mental health as well as their physical health.

"Research shows that if you are happy it prolongs your life. There is evidence that optimists live up to seven years longer than pessimists!"

### Leading the way

And Sandwell is already leading the way in helping older members of the community to feel less isolated.

Agewell is committed to helping older people in Sandwell maintain a more active lifestyle and provides a range of activities, including EXTEND gentle exercise sessions, and Falls Prevention courses.

Agewell's Older People's Champions are available to help anyone aged 50 or over who may

**"Research shows that if you are happy it prolongs your life. There is evidence that optimists live up to seven years longer than pessimists!"**

been feeling lonely to get out and about and join a group or try a new activity, as well as to offer a wealth of other support.

Sandwell Primary Care Trust's wide-ranging Confidence and Wellbeing HUB offers a range of

programmes and workshops, free of charge, to the people of Sandwell as well as access to psychological therapies.

Ground-breaking projects include the Books on Prescription scheme in which doctors and other health professionals can offer their clients a recommended self-help book from their local library. In fact, Sandwell has recently been recognised as a national leader of best practice in the field by the NHS Confederation.

However, Dr Walton believes it is vital that the whole community pulls together.

He says: "Mental health is everyone's business – individuals, families, employers, educators and communities all need to play their part.

"It is by supporting each other and helping everyone to feel part of

the community that we can all improve our mental health."

To find out more about the range of activities and services offered by Agewell to help maintain good mental health in later life, call 0121 289 3038. ●



## Telephone tree keeps growing

Are you a branch on the Agewell telephone tree? Sign up as part of your Agewell membership.

If there's some information we need to share with older people across the borough, like when flu jabs are available, or when we're experiencing severe weather conditions and want to check if our members need any assistance, the telephone tree swings into action.

Members pick up the phone to pass on the information and the branches grow and grow until everyone has received a call. The telephone tree has already proved invaluable and we're looking for more members to get involved.

**Please get in touch if you'd like to find out more.**

## Use your head at talking threads

A Talking Threads group supported by Agewell and Wednesbury 2000 is helping people get together to knit and make new friends.

The group meets on Mondays at The Old Post Office in Holyhead Road in Wednesbury, from 2-4pm, when people are invited to come along to have a cup of tea and a chat while knitting.



Agewell Chair, Edna Barker, says: "You have a cuppa and a chat and it keeps you socially active. I'm a firm believer that using your brain to interact with others reduces the depressive type of illnesses that older people are prone to."

**Just turn up on a Monday afternoon to take part.**

## Eyes down for flu jabs



Having signed up to become flu ambassadors in Sandwell, Agewell has introduced Flu Bingo to incentivise their volunteers and help spread the word about the free flu jabs which are now available.

Agewell members are taking special bingo cards into the community. Each time they talk to someone about getting a jab, they'll dab a number on their bingo card. And when they get a full house, the card can be returned to Agewell for a prize.

**The flu jab is free if you are aged 65 or over or have certain chronic diseases. Talk to your GP practice to find out more.**

## We're on your TV!

Keeping in touch with older people is vital to prevent feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Agewell's Older People's Champions service has always offered a friendly voice on the phone or a familiar face at the door. But now Agewell staff are set to appear on your TV screen!

A Virtual Befriending pilot is being launched in partnership with Sandwell Telecare Assisting You (STAY). The service will be similar to Skype, enabling some of the more isolated older people in the community to enjoy a video chat with Agewell via their TV.

**Give us a call to find out more 0121 289 3038.**

## Changes to meals to your door

Agewell is busy looking at how the proposed changes to the local authority's hot meals service will affect older people.

What time do your meals arrive? Is this convenient for you? Do you think they are good value?

These are just some of the questions staff and volunteers are asking and all the information received will be passed on to Sandwell Council.

**Can you spare some time to help with future surveys? Just give us a call.**

## Personal budget seminars

Are Personal Budgets and Direct Payments working? That's what Agewell has been finding out with a month of seminars designed to hear the views of local older people.

Many people came along to have their say on how they spend their budget and to suggest changes

which could be made to the system. Personal Budgets and Direct Payments were introduced to give individuals more choice about the support they need to improve their quality of life. We want to find out if this is the reality.

All the feedback gained is now being looked at and will be used to help shape the future of the service for all.

## Youngsters face dragons



A 'Dragons Den' style competition has seen youngsters arguing their case to win £1,000 to help local older people.

Agewell Chair, Edna Barker worked with Sandwell Homes to deliver a recent "boot camp" for young people aged 14 – 17 and as part of the week's activities the youngsters were split into two teams to present to the 'Dragons' to secure the £1,000 for a project which would encourage young people to help older people in the community.

The successful group is now using the money to get involved in a gardening project to tidy people's gardens and do other jobs around the homes of older people.

One of the 'Dragons', Interim Chief Executive of Sandwell Homes, Paul Field, says: "Both teams had a thoughtful view about older people in their communities and it was fascinating to see that the teams thought they would be learning from the life experiences of the older people they were assisting."

# MEET THE AGEWELL STARS



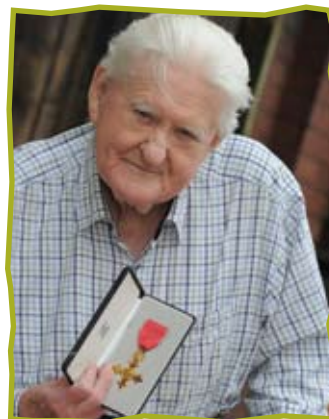
Several of Agewell's founder members and long-serving members have received the recognition they deserve for all their hard work and dedication to Agewell and other local organisations. They really are stars and their MBEs, OBEs, BEMs and local certificates from the High Sheriff of the West Midlands, just go to prove it!



## John Allen MBE

John Allen, aged 72, was awarded the MBE four years ago for his services to the community in Wednesbury. Over the years he's done no end of work for Agewell, including being Chair for three years.

"I was proud to receive my MBE from Prince Charles and tell him about my work for Agewell, Wednesbury 2000, Wednesbury Civic Society and the Friends of the Art Gallery and Museum," says John.



## Tony Salter OBE

Tony Salter, aged 82, was one of the original six founding members of Agewell, and is pleased with the way it has grown and developed.

He received his OBE in 2008 for his work in giving older people a voice.

This included being Chair of the Better Government for Older People group.

"Agewell has established itself as a mouthpiece for older people in Sandwell," he explains. "That's what I like about it."





### Tony Mallam BEM

Tony Mallam was also one of the founder members of Agewell and is very proud of what he's been involved with over the years.

His work with Agewell and other groups in Wednesbury was rewarded this year when he received a British Empire Medal in

the Queen's Honour's List. "It's extra special because I received it in the Queen's Diamond Jubilee year and I'm a big royalist," says Tony. "I'm proud to say I was there at the beginning of Agewell and was part of the foundations."

Tony also works with the Wednesbury Sons of Rest group, Wednesbury 2000 and is involved in the area's annual remembrance service.

### Doris Strange and Edna Barker



Doris Strange and Edna Barker were delighted to be presented with certificates by the High Sheriff of the West Midlands for their 'valued contribution' to the local community.

Doris, who has been an Agewell member for years, and is now Vice Chair, says: "I love Agewell and

the work it does. I'm very involved with the police and local councillors as well. I like to keep myself busy."

Edna says: "I got involved with Agewell when I retired. I'm now Chair and over the years have seen the organisation go from strength to strength.



"A recent highlight was being invited to Prague to give a presentation about Agewell. We have now been invited back because they are so impressed with what we do and want to learn from us." ●

# COMPETITION CORNER

Why not keep your brain active by giving it a bit of a work out with our Sudoku puzzle?

For those who are new to Sudoku, there's only one rule - fill in the grid so that in each row, column and small square the numbers 1 - 9 appear only once.

If you manage to crack it, send your entry to: Agewell Sudoku, Suite 5, Vision Point, Vaughan Trading Estate, Sedgley Road East, Tipton DY4 7UJ

**Closing Date: Friday 21st December 2012**

**The first correct entry out of the hat will win a £10 gift voucher.**

Good luck!

3		2						
4		5		9	7		8	1
1	7			5		6		
			8					3
		6				8		
8					6			
		4		7			1	8
2	8		6	1		4		7
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Name: .....

Address: .....

Telephone no: .....

Email: .....

# LIVE HEALTHY, LIVE HAPPY, LIVE LONG

There are three steps everyone should take to ensure they live a long and healthy life. That's the view of Dr George Pollock, honorary consultant in public health medicine at Sandwell PCT.



Dr Pollock out walking with his wife, son, daughter and granddaughter.

## Step 1: Stop smoking

First and foremost, Dr Pollock urges smokers of any age to do everything they can to kick the habit.

"People often say they have smoked all their lives and it's too late to stop but the evidence is that from the day a person stops smoking, their health starts to improve, regardless of how long they've been a smoker.

"Smoking is an established risk factor for many chronic conditions, including heart disease, stroke and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. So, if you want to live a long and healthy life, then the message about smoking is an absolute – don't do it!"

## Step 2: Do some exercise

Dr Pollock says that equally important are the benefits of regular physical exercise. And he stresses that he is not talking about going to the gym or following a punishing exercise regime.

He says: "For many older people, probably the best and most straight-forward form of exercise is simply walking. There are various guidelines but, as a rule, if people can find time to walk as briskly as they can for roughly half an hour, maybe three times a week, the benefits will be significant.

"Equally, if you are in a building with stairs, take the stairs rather

than the lift, or consider walking to the next bus stop.

"Swimming is another good form of exercise, as is gardening. And these are all things you can do at your own pace with no pressure from anyone else.

"If you prefer to exercise with other people, there are all sorts of community-based physical activity programmes older people can join, such as those run by Agewell."

At 82 years of age, Dr Pollock himself remains a keen walker and an occasional swimmer. And he is convinced that it is his commitment to being active throughout his life that has helped him to reach his eighties in such good health.

"Exercise is multi-beneficial. It keeps your joints flexible and your circulation going at a good rate. It also releases tiny amounts of endorphins which make us feel satisfied and mildly euphoric."

As well as reducing your likelihood of developing a number of chronic conditions, Dr Pollock says there is also evidence that physical activity

can be effective in preventing and treating depression in older adults and can affect your chances of developing dementia.

### Step 3: Eat a balanced diet

Thirdly, Dr Pollock stresses the importance of a healthy, balanced diet. This includes

eating at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, trying to eat more wholegrains and foods containing fibre, and eating plenty of calcium-rich foods, such as low fat dairy products, nuts and seeds and tinned fish.

People should limit their consumption of salty foods, never add salt at the table and also consume minimal amounts of foods containing saturated fats and sugars.

It is also important for people over the age of 50 to eat enough protein. This means eating plenty of protein-rich foods such as lean meat, fish, eggs, beans, soya products and unsalted nuts and seeds, although your intake of red and processed meat should be limited.

Dr Pollock adds: "As well as looking at what you eat, you should be thinking about how much you eat.

"The British Medical Association has a simple message 'Eat less, move around more' and I think that says it all."

Equally, Dr Pollock believes that current Department of Health guidelines for alcohol consumption

– currently no more than 3-4 units a day for men and no more than 2-3 units a day for women - are likely to be reduced in the future.

"If you prefer to exercise with other people, there are all sorts of community-based physical activity programmes older people can join, such as those run by Agewell."

He says: "Alcohol puts your blood pressure up and there is evidence that it makes you more likely to develop certain cancers, in particular breast and prostate cancer."

### What is Healthy Ageing?

Healthy ageing is seen as being free of chronic disabling conditions, having the ability to feel content and to enjoy life, and being able to perform the physical, mental and social activities we would like to.

Dr Pollock believes that people should start to think about healthier ageing from around the age of 50 upwards, and maybe even before. There is evidence that ageing begins to accelerate from as young as 30 and that following good advice throughout our lives can have an impact on our health in later years.

However, he stresses that it's never too late to start. And he believes it's as important to look after your mental health as it is your physical health.

Dr Pollock, who holds a handful of honorary appointments, including honorary senior research fellow at

the University of Birmingham and Chairman of the Education and Training Committee at Birmingham Medical Institute, says: "Freud said

that man needs love and work. I believe that for a person to feel happy and fulfilled they need both, which is why I have never stopped working myself.

"Even after retirement age, I think people should consider working part-time or in an unpaid or voluntary capacity.

"Older people can suffer terrible loneliness and isolation and staying socialised, either through work or through things like community-based social clubs and activities, is vital. We all need a sense of purpose and a reason to get up in the morning."

Dr Pollock adds: "Whereas people aged 50 plus used to see the next 10 of 15 years of their lives as a downhill path towards being a pensioner, most of us simply don't view ageing like that any more.

"However, it's impossible to avoid the stories in the media about some of the problems of old age, such as dementia and I think a lot of people want to know what they can do to keep themselves healthier for longer.

"The good news is that there is increasing evidence that by taking a serious look at our lifestyles throughout our lives and into older age we can achieve healthier ageing and give ourselves the best possible chance of continuing to enjoy long, happy and healthy lives." ●

# BE PART OF THE OLYMPIC LEGACY - BECOME A VOLUNTEER



At a time when volunteering is a hot topic across the UK, following the huge success of the London 2012 Olympics, Agewell is calling on people of all ages to get involved in the organisation.

The 70,000 London 2012 volunteers became the 'games makers', helping to create a real spirit of togetherness at the Olympics and Paralympics. People gave many, many, hours of their time for free but the rewards they gained in return were immeasurable. In fact, London 2012 became known as 'The People's Games'.

Now Agewell is hoping that the Olympic Games will have inspired more people to put themselves forward to become a volunteer at a local level. And there are a whole host

of volunteering opportunities offered by Agewell.

However much – or little – spare time you have available, you can make a world of difference to older people across Sandwell.

Individuals are always needed to support our Older People's Champions who help to combat feelings of loneliness and isolation for local older people.

Agewell Manager, Deb Harrold explains: "This may involve accompanying someone to a community group or activity for

the first time, helping them to get out and about a bit, or simply going and having a chat with them once a week.

"They may be little things, which don't involve a huge investment of time, but they can make a very big difference to someone who's been stuck at home alone with no-one to talk to."

If the Olympics has made you realise what a great feeling you could get from volunteering, give Agewell a call and find out about the opportunities on your doorstep. ●

## Contact Details

For more information about the work of Agewell, contact us as follows:-

Agewell  
Suite 5, Vision Point,  
Vaughan Trading Estate,  
Sedgley Road East,  
Tipton DY4 7UJ



Black Country NHS Cluster

T: 0121 289 3038 E: [agewell@agewellinsandwell.org.uk](mailto:agewell@agewellinsandwell.org.uk) W: [www.agewellinsandwell.org.uk](http://www.agewellinsandwell.org.uk)