



agewell
sharing experience

Agewell Magazine

Inside this issue:

World cycling champion Walter Fowler proves that age is no barrier to sporting success.

Full story on page 10

Also inside:

You can make a difference | Page 3

Making change happen | Page 4

It's all go at Flu Central | Page 5

News round-up | Page 6

Celebrations & Festivals | Page 8

Why getting 'on yer bike' is good for you | Page 9

Welcome

Welcome to our autumn/winter issue which is packed with all the latest news from Agewell.



Firstly, I'm delighted to announce that Agewell Chair, Edna Barker, has been named a Diamond Champion by the Royal Voluntary Service.

We nominated Edna for the huge amount of work she does for Agewell including befriending, launching the 'Talking

Threads' knitting groups and generally championing Agewell's work in this country and abroad.

Diamond Champions celebrates the work of older volunteers – the hidden gems in our communities. More than 2,000 nominations were received and Edna was one of the 60 chosen. She'll now receive a specially designed Diamond Champions pin and certificate signed by RVS President, Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Cornwall. What an accolade!

Agewell member Betty Johnson has also received an award - she's been named Tiptonian of the year in recognition of her contribution to Tipton and its community.

Edna and Betty are an inspiration to us all – and they're not the only ones. The front of our magazine features 79-year-old world cycling champion, Walter Fowler. Don't miss his story on page 10, part of our special cycling feature.

You'll also find a short questionnaire enclosed about our vision for a Community Hub for older people. Please tell us what you think – and you'll be entered into a special prize draw.

We believe that keeping healthy and active is vital in older life and we were instrumental in launching Social

Enterprise West Midlands' (SEWM) Health & Wellbeing Network, sponsored by Sandwell Leisure Trust.

We're constantly broadening our activity and looking to work with new partners. Becoming a member of SEWM is helping us to do this. We were honoured to be shortlisted in their recent Social Enterprise Awards, alongside our key partner, Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group.

The CCG won the Social Enterprise Partner Award which recognises great supporters of social enterprise and social value. Fantastic news!

We've recently been in discussion with The Community Housing Group in Kidderminster about establishing a befriending service in The Wyre Forest and have signed-up as a Champion for the national 'Campaign to End Loneliness'. During the next six months we'll also be focusing on our work to support people with dementia and their carers.

However, to continue with the huge amount of work we're doing we need your help. The bigger our membership, the greater our influence.

So, please get your friends and neighbours to join Agewell too. Visit www.agewelluk.org.uk or give us a call on **0121 289 3038**. And don't forget to attend your monthly local forum - see the **Diary Dates** section on our website for dates and times.

Finally on behalf of everyone at Agewell, I'd like to wish you all a very happy festive season and New Year.



Deb Harrold, Agewell CEO

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE



What could be more relaxing than a knit and a natter? And when you can make a difference to the lives of other older people at the same time, it's even better.



Agewell's newest 'Talking Threads' knitting group was set up a few months ago in Oldbury and members have been casting on for a national campaign.

The group joined in The Big Knit, a campaign spearheaded by smoothie makers, Innocent, and Age UK. You might have seen it advertised on TV.

Our knitters made more than 300 tiny hats to place on the top of the Innocent smoothie bottles sold in Sainsbury's stores around the country.

"They knitted the little woolly hats in some amazing designs such as tiny crowns," says Agewell Chair Edna Barker. "For every smoothie sold, Sainsbury's is donating 25p to Age UK to fund projects to help older people keep warm this winter."

The Oldbury knitting group meets at St David's Court every Tuesday from 10.30am – 12.30pm and local

older people are invited to come along for a knit, a cuppa and a chat. It was launched following the success of the Wednesbury 'Talking Threads' group which meets at The Old Post Office in Wednesbury from 2 – 4pm every Monday. Again, new faces are always welcome.

"Both groups are really social groups," explains Edna, "but we knit to raise money for charity and to keep our hands and minds active!"

"Some of our members have made lovely knitted toys which we're hoping to sell and a lady from the local church has been knitting scarves and gloves to go in the shoe boxes which are sent to children abroad at Christmas."

Both knitting groups are always looking for projects or charities to knit for. If you have any ideas, or if you'd like us to help you set up your own knitting group in your local area, please call us on 0121 289 3038 ●

MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN



As part of our work with Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group, we have recently completed a project with national organisation, iMPower, which required the thoughts and views of older people.

iMPower's research – conducted over a six month period - included a survey of over 600 GPs, 40 interviews with leaders and managers in the care and health services as well as a survey of 200 older people and three filmed focus groups with older people.

It was seeking to address two connected challenges:

1. The increasing dependency on acute settings and urgent care, particularly for older people and
2. The positive agenda to integrate care in home and community settings.

Currently, patients over 65 account for 80 per cent of emergency hospital admissions lasting over two weeks. There is a general consensus that up to half of these could be avoided or the length of stay shortened.

iMPower's research with older people looked into their values and motivations to see how these affect the way they engage with health and social care services.

Agewell carried out 200 telephone surveys with people aged 55 to 86 and over. Everyone was asked some general questions about their attitudes and understanding of health services as well as a 'values questionnaire'.

We also arranged for three focus groups of eight people to meet at The Public in West Bromwich. Each group was filmed discussing the options for accessing health and care services and sharing their experiences.

"Agewell has contributed hugely to our research findings and have been essential to the progression of this important project," says iMPower's Grace Warman. "Within a week they had called over 200 people and were only too willing to play a large role in organising the focus groups.

"Their extremely enthusiastic, friendly and hard working attitude made them a pleasure to work with and we couldn't be happier with what they have produced for us."

A white paper entitled 'A Question of Behaviours' has now been produced by iMPower and concludes that delivering care integration and managing acute demand depends as much on changing behaviour as new systems and structures.

The full report is available on our website at www.agewelluk.org.uk - see Consultation and Engagement Case Studies.

If you need to consult with older people, we are the organisation to speak to! Our broad range of consultation and engagement activity never stops. To find out more, call us on 0121 289 3038 ●

IT'S ALL GO AT FLU CENTRAL!

It's here again. No, not Christmas – the flu season. It started at the beginning of September and continues right through the winter into January.

Flu can be unpleasant, but if you're generally healthy, it should clear up within a week. For older people, however, it can be a lot more serious.

Anyone aged over 65 can have a free flu jab each year to protect against the risk of flu and its complications.

To ensure that local older people go for this important job, Agewell has launched Flu Central - an in-house call centre from which we're phoning all 1,300 Agewell members to check if they've had their flu jab.

All those who've not yet booked an appointment will receive another call four weeks later so we can make sure they've been to their GP to get the flu vaccine.

"It's important to be proactive on this issue," says Agewell Director, Pauline Withey. "This year we're speaking to every single Agewell member direct in the hope that everyone gets the flu jab.

"We'll also be reminding people about the pneumonia vaccination and making them aware of the new shingles vaccination which is currently available for those aged 70 and 79."

Alongside Flu Central, which is run by Agewell staff and members, Agewell's Flu Champions are out and about in the local community. They're busting the myths surrounding the flu jab and encouraging older people to get vaccinated.

All our Flu Champions are older people themselves.

If you enjoy taking to people and could spare some time to help out at Flu Central, or are interested in becoming a Flu Champion, please call us on 0121 289 3038 ●



Busting the Myths

I'll get flu if I have the jab. The flu vaccine can't give you flu. The jab is quick and perfectly safe.

I had the jab last year so I'm protected. The viruses that cause flu change every year so you need a vaccination each year that matches the new viruses.

Having flu is just like having a bad cold. Flu is much worse. Symptoms come on suddenly and sometimes severely. If you get complications caused by flu, you could become seriously ill and have to go to hospital.

Flu can be treated with antibiotics. Antibiotics only work against bacteria and viruses cause flu.

I've already had flu this autumn so I don't need the jab. Flu is caused by several viruses so the immunity you developed naturally will only protect you against one of them.

It's too late to have the flu jab now. The sooner you have the vaccine the better as we never know when flu will strike.

Vitamin C can prevent flu. There is no evidence to prove that taking daily vitamin C supplements will stop you getting flu.



Support at home

Agewell's innovative 'falls prevention at home' pilot project is proving a great success, with 40 referrals received already.

"We know that people benefit from our community-based falls prevention groups," explains Agewell CEO, Deb Harrold. "But what about those individuals who are not ready - or able - to leave their home?"

Once a referral is received – a large proportion of which are coming from the Community Rehabilitation Team (Integrated Care Service) at Sandwell Hospital – our qualified Postural Stability instructors begin an intensive one to one exercise and support programme at home which lasts for between 6 – 12 weeks.

At the end of the programme participants are encouraged to attend a community-based falls prevention or gentle exercise group. It's very important to 'maintain the gains' by continuing to exercise - and the groups are great fun too!

If you'd like to find out more give us a ring on 0121 289 3038.

Celebrating Together

Older people were the focus of attention UK-wide on 1st October.

Older People's Day is a national celebration of the achievements and contributions which older people make to our society and the economy. To mark the

day, Agewell members were at Sandwell's newest leisure centre – the Portway Lifestyle Centre. A range of general information about Agewell was handed out and older people were invited to have a look at the state-of-the art leisure facilities at the £18 million centre in Oldbury.



Later in the week, Agewell teamed up again with Sandwell Leisure Trust to take part in an event at Bromsgrove Central Church.

"We carried out a short survey to see if older people knew about the Leisure Trust's Ryland Centre and to find out what types of activities they'd like to see there." explains Agewell Director Pauline Withey. "People mentioned dance, yoga, indoor bowls and line dancing."

Visitors were treated to an Extend gentle exercise taster session and the plan is to arrange more taster sessions to encourage older people to use the centre and get more active.

Thank You

A big thank you to the Percy Bilton Charity for donating 50 superb Christmas hampers to Agewell.

We'll be giving them to the most vulnerable older people we work with to bring a little bit of extra festive cheer this Christmas.

The charity helps organisations and individuals in need throughout the UK.

See www.percybiltoncharity.org.uk for more details.

Free Swimming

Did you know that if you live in Sandwell and are aged over 60 you can register for free swimming?

Apply on-line at www.slt-leisure.co.uk and you can swim for free every day until 1pm at Sandwell leisure centres.

If you're not able to apply online, or feel a little uncertain about how to go about it, give us a call on **0121 289 3038** and we can do it for you.

Getting active with Sandwell Leisure Trust



Watch out in our next issue for a special feature on getting active with Sandwell Leisure Trust.

Six Agewell members have just applied for their three-month Gold Leisure Passes. We'll be following their journey and reporting back on how they have got on.

Trips on the cards

Agewell's Rowley Regis Local Forum has successfully applied for funding from Sandwell Housing's Community Chest Fund.

It now has £500 to help fund trips for its members who are now busy creating a wish-list of places to visit. All our forums meet monthly, see **Diary Dates** on our website for dates and times.

Listening to the community

Abuse against older people is often a taboo subject but Sandwell Safeguarding Adults Board is eager to ensure the voice of the community is heard.

Members of the board are currently going out and about, visiting organisations in Sandwell and listening to what ideas people have for improving the reporting of abuse.

The team is keen to come along to local Agewell Forums to talk about what we can all do to prevent harm to vulnerable older people, especially women, in Sandwell.

From March 2012 to March 2013, Sandwell Safeguarding Adults Board found:

- Of the 748 referrals of alleged abuse for people over 18, 49% related to women over 65.
- The most likely place for alleged abuse to have taken place was in the person's own home or in a care home.
- The most common type of reported harm was physical abuse. More than 40% of cases related to women over 65.

Safeguarding Improvement Officer, Jayne Element, is keen to talk to local groups about how to improve the prevention of abuse and neglect of vulnerable people. She will bring details of free training, leaflets, posters and other information.

To find out more and to arrange a visit, call Jayne on 0845 352 7613.

Agewell's Geraldine Child represents Agewell on Sandwell Safeguarding Adults Board. If you would like her to raise any issues with the board, call 0121 289 3097 or email geraldine.child@agewelluk.org.uk

To find out more about preventing adult abuse in Birmingham, contact Birmingham Safeguarding Adults Board's website at www.bsab.org

CELEBRATIONS & FESTIVALS

Following on from the feature in our last issue, here we take a look at some of the autumn and winter festivals which have or will be taking place in the months ahead.

1st November **All Saints Day**

All Saints' Day is also known as All Hallows' Day and is the day after All Hallows' Eve or Hallowe'en. It is a feast day celebrated by Anglicans and Roman Catholics when they attend church to remember all saints and martyrs throughout Christian history.

3rd November **Diwali**

Diwali, the Festival of Lights, is an important celebration for Hindus and Sikhs. The festival lasts for five days and celebrates the victory of good over evil, light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance. Homes and shops are decorated with lights and fireworks are set off. Gifts are exchanged - traditionally sweets and dried fruit. Diwali is a time to spring-clean, redecorate and buy new clothes.

28th November **Hanukkah**

Hanukkah is the Jewish Festival of Lights. It is celebrated for eight days and commemorates the Jews' struggle for religious freedom. It marks the end of a three year war when a group of Jews called the Maccabees defeated the powerful Syrian Greeks. When they recaptured the temple in Jerusalem they had

enough oil to last one day. The menorah, the eight-branched candelabrum, miraculously stayed alight for eight days. Today Jews light one candle each day during Hanukkah.

25th December **Christmas Day**

Christmas is a Christian holy day that marks the birth of Jesus. Mary was visited by an angel who said she would give birth to God's son. Mary and Joseph travelled from Nazareth to Bethlehem where they found no room at the local inn. Mary gave birth to Jesus in the stable and laid him in the manger. Traditionally, Father Christmas visits houses at midnight on Christmas Eve, coming down the chimney to leave presents in children's stockings.

14th January **Makar Sankranti**

This is one of the most important festivals in the Hindu calendar. It celebrates the sun's journey into the northern hemisphere. Throughout India, the festival has different names and is celebrated in different ways, such as by flying colourful kites, by lighting bonfires, by bathing in the rivers and by dressing cattle with flowers and bells.

31st January **Chinese New Year**

Chinese New Year is the most important of the Chinese holidays. It is a time of feasting, fireworks and giving gifts. The 15 day holiday begins on the first day of a new moon and ends with the full moon on the day of the Lantern Festival. As the Chinese calendar is based on the lunar year, the date of Chinese New Year changes every year. Each year is named after an animal and 2014 will be the year of the horse.

4th March **Shrove Tuesday**

Shrove Tuesday (also known as Pancake Day) is the last day before the period Christians call Lent and it is traditional on this day to eat pancakes. Lent is the period of 40 days which comes before Easter. It begins on Ash Wednesday and marks Jesus' sacrifice and withdrawal into the desert for 40 days. Christians give up a particular vice such as a favourite food for 40 days. It is a time for reflection and a test of self-discipline.



WHY GETTING 'ON YER BIKE' IS GOOD FOR YOU!



London 2012 really roused the nation and motivated us all to get more active. One of the sports to have seen the greatest increase in participation is cycling. But how can you get involved?

You certainly don't have to be an aspiring Olympian to get on your bike, as we found out by talking to Mark Bould, Cycling Programme Manager for Mytime Active. "What's great about cycling is that it works on different levels for all different ages and abilities," he says.

"For older people, cycling can be a great choice of activity. It's free – all you need is a bike and a helmet, you can make it as easy or hard as you like and it gets you enjoying the outdoors."

Mytime Active runs a broad range of cycling activities in Sandwell, some of which link in with its 50 plus activity programme. During the spring and summer there are free weekly cycle rides in Sandwell Valley Country Park for the over 50s.

"It's a perfect place to cycle because Route 5 of the Sustrans National Cycle Network runs through Sandwell Valley," explains Mark. "This means you're cycling on surfaced tracks through lovely surroundings."

What's more, Mytime Active has teamed up with cycle hire company, Closer to the Edge. It now has 25 bikes for use by community groups for rides in the Country Park. So you don't even need to own a bicycle!

Regular exercise of any kind is generally accepted as being good for both your body and mind. But as we get older, we tend to do less and less.

The type of exercise doesn't matter so much - what's important is that it must be enjoyable and not take up too much time if you're going to keep it up ●



WALTER WOWS ON WHEELS!

At the age of 79, cycling champion Walter Fowler is still turning heads on the track and is proving that age is no barrier to sporting success.



Walter, who lives in Kinver, is held in awe by youngsters at Halesowen Cycling Club where he's showing no signs of slowing down!

He currently holds the World 500m Time Trial record in the 75-79 age group which he won at the 2012 World Track Masters at Manchester Velodrome. "Records don't stand for long," he says. "I'm planning to beat it myself this year. If I don't, someone else will."

"I'll be moving into the next age category and hoping to put some records out of sight!"

Walter started cycling competitively more than 60 years ago in 1950 following a sporting school career. He competed for his county in athletics and boxing, only giving up the latter when he started wearing glasses! He also represented his school in football.

He took up cycling seriously when he lived in Brighton, riding on the same track as cycling greats including Reg Harris and other international stars. When he went into National Service in Singapore in 1952, he took his bike with him!

Walter's only break from cycling came in 1960 when he married and had children and his time was spent with his family. But in 1980 he was back with a vengeance, setting out on challenging touring rides.

These included cycling from Geneva to Nice through the Alps, from Lands End to John O Groats and completing the Pacific Coast Ride in America.

"I wasn't competing at this time," he explains, "and I was cautious about extending too hard and injuring myself. I went through this stage though and by 2007 I found I had the itch to see if I could ride on the track again."

"After 50 years away from the track I joined Halesowen Cycling Club and they said I should do the Masters."

In 2008, Walter rose to the challenge and won the World Championship in the 70-74 age group at the age of 74 in Sydney, Australia. Having reached the top age category, Walter began campaigning for a 75+ category. He took his petition to the Union Cycliste Internationale and got a new age category approved.

Just before competing in Sydney in 2009, Walter had a crash and was diagnosed with bladder cancer. Not one to be defeated, he came back in 2010 to take second place behind an American in Portugal.

The American took the title again the following year when Walter didn't compete due to his wife's illness. But in 2012 he returned to beat the American and win the Championship.

"I'm a firm believer that cyclists reputedly live seven years longer than anyone else and I like to think that I've held off the recurrence of cancer because I'm fit."

"Cycling isn't just about keeping fit. The atmosphere is very good amongst older men in cycling. They have a penchant for helping each other. I'm pleased to be able to inspire others now I'm nearing 80."

A big thank you to Halesowen Cycling Club for allowing us to photograph Walter in action. To find out more visit www.halesowencycling.net ●

Did you know that walking, gardening and cycling are the only activities that have been shown to be continued throughout life?

Interestingly, three times more men than women currently cycle for fun but British Cycling is trying to change that. Breeze is the biggest programme to help women feel confident and comfortable about going out on a ride. They offer details of local women-only bike rides, along with information on how to improve your bike skills, become a Breeze champion or find a female-friendly bike shop.

If you want to meet other local cyclists, why not join voluntary organisation, Cycling in Sandwell? It's free to register and you'll get information about organised bike rides, free cycle maintenance checks and plans for new cycle routes and facilities.

You could also try a Sky Ride Local ride. These free community bike rides offer a great way to get out and explore the area on your doorstep with other like-minded people.

And if you'd prefer to just head out on your own, or with friends, rather than as part of a group, give one of the British Cycling Approved routes a go.

Where to find out more



For details of group bicycle rides for older people contact Mytime Active on **0121 366 0966** or email **mark.bould@mytimehealth.co.uk**

For a free Sandwell Cycle Map call **0121 569 4889** and for a free Birmingham Cycling and Walking Map call **0121 303 7195**

Meet local cyclists: **www.cyclinginsandwell.co.uk**

For Sky Ride details visit **www.goskyride.com**

For information about cycling in general visit **www.britishcycling.org.uk** and for women visit **www.breezebikerides.com**

What's so great about cycling?



A bicycle supports your body, so cycling isn't a weight-bearing exercise, which means it reduces the stress on joints and is, therefore good for people with certain bone and joint problems, such as arthritis.

Cycling can help maintain your bone mass which protects against osteoporosis and can improve your co-ordination, mobility, strength and endurance. It also improves your leg muscle strength which can reduce the risk of injury from falls.

A bicycle can be parked just about anywhere, so no more expensive car park bills.

Cycling at least twenty miles a week reduces the risk of heart disease to less than half that for non-cyclists who take no other exercise.

Bicycles require no road tax, no MOT, no insurance, no licensing, no breakdown recovery services and no fuel bills.

Cycling can lower your blood pressure.

If one third of all short car journeys were made by bike, national heart disease rates would fall by between 5 and 10 per cent.

Riding a bike on a regular basis can reduce the risk of Type II diabetes and some forms of cancer.

Cycling is a great way to get out and about and make new friends which can be beneficial to mental health. It can relieve stress, mild depression and sleeping disorders.

Now you have such a wealth of cycling information at your fingertips, what are you waiting for? Go on, get on your bike!

New Portway Lifestyle Centre

Newbury Lane, Oldbury, B69 1HE



NOW OPEN



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Best national small chain - members' choice health club awards 2013

Free Session at Portway Lifestyle Centre

Gentle Exercise
Mondays 1.30pm

One entry only. SLT reserves the right to amend, decline or remove this offer at any time. Cannot be used in conjunction with any other offers/discounts.

New social group for men

'Time 2 Talk' is a new, weekly social group that's just for men!

The group meets every Thursday, 2pm to 4pm at Dartmouth Central Bowling Club, by Dartmouth Park, in West Bromwich.

Come along for a chat and enjoy a game of bowls or snooker. £2 per session. Call us on 0121 289 3038 to confirm your attendance.

Everyone's welcome - bring a friend!

Yoga taster sessions for women

Fancy trying something new? Yoga taster sessions for women only are available every Thursday, 10.30 to 11.30am at the Rowley Disability Centre in Rowley Regis, until Christmas.

£2 per session. Just turn up, no need to book. For more details call 0121 506 4980 and ask for Vina Fatania.

In partnership with Sandwell Council and Sandwell Leisure Trust.

Contact Details

For more information about Agewell and our services, contact us as follows:-

Agewell CIC
Suite 9, Vision Point,
Vaughan Trading Estate,
Sedgley Road East,
Tipton DY4 7UJ



follow us on twitter
@agewellinfo



T: 0121 289 3038 F: 0121 289 3105 E: info@agewelluk.org.uk W: www.agewelluk.org.uk