



**agewell**  
sharing experience

# Agewell Magazine

## Inside this issue:

Agewell member Davinder Bahia had never been to a gym before in his life - but he's loving it now!

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# Welcome

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



**Sadly I must start this issue with the news that one of our original six founding members, Tony Salter OBE, has died. Tony was a staunch supporter of Agewell over the years, receiving an OBE in 2008 for his work in giving older**

**people a voice. He will be greatly missed by everyone in Agewell and our thoughts are with his family and friends. Read his moving tribute on page 8.**

Time certainly flies by. On 31st March we reached the end of our first year as an independent social enterprise and I can't believe how much we've achieved in our first 12 months.

We've welcomed 505 new members, bringing current membership to 1,657, and 30 per cent of our individual members now regularly attend our monthly Local Forums.

We've consulted with hundreds of older people on a whole host of key issues including community transport, end of life care, person-centred care, healthy ageing and accident & emergency services.

As part of our Flu Central campaign, we telephoned 1,270 individual Agewell members to promote the flu, pneumonia and shingles vaccination programmes as well as other health information.

17 Agewell members volunteered to staff the specially created call centre, clocking up a total of 127 hours on the project. It was a great example of what can be achieved when older people are contacted by their peers. They were able to chat easily and dispel the myths surrounding vaccinations. They also talked

about any other issues and problems people were experiencing, signposting them to other services which can help.

Our community-based exercise programmes continued to be well attended. There are currently 342 registered participants across 22 weekly gentle exercise and falls prevention groups held in local venues at the heart of communities.

We piloted a new home-based exercise service this year which has been a great success - turn to page 9 to find out more.

We continued to work closely with Sandwell Leisure Trust to encourage older people to keep fit and active. Free leisure passes were offered to several Agewell members. How did they get on? Read our feature on page 4 to find out!

As a small team, we can only achieve all this thanks to all the time and effort given by our volunteers. In total, they have contributed more than 1,050 volunteer hours during the past year. Wow!

Of course we've lots more plans for the months ahead. These include working more closely with GPs and other health professionals to encourage more referrals of socially isolated older people and those who have suffered a fall or are at risk of falling. We are also working on a new business strategy for the next five years to ensure our business will grow and is sustainable.

If you'd like to find out more, give us a call on **0121 289 3038**. And keep an eye on our website where our 2013/14 Annual Review will be available shortly.

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Deb Harrold". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the left.

**Deb Harrold, Agewell CEO**

# YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE



An attempt to stop one criminal act has led to Vera Tonks getting heavily involved with helping to prevent crime.



**Agewell member, Vera, is Vice Chair of Agewell's West Bromwich Forum. For almost eight years she's also been a member of the Sandwell Crime Prevention Panel and is currently Vice Chair to Chairman Kevin Bradley.**

She's often to be seen out and about at events, handing out leaflets from the Crime Prevention bus, or outside local supermarkets.

"We go all over Sandwell," Vera explains. "We do Safer 6 with the Police which is six weeks of community safety work across the borough. We visit the Sandwell Show and Tipton Canal Festival and we're always at the Christmas lights. We'll go anywhere!"

"Our aim is to help people of all ages to avoid becoming a victim of crime. We give out home safety packs and mark postcodes on mobile phones. Sometimes we get freebies off the Police to give away or we get grants to buy things to hand out."

It all started years ago when Vera was trying to get some council garages removed from behind her home because they were being vandalised. Someone suggested that she join Neighbourhood Watch and from then on there was no stopping her!

As well as being a member of the Crime Prevention Panel, Vera's also been part of Sandwell Community Information and Participation Service (SCIPS) and has sat on the Town Area Panel. Plus, she's been a tenant advisor and on the Tenancy Appeal Panel.

"At the moment I'm trying to stop mobile phone theft by persuading people not to take their phones out everywhere and to get them postcode marked. I'm also distributing purse bells which you attach to your purse to make them harder to steal."

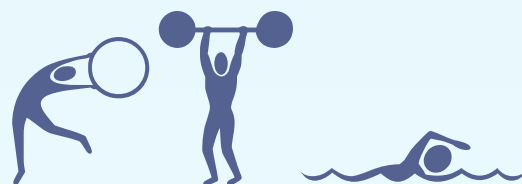
A pet hate of Vera's is bus passes being carried in women's purses which makes it easy for thieves to grab them when they're taken out to show the pass. So, Vera's publicising carrying bus passes in a separate place. She also advocates wearing your handbag around your front.

She's also promoting the ICE scheme which stands for In Case of Emergency. A person's main contact is stored in their phone under ICE and then their name. This helps medical staff to contact a relative or friend in the event of an emergency.

Vera does all this voluntary work despite suffering from severe rheumatoid arthritis. She takes it all in her stride, saying: "I'm OK, I've got Wendy and Bertie to help – Wendy is my wheelie walker and Bertie is my buggy!"

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

# LET'S GET PHYSICAL



If the thought of entering a leisure centre fills you with dread, think again! Times have moved on and today's leisure centres offer so much more – in fact, something for everyone whatever their age, ability, fitness or disability.

To mark the opening of its brand new Portway Lifestyle Centre on Newbury Lane, Oldbury, Sandwell Leisure Trust offered six Agewell members a free Gold\* membership pass for three months.

"We wanted to give a helping hand to people who were looking to increase their physical activity," says Neil Duggan, Sandwell Leisure Trust's Business Development Manager. "It can be hard to take that first step towards exercising but there's always a member of staff here to help.

"We also wanted older people to experience how easy it is to register on-line for a membership pass – either at home, in a local library or using the kiosks in our leisure centres."

For older people, physical activity and exercise are vital to stay healthy and independent. "As we age,

we spend more and more time sitting down and less time being active," says Agewell's Productive Ageing Manager, Kuldip Bahia.

"This can affect your body - leading to a greater chance of falls, heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes, as well as your mind - putting you more at risk of depression and dementia.

"Our aim is to help older people stay fit and healthy in body and mind, and using their local leisure centre is just one way of doing this."

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To find out where your nearest leisure centre is visit [www.slt-leisure.co.uk](http://www.slt-leisure.co.uk) or call **0300 012 0121**. If you're nervous about registering online, call Agewell on **0121 289 3038** and we can do it for you.

\*Please note the Gold Pass is now called the One Card.

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## STEVE'S STORY

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**"I've got a long history of exercising as I'm a retired physical training instructor from the army," says 62-year-old Steve Simcox from Wednesbury.**

"When Agewell offered me the pass I'd been suffering with a calf injury. I thought using a gym could be part

of my recovery. It was also the start of November and so the evenings were very dark and I couldn't exercise outside.

"It was very easy to apply for the pass on-line. When I first tried to use it at Portway I had a problem getting through the barrier but the staff were very helpful and it was fine after that.

"I thought Portway was excellent. I used most of the equipment in the gym. I started with cycling because it's good for your heart rate then moved onto the step walkers and then the hand cycles. I also used different weights to exercise all my muscles."

Steve was particularly impressed that Portway caters for everyone. "I noticed that everyone is treated as equals at Portway," he says. "People with disabilities were there using the gym independently and the staff were extremely helpful.

"I started going three or four times a week and spending up to two and a half hours there at a time. There were always people of different ages in there which was nice. I often went first thing in the morning to start the day. I can't believe what excellent value the Gold membership pass is," he says. "I'd definitely recommend it."

## DAVINDER'S STORY

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**Our front cover star, Davinder Bahia, aged 62, hasn't stopped moving since he took up Agewell's offer of a free Gold membership pass!**

"I'd never been to a gym before in my life but I wanted to lose weight so I thought I would give it a try.

"I chose Portway because it's a good facility and they've got a large car park so it's easy to get to. It's also not as busy as other places.

"I was a bit nervous when I went for the first time but it was fine. When I got there, the staff showed me how to use all the equipment. They were very friendly.

"To start with, sometimes, I had to ask for their help, but after a few visits I felt confident enough to use the machines by myself.

"I found I really liked it! I would do a bit of weight training and then some cardio work like going on the treadmill.

"The main thing for me was losing weight but going to the gym is keeping me fit and active as well. I'm a driving instructor so there's not much walking around as I'm just sitting in the car.

"I used to try to go to the park in the morning for an hour or so to get a bit of exercise but now I go to the gym instead which is much better. I can go there even when it's raining!

"I've got a lot more choice at the gym to do all sorts of exercise and it works well for me. And I've lost some weight!"

Davinder has become so enthusiastic about the gym that when his free pass ended he took out his own membership so he can continue to keep getting fitter and healthier. ●



## We faced the dragons!



Agewell was one of 15 organisations, shortlisted from 106, to take part in a development programme delivered by The Young Foundation and Arden Commissioning Support Unit.

The aim was to help social ventures make the most of the new NHS opportunities in Coventry, Warwickshire and Worcestershire.

Agewell CEO Deb Harrold and Chair Edna Barker attended a number of challenging workshops to learn how to pitch successfully and teamed up with The Community Housing Group (TCHG) in Kidderminster to cost and pitch our befriending service 'Dragon's Den' style.

"It was a very useful programme to take part in, particularly so early on in Agewell's new life as a social enterprise," commented Deb.

"We made a lot of new contacts and were challenged to really focus on what Agewell has to offer and how

best to sell our services. We particularly enjoyed working with TCHG with whom we are developing a closer working relationship for future partnership opportunities."

## Health Consultation

Following a successful consultation project with iMPower last Autumn, we carried out a further piece of work for them in February.

We looked at the age of individuals visiting hospital A & E departments and walk-in centres and investigated why they are visiting. A total of 400 face to face surveys were completed at Sandwell and City Hospitals and at walk-in centres in West Bromwich and Winson Green, Birmingham.

## New Hospital Visiting Services

In response to a request from a local resident, Agewell has launched a hospital visiting service.

If you know someone who has been admitted to hospital, an Agewell befriender can visit them during their stay, enabling relatives who regularly visit to have a break.

**Call Agewell on 0121 289 3038 to find out more.**

## End of Life Day Therapies Review

Agewell was recently tasked with reviewing the day therapies currently offered within hospice settings.

We carried out surveys at four hospices to find out what patients, carers and family members think of the day therapies on offer and what other activities or services they would like.

The survey was also taken to the six Agewell Forums where members were asked what they would like to see regarding hospice day care provision should they ever experience it as a patient or carer in the future.

The results were jointly presented with Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group to the Joint Health & Social Care Scrutiny Committee.

## Get Social with us!

Agewell is live on Facebook, Twitter and Linked In so make sure you follow us to find out the latest news.

Don't forget you can make secure referrals to Agewell online at [www.agewelluk.org.uk](http://www.agewelluk.org.uk) and if you send your email address to [info@agewelluk.org.uk](mailto:info@agewelluk.org.uk) we'll keep you posted with regular eflyers.

## Awards for All success

Sandwell Leisure Trust, in addition to managing leisure centres in Sandwell, also manages the Ryland Centre in Bromsgrove which is newly refurbished but underused by local older people.

Agewell has consulted with local agencies, community groups and local older people to find out what they'd like to see taking place at the centre and we've led a successful Awards for All Lottery Bid to secure funding for new sessions to start.

These will include table tennis, short bowls, badminton, EXTEND gentle exercise, tea dances, healthy walks and gardening sessions.

## Book Swap

To mark World Book Day, we held a Book Exchange at St David's Court, Oldbury where residents and Agewell Forum members swapped their unwanted books for a new read.

Everyone was also given a free book to take away.

The event was so popular that a selection of books will stay at St David's Court for residents to continue swapping, plus the Book Exchange is being taken to Agewell's Forums so everyone can enjoy a good story!

## Conference Speech



Agewell has been helping Social Enterprise West Midlands (SEWM) expand into the health and wellbeing sector and we were delighted to take part in their recent Health & Wellbeing Social Value Conference held at Solihull Council's Civic Suite.

Agewell CEO, Deb Harrold, was invited to be one of the key speakers during the high profile event which brought together public health organisations, local authorities and social enterprises.

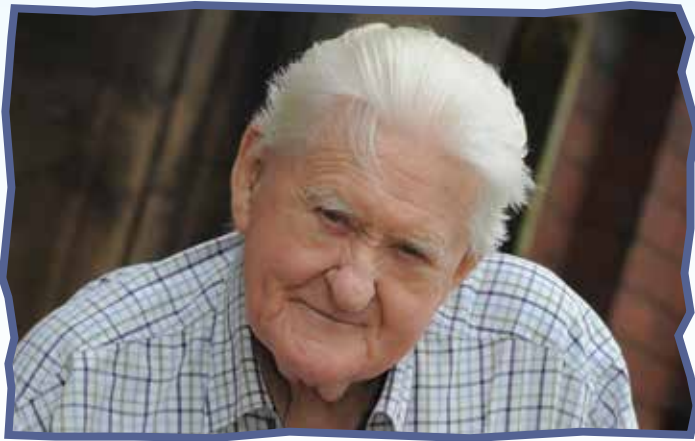
Andy Williams, Accountable Officer for Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group was announced as one of SEWM's first Health & Wellbeing Social Value Champions.

## Prize Draw Winner

Thank you to everyone who completed the questionnaire in our last issue about our vision for a Community Hub for older people. A Love to Shop voucher is now on its way to Doreen Ellis in Wednesbury ●

# FOND MEMORIES OF TONY

It is with great sadness that we share the news that one of our founding members, Tony Salter OBE, has died aged 83.



**Tony was one of the six volunteers who started Agewell back in 1998 and has been an active supporter ever since, helping to build the organisation it is today.**

In 2008 his commitment to giving older people a voice was recognised when he received an OBE from Prince Charles for services to the elderly and to the community in the West Midlands.

Tony said: "Agewell has established itself as a mouthpiece for older people in Sandwell. That's what I like about it."

Good friend and fellow Agewell founding member, Tony Mallam, said: "Tony was a very, very great asset to Agewell. He had knowledge and experience in dealing with people and was a larger-than-life character. You may not always have agreed with him, but Tony always spoke sense.

"The hardest thing in life is to get groups established and consolidated and Tony made sure Agewell is now on a firm footing.

"I was privileged to have known such a man as Tony. He was his own man and he brought so much to Agewell and its managers. People never leave us - their spirit is always there. When Agewell meet around the table Tony's spirit will be with us."

Leading on from his involvement in Agewell, Tony Salter went on to become Chairman of Better Government of Older People. This national role saw him visiting London to meet with Government Ministers including the then Prime Minister, Gordon Brown.

Throughout his life, Tony made a real difference to the lives of people of all ages across Sandwell.

One of his proudest achievements, which he often spoke of, was launching an apprentice scheme in the early 1970s when he was a Training Manager in the Work Division at Sandwell Council.

Tony was passionate about giving young people a good start in their working life and, today, there are still three Senior Managers who work for Sandwell Council who started their career as one of Tony's apprentices.

Over the years, he was heavily involved in Sandwell Council and local health services, becoming a Member of the Council between 1968 and 1974 and, from 2000 – 2004, serving as Chairman of Sandwell Community Health Council.

He was also a Non-Executive Director of Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust and, from 2002 – 2006, a Non-Executive Director for Wednesbury and West Bromwich Primary Care Trust.

Tony was a real people person. He was very sociable and would happily chat both to strangers he'd just met and to people he'd known for years in the same friendly manner. It didn't matter what their background was – whether the man in the street or Prince Charles, the future King of England, at Tony's investiture.

He was husband to Sheila, had four daughters, five grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

Daughter, Jayne, sums up: "He was an incredible individual and the best dad a daughter could wish for. We are so proud of him and his achievements." ●



# READY, STAY STEADY, GO!



Having a fall can destroy your confidence, reduce your independence and increase feelings of loneliness and isolation. It's a big issue for older people and one which has huge cost implications for health and social care services.

**But thanks to the new home-based exercise programme which Agewell has been piloting, older people across Sandwell have been learning to get more steady on their feet and enjoy greater mobility and a new found confidence.**

Agewell's Capacity to Care Manager, Pauline Withey, explains: "The pilot programme was introduced in April last year to extend the valuable work we are already doing in the community.

"Following a fall older people take longer to heal and regain their mobility than a younger person. We felt the support already on offer wasn't long enough which is why we took the opportunity to introduce a one-to-one home-based service. A tailored exercise programme can reduce an individual's risk of falling by up to 50 per cent."

Following an initial visit with an Agewell Postural Stability Instructor (PSI), a programme of up to 12 one-to-one sessions is developed specifically for the individual in their own home. Exercises are designed

to increase their muscle strength and balance and get them back on their feet once again.

At the end of the programme, individuals are encouraged and supported to join a falls prevention or gentle exercise class in their community and continue getting stronger and steadier.

59 referrals were received in the first 12 months (32 women and 27 men) and so far no one has suffered a further fall. So, what difference is the programme making to people's lives?

## Gwen

When Agewell suggested to Gwen that she tried some exercises she admits she was "a bit iffy at first". The 88-year-old was referred by her Oldbury GP as she was at risk of having a fall.

"Khat came to the house each week and I found I got on well with the exercises. We did things like marching on the spot and arm and leg exercises to strengthen them.



"I was managing to get about OK as I've always been quite active, but I couldn't keep my balance. The exercises have definitely helped me to be a bit more steady."

"I'm now able to go to a gentle exercise class at Londonderry Baptist Church. Susie, the tutor, says to do what you can but not to worry if you can't do it all. It's something to look forward to. I've always been a home bird but it's nice to have a social life too."

## David



David had suffered a series of falls due to his Multiple Sclerosis and was referred to Agewell by his physiotherapist.

"I wear an alarm on my wrist and had called the paramedics out on numerous occasions," he explains. "Agewell thought some exercises would get me a bit more mobile."

"Recently it's been taking my wife about half an hour to get me in and out of the car. Alison, the tutor, has shown me how to move from a sitting to

a standing position properly and it's helped a lot. I'm determined to make it a bit easier for my wife so I make sure I practice the exercises regularly. When I'm sitting on the edge of the bed, I practice standing up in the correct way."

"The sessions have definitely made a difference. They give you confidence to keep going. You learn which pain you can work through and just carry on."

## Did you know...



- If you've had a fall, you're certainly not alone. About one third of people over 65, and 50% of people aged 80 and over, will have a fall in a year.
- The majority of falls – 75% - are not reported.
- Falls are the cause of more than 50% of hospital admissions due to accidental injury.
- Each year in England, more than 223,000 people aged over 60 suffer a fracture as a result of a fall.
- Falls account for between 10 and 25% of ambulance call-outs for people aged 65 and over.
- Each year, more than 1.5 million hospital beds in the UK are occupied by people aged 60 and over who've suffered a fracture.
- Falls cost the NHS and social care an estimated £6m per day or £2.3bn per year.
- Evidence shows that specific programmes for improving strength and balance can reduce the risk of falls by as much as 55 per cent.

Agewell accepts referrals from GPs and health professionals as well the individual themselves and their friends or family members. Give us a call on **0121 289 3038** to find out more or make a secure referral via our website.

# What does it take to be a Postural Stability Instructor?



**Khatoon Hussain believes that plenty of patience and adaptability are the key qualities needed to become an Agewell PSI tutor.**

Having started out in office administration, she now enjoys getting out and about, visiting older people to improve their mobility.

She says: "I started running some gentle exercise classes and found I loved it so I was keen to

progress to become a Postural Stability Instructor. I undertook a three-month distance learning course with a practical session once a week, before completing a final exam and practical."

Khat now runs 12-week Postural Stability programmes, visiting between 5 and 7 older people each week.

"Patience is a must," says Khat. "Along with the ability to adapt to fit in with each client. It's important to empathise with each individual. One of the great things about being a PSI tutor is that everyone is different. The reward is seeing the difference you can make."

## How to stay steady

If you find it difficult to get around, have already had a fall, or are worried about falling, there are some simple steps you can take to help you stay steady on your feet.

### 1. Keep active!

Try to keep as active as you are able to maintain your strength. Activities which help muscle strength and balance are particularly good. Use the stairs often if it's safe for you to do so. Try slowly rising to a standing position from a chair a few times. Try to limit the time you spend sitting still to stop your muscles becoming weaker.

### 2. Check your eyesight

Have your eyes checked at least every two years or every year if you're over 70. It's free if you're over 60! Even if you think your eyesight is fine, still go for regular eye tests as any eye conditions can be picked up at an early stage. Wearing the wrong glasses, or no glasses, can affect your balance and co-ordination.

### 3. Look after your ears

Problems with your ears can have a big impact on your balance. As you get older, hearing loss is more likely, so have a chat with your GP if you think you need to get your ears checked out.

### 4. Think on your feet!

If you have any pain in your feet or feel you are losing some sensation in them, speak to your GP. Foot problems can affect your balance, increasing your risk of falling. Keep your toenails short and wear comfortable, high sided, low heeled shoes with a thin sole and a good grip. At home, wear slippers which fasten and stay on well. Don't walk in bare feet, socks or tights.

### 5. Look out for hazards

See whether there's anything around your home which may make you fall eg wet surfaces in the bathroom, loose rugs, electrical wires running across the carpet, things left on the floor, poor lighting.

### 6. Eat well

Eating healthily is important for you to have the right vitamins. Make sure you drink regularly during the day to stop you getting dehydrated.

# New Portway Lifestyle Centre

Newbury Lane, Oldbury, B69 1HE



## NOW OPEN



- 114 Station Gym
- 50 Weekly Fitness Classes
- Sports Hall – Badminton, Bowls
- Outdoor LifeTrail
- Hydrotherapy pool
- Multi-Purpose Activity Room
- Outdoor 3G Football Pitch
- Sensory Room
- Café
- Free Parking



SANDWELL LEISURE TRUST  
[www.slt-leisure.co.uk](http://www.slt-leisure.co.uk)  
0300 012 0121  
[info@slt-leisure.co.uk](mailto:info@slt-leisure.co.uk)



### 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.

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

## easyfundraising.org.uk

### Raise funds for Agewell when you shop online

Did you know you can raise money for Agewell just by shopping online through Easyfundraising?

- It's 100% free
- There's over 2,700 retailers to choose from including Amazon, M&S and Tesco
- Over 500,000 supporters already use [easyfundraising.org.uk](http://easyfundraising.org.uk)

Visit [www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk) to find out how easy it is. Don't forget to select Agewell as the good cause you wish to support.

You can also click the 'Fundraise for Us' button on [www.agewelluk.org.uk](http://www.agewelluk.org.uk) to find the easyfundraising link or call us on 0121 289 3038 to find out more.

## Contact Details

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

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