



agewell
sharing experience

Agewell Magazine

Inside this issue:

Rowley Forum's fortnightly line dancing sessions are proving popular. Find out more on page 11.

Also inside:

Community Offer Update | Pages 4 & 5
Remembering a Community Icon | Page 6
Volunteers Return to Hospital Shop | Page 7
Thinking Differently about Dementia | Pages 8 & 9
Forums get Going Again | Page 11
Keep Moving with Agewell | Pages 12 & 13
Round-Up News | Page 15

WELCOME



Welcome to the latest issue of the Agewell magazine, which will bring you right-up-to-date with our services and how we are continuing to support older people and their families across Sandwell.

It's hard to believe that it's now two years since

we entered the first Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020. It has been a tough two years for us all and our thoughts are with everyone who has experienced loss and hardship and continues to do so.

Our aim at Agewell is to help older people across Sandwell to enjoy a better older age. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of all our staff and volunteers, we continue to achieve this aim daily through a variety of services which you will read about on the following pages.

A key moment for us last year was to hear we'd been successful in securing funding from The Big Lottery for a new 3-year project 'Thinking Differently About Dementia.' This service went live in July and provides a range of innovative initiatives for people living with mild and moderate dementia and their family carers. Find out more on pages 8 and 9.

Later in the year we also received the news that our 'Provider Collaborative' with eight other local organisations had been given the green light from Sandwell Council. The new Sandwell Community Dementia Service covers the whole of Sandwell, with Agewell focussing on Rowley Regis. See page 10 for more information.

Encouraging older people to keep moving has never been more important than during a pandemic.

In May last year we published a new leaflet 'Keep Moving with Agewell' which features 14 exercises that can be done safely at home to work on your mobility, strength and balance. Read how exercising regularly is improving people's lives on pages 12 and 13.

Agewell is one of the organisations delivering Sandwell's Community Offer which launched at the start of lockdown. See pages 4 and 5 to see how our Community Navigators have been making a difference to those living in Wednesbury and Oldbury. There's also news of our ever popular Sapphire Service on page 14 which is now in its fifth year.

Fortunately our Hospital Shop was able to stay open throughout 2021. Thanks to the vaccine roll-out we now have five of our volunteers back which is great news. Find out more on page 7.

We were also delighted that our Local Forums in Rowley and Wednesbury (see page 11) were finally able to re-start in October, much to the delight of their members including our cover star Sarah Blake who was photographed at one of Rowley Forum's popular line dancing sessions.

We started the New Year still under the threat of Covid-19 thanks to Omicron. As we move into Spring, it's becoming clear there are still many more challenges ahead for us all, both nationally and internationally.

Agewell was established by a small group of volunteers in 1997, originally as an initiative within the NHS. 25 years later we continue to flourish and will adapt to whatever changes are necessary.

If you know an older person who is isolated and lonely, or a family carer who is overwhelmed, please email info@agewelluk.org.uk or call us on **0121 796 9333**. We can help.

Deb Harrold, Agewell CEO ●



STRENGTHENING OUR TEAM

We are delighted to welcome the following new members of staff who joined the Agewell team recently.

Mel Charters (above right) has been appointed as Project Co-ordinator of the new Thinking Differently About Dementia project.

She has an eclectic background in wellbeing and is a qualified holistic therapist and mindfulness practitioner. Mel taught mindfulness in a Birmingham residential college for adults facing barriers to learning and has worked with people in social care settings over many years.

"When this opportunity presented itself, I thought my skill base would be of value to the people being supported," she says. "I'm pleased to be working in my local community and being creative, sharing skills and learning from others."

Jo Pegler-Hadlington (above left) has joined us as a Dementia Advisor for the new Sandwell Community Dementia Service.

Jo had always worked in Operations Management

when, five years ago, she had to have major surgery and felt she couldn't go back to a stressful role. She took a few years out before looking for a job with real satisfaction.

Her good friend Claire Williams, a Wellbeing Adviser on the Thinking Differently About Dementia project, suggested joining the new community dementia service.

"I wanted a rewarding role and I think I've found it," she says. "If I'm doing something, I want to do it well so I'm completing lots of training and am working towards my Level 2 in Dementia. For some people you're supporting, you might be all they've got so you have to be able to give your best."

In addition to welcoming Mel and Jo, former Hospital Shop volunteer, **Jackie**, is now a paid member of the Sapphire Service team. You can read more about her on page 14.

COMMUNITY OFFER UPDATE...

Following the launch of the Community Offer at the start of the pandemic in March 2020, the team is now back working in the community to help people re-engage in local activities and services.

Agewell's two Community Navigators, Nicola Groves and Tanya Graham, work with Communities in Sync and Navigators from Crossroads and Ideal for All to provide a whole range of support for people in Wednesbury and Oldbury.

Navigators from other local organisations cover the other four towns in Sandwell.

The aim of the Community Offer is to enable people to play a more active role in their community. But as soon as the project began, the first lockdown hit and the focus became wellbeing support.

Now local services are getting back up and running, the team is pleased to be out and about at long last and the Community Offer is more vital than ever.

Tanya explains: "Covid has had a huge affect on people. We're supporting people with quite complex needs and the pandemic has really hit them hard. There's a lot of fear in the community and people are still feeling worried about going out.

"It's impacting on their physical and mental health and we're doing a lot of hand-holding to make people feel safer and able to access services without feeling overwhelmed. The more we find out about which services are now open, the more we can empower people."

Having talked to people on the phone throughout the pandemic, the team is finally putting faces to names and meeting people at community venues to help them become part of their community again.

"The Community Offer is so important," adds Tanya. "For some people, the telephone call from us was the only thing they had during Covid. Now we can spend more time with them and help them access the right services."

Many referrals are now coming through to the service and issues have really been heightened due to Covid.



Nicola says: "We're referring a lot of people to mental health services because they've been stuck at home for so long and are really struggling. People have lost their confidence so we're helping them access community walks, social groups and activities such as the line dancing sessions in Rowley Regis and local exercise classes.

We meet them at the venue and go in with them so they're not worried. The project is moving in the right direction but it's still so tough.

If you'd like to make a referral to the Community Offer, please call 0121 726 3983. The service is free to access and referrals are open to everybody aged 18 years and over. You can contact the service on behalf of yourself or someone else, whether it is a friend, neighbour, colleague, family member or someone you are supporting.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Invaluable Support

John says he simply couldn't have got through the pandemic without the support he received from the Community Offer.

"I was really bad last year and Nicola stuck by me," he explains. "She put me in touch with Welfare Rights to make sure I was getting the right benefits and Sandwell Healthy Minds. I had been refused PIP (Personal Independence Payments) but Nicola provided a letter to go with my application and I was awarded it. She arranged food parcels for me and helped me get a new phone so I could do online shopping.

"During the lockdowns I spoke to her quite a few times each week. I don't speak to many people but find Nicola easy to get on with. She's gone above and beyond to get me the help I need. I don't think I'd be where I am without Nicola's help."

A Helping Hand

The Community Offer is helping Joy to overcome her fear of going out.

After chatting to Tanya on the phone for so long during the pandemic, Joy got to meet her in person when she arranged to meet her at the West Bromwich African Caribbean Resource Centre.

Joy says: "Tanya's an absolutely lovely lady. I was referred to the Community Offer when I had to call the ambulance service because I was unwell. I have problems with crowds and meeting people

There For Me

Tracey has been supported by the Community Offer throughout the past difficult year.

"Tanya first started calling me last January and then I lost my husband to Covid in February," says Tracey. "It's just been a terrible time and Tanya's been really supportive. She's always been there for me and has helped me in a big way.

"She got food delivered to my house and a grant for my heating and she phoned me every week. She's been a big part of my life. It's someone to talk to outside of family. You can tell your problems to her and she gives me advice and suggests which direction to go in.

"She's been my rock."

and I get panic attacks. Tanya met me at the centre because I'm always in the house and came in with me so I didn't have to do that on my own.

"In my head I want to get out but my body won't let me. Tanya also put me in touch with the council because I need help at home with my disability. Now she's suggesting other things I can do from home and I'm thinking of talking to other people on the phone who are lonely so I can help them."

THANK YOU TO MAUREEN

Business Support Officer, Maureen Collins left Agewell last year.

She joined Agewell in 2015 and worked on a variety of projects, providing invaluable help to the Agewell team.

She was also often the voice of Agewell, making follow up calls to those who requested a copy of

our 'Staying Steady Staying Safe' booklet, and during lockdown she made many hundreds of wellbeing calls to help prevent people feeling isolated, whether they were part of the Agewell telephone tree or members of our community exercise classes.

A huge thank you from all of us Maureen for your hard work.

REMEMBERING A COMMUNITY ICON

Dot Abbey, Chair of Agewell's Tipton Local Forum and a pillar of the local community, sadly passed away last March.

Dot first became involved with Agewell around six years ago, having spent her whole life helping the Tipton community in hundreds of ways.

Daughter, Sue, says: "Mum went to one of the Agewell groups with a friend and the next thing I knew, she said she was going to be running it! Three years later she was a member of the Executive Board.

"She always used to be out and about. We'd joke we needed a tracker on her. You never knew where she was. She just loved getting involved in the community and she was so highly regarded by them."

A lollipop lady for 17 years, Dot knew everyone and everyone knew her! She got heavily involved in Tibbington Tenants' and Residents' Association and took children on many trips out in the minibus which her husband provided.

Dot ran the summer play scheme and organised football matches on the Tipton Cracker, including a particularly memorable one against officers from Tipton Police Station. She put on barbecues, Halloween parties and Christmas discos, and ran a girls' dancing group, taking them to perform at local old people's homes.

For the Royal Wedding in 1981, Dot created a community carnival float with her younger daughter as Princess Diana! The float won first place.

For the older members of the community, Dot ran day trips including her famous mystery tours. She also set up Tuesday afternoon bingo and did regular errands for neighbours including collecting



newspapers every day and doing shopping and gardening.

Dot roped the whole family into helping with her community ventures. Her younger brother, Wayne, often dressed as Santa for Agewell's Christmas parties, while his friend, Neil, was an elf! Both

also helped with all the day trips.

When Dot decided she wanted to do something, she threw herself into it with full force. Through Agewell she became more involved in local health care and joined the Clinical Commissioning Group Local Forum Panel. She also attended Patient Participation Group meetings at Black Country Family Practice and ran charity coffee mornings for patients.

"She volunteered for everything," says Sue. "When our doctors' surgery suggested having a newsletter, my mum said she'd do it. She ran their patient survey

"You just shouted 'Dot' and she was there to help. She was always looking for something new to do and she loved it all. If something was going on to do with the community, she was there. Even though she battled cancer for five years, she still carried on with everything."

Dot's Daughter, Sue



too and went all along the queue asking everyone to fill it in."

She says: "I bumped into some ladies at the doctors and they said 'why don't you run the Forum in memory of your mum?' I already run a Diabetes group and have done various joint ventures with Agewell so it makes sense. I've already got lots of new plans for the Forum so we can get crafty and creative and keep our brains working."

Tipton Local Forum takes place on the 2nd Wednesday of each month, 10 am to 12 noon, at Glebefields Library in Tipton.

VOLUNTEERS RETURN TO HOSPITAL SHOP



Staff and patients at Sandwell Hospital are delighted that the Agewell shop in the Outpatients Department has been able to stay open throughout the ups and downs of the past year. And our team of volunteers are now back and working hard.

The shop only had to stop trading during the first lockdown, closing its doors on 1st March 2020 and reopening five months later in August after a host of Covid safety measures were put in place to keep staff and customers as safe as possible.

A counter screen was installed, floor markings kept people at a safe distance and only two customers and two members of Agewell staff were allowed in the shop at a time. All surfaces were cleaned regularly and anyone entering the shop had to wear a face mask.

When the shop reopened, it was run by Agewell staff initially. Once the vaccine roll-out started, all volunteers were contacted to see if they wanted to return.

"We started off with a couple of volunteers to see how it went and the shop started to get busy again," says Agewell Services Manager, Pauline Withey. "We currently have five volunteers who cover the shop from 10am – 2pm.

"Having our volunteers helping out five days a week makes a huge difference. It means our Sapphire Service staff, who are based in the shop, are free to get important calls made to support older people.

The team of volunteers includes Shirley Gilks and David Lesyczynsky (pictured above), along with Brenda Williams, Carol Bowen and Derek Richards.

Shirley has been volunteering for Agewell since summer 2016 when she joined the trolley round before helping in the shop. A year later, David joined the team on the trolley round. As he gained confidence, he started working in the shop too and, as he lives close by, can often be called on when an extra pair of hands are needed.

Since the Urgent Care Centre opened next door, footfall has significantly increased in the shop and hospital staff often say how much they appreciate having it open. Stock is changed on a regular basis so the shop often has new lines, as well as all the usual favourites.

"As Agewell is a Community Interest Company, any profit made in our shop stays in Sandwell and is re-invested to benefit local older people so please pop in and support us."

The hospital shop is open Monday to Friday from 8am-4pm. If you are interested in helping out, give us a call on 0121 796 9333.

THINKING DIFFERENTLY ABOUT DEMENTIA



Brand new Meeting Centres and support groups are in the pipeline as part of Agewell's exciting new project to empower people living with dementia.

Launched last July, Thinking Differently About Dementia (TDAD), is a 3-year National Lottery funded project, spearheaded by Agewell and Dementia Pathfinders, which will provide community support for people in Sandwell living with mild or moderate dementia and their family carers.

For the past few years we've been delivering highly successful specialist dementia services through projects such as Kingfisher Buddies and the Sandwell Dementia Navigator Service. This new project will complement our existing services by providing support following a diagnosis.

It's being run by Project Co-ordinator, Mel Charters, Wellbeing Advisors, Debra Pierson and Claire Williams, and Dementia Support Worker Faye White (pictured right).

"The plan is to set up two Meeting Centres in Sandwell," says Project Co-ordinator, Mel Charters. "Since the project went live, we've been focusing on identifying suitable community venues. We're pleased to say we launched our first Meeting Centre at Warley Baptist Church in Oldbury in March.

"The Meeting Centre will be a local resource where people with dementia, and their family carers, can meet, talk to others and get help that focuses on what they need. Families will be supported to prepare for the future and adapt to changes."

In addition to the Meeting Centres, the project will also see new groups being set up as part of a UK-wide network called DEEP (Dementia Engagement and Empowerment Project). There are already 80 DEEP groups nationwide where people can share their experiences and support each other.

Debra Pierson explains: "Our DEEP groups will be supported by Agewell but led by people with dementia themselves. The groups offer support and friendship but also give people a voice in terms of how the group is run and what it does.



"Our first DEEP group has already started on a Wednesday afternoon at Queensridge Court in Oldbury and we've been sharing information about the project in Tipton so we can set up a group there too."

The aim of Thinking Differently About Dementia is to take a creative approach to supporting people in their own homes as well as at community venues and local open spaces. Social opportunities will be offered plus help with engaging with sports and leisure activities, the arts and nature. Initiatives are also being launched to help people access music and activity programmes online.

"It's a very person-centred project," adds Debra. "We'll be working with people with all types of dementia to remove the stigma and think creatively what we can do to support them."

If you, or someone you know, has recently been diagnosed with dementia and is interested in finding out more about Thinking Differently About Dementia, call us on **0121 796 9333** or email info@agewelluk.org.uk

My Future Care

As part of the Thinking Differently About Dementia project we're working with Mycarematters to develop a Sandwell version of the My Future Care Handbook. This encourages families to prepare for the changes ahead following a diagnosis of dementia.

Zoe Harris, founder of Mycarematters, came up with the handbook idea when her late husband's dementia meant that he could no longer tell his carers what he wanted or needed. To overcome this challenge, Zoe developed a handbook which encourages people to 'plan for tomorrow, live for today'.

Individuals clearly record in the interactive workbook everything relating to later life and beyond. This may

include compiling a bucket list, creating a music play list, thinking how you might want to be cared for and writing a will. It helps people to think about and make decisions around their future and end-of-life while they can.

The handbook is about living well as well as having a good end-of-life. There are fact sheets on healthy living and financial planning and lots of information people need to help them make, record and share decisions about their future.



Meeting Centre Model

Thinking Differently About Dementia is based on the Meeting Centre Model from the Netherlands.

The Association of Dementia Studies at the University of Worcester is helping organisations like Agewell to establish Meeting Centres in different parts of the UK to work with their communities to support people and families affected by dementia.

These centres will be set up in ordinary community venues and will form the backbone of community-

based dementia support across the country. Research has shown that being able to talk to other people and have fun helps people to cope with living with the symptoms and changes that dementia brings. Each Meeting Centre will have a social club at its heart and everyone becomes a member of that same club. Agewell's Oldbury Meeting Centre was launched in March. Call Agewell on **0121 796 9333** if you are interested in becoming a member.

Happy Hour

Variety Hour took off so much in the run up to Christmas that it returned again in February.

These fun on-line sessions have been made possible through a grant from the Paul & Nick Harvey Fund run by Music for Dementia. The organisation believes that everyone living with dementia should have access to music as part of their care from diagnosis to end of life.

We were one of 27 organisations to receive a grant from the Paul & Nick Harvey Fund and we're using it to run Variety Hour sessions to engage people mentally, physically, emotionally and socially. And what a hit they've been so far!

We've worked with Craig Stevens from Engaging Activities to run the sessions which bring a mix of quizzes, music, poems, jokes and laughter to people in their own homes. Everyone joins in through Zoom and enjoys an hour of fun, stimulating entertainment.

Variety Hour was launched last Autumn and returned again in February.

Will Downes' dad, John, has really enjoyed it. "My dad likes everything about it," says Will. "I always make sure I make time for the sessions and we both get involved together. There are always some familiar faces, which is nice, and my dad likes Craig's rubbish jokes!"

NEW SANDWELL COMMUNITY DEMENTIA SERVICE LAUNCHED

In addition to Agewell's Thinking Differently About Dementia project, we are also delighted to be part of the new Sandwell Community Dementia Service which provides a single point of access for advice, information and support for people with a dementia diagnosis or health concerns, such as memory loss, and their families.

Commissioned by Sandwell Council and the Black Country and West Birmingham CCG, we've partnered with eight other local organisations to create a 'provider collaborative' which will deliver the service.

Dementia Navigators work across the borough, with Dementia Advisors focusing on specific towns. Agewell's Dementia Advisor, Jo Pegler-Hadlington, covers Rowley Regis.

Deb Harrold, Agewell's CEO, explains: "This new service is for anyone living with the effects of dementia, their family and carers. It replaces the Sandwell Dementia Navigators Service which over the past couple of years has supported more than 800 local people.

"Now we're providing information and support for people at the beginning of their dementia journey so they may have concerns about their memory but have not yet received a diagnosis. The aim is to help individuals gain a clear and early diagnosis of their condition before providing help which is specifically tailored to their needs."

Living with dementia or health worries can be very worrying and can lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation. The support provided through the new service will be designed to empower and enable people to make informed decisions about the care that they, or their family member, receives so they can live a fulfilling life with dementia.

Navigators will be working hand-in-hand with a range of health and social care services so that families can be supported as early as possible.

Each referral is made to a single point of access where a Dementia Navigator will look at a person's individual requirements, before passing it to the



Dementia Advisor covering that town in Sandwell. A Dementia Handbook for Sandwell is also being developed.

"The Sandwell Community Dementia Service is an exciting opportunity for us to join up expert dementia support in the area to deliver a really specialist and integrated service across our health and social care system, which is reflective of our diverse communities in Sandwell."

**Manjula Patel, CEO
of Murray Hall Community Trust**

The single point of access acts as the glue that holds everything together and provides a pathway to support people, enhancing their quality of life wherever they may be on their journey with dementia.

Councillor Maria Crompton, Deputy Leader of Sandwell Council, added: "We want the people of Sandwell to live well for longer. We are working with our voluntary and community sector partners to create community-based opportunities that will ensure the support is in place so that our residents can live healthy lives with their friends and families."

Referrals can be made to the Sandwell Community Dementia Service by calling 0121 726 8543.

Opening hours are 8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Thursday, Friday's 8.30am to 4.00pm. To contact the Alzheimer's Society out of hours, evenings and weekends please call 0333 150 3456.

FORUMS GET GOING AGAIN

Agewell's monthly Local Forums have finally started to get back up and running again after the lockdowns and restrictions brought by Covid. And they've certainly been missed!

Rowley Forum



Rowley Forum has grown so much it's had to move to bigger premises!

Chair, Clive Atkins, says: "We now meet at Rowley Disability Centre and around 60 people come regularly. We've been putting on film shows once a month and they're a great afternoon's entertainment. The films are new releases, such as "The Last Bus" and "Dream Horse" and we provide a cup of tea and a biscuit too.

"We also had an excellent festive trip to Bury market. Around 35 members went and had a fabulous time.

The highlight was going to one of the most beautiful fish and chip restaurants!"

The Forum's fortnightly line dancing is going well too and members can join in the dancing or just meet to enjoy the music and a chat. Line dancing takes place every other Wednesday from 1-3pm at the Disability Centre.

Crafty members can also meet for a chat at Knit & Natter which takes place at Lady of Lourdes Church in Old Hill from 10am-12pm on a Wednesday. Just turn up. A small charge applies.

Wednesbury Forum

Since starting up again last October, Wednesbury Forum has been welcoming many familiar faces as well as some new ones from other communities.

"We've had some new members from other areas where the Forums have not been able to get back up and running yet," says Chair, John Allen. "There's a real demand for the Forum and it's lovely to be meeting up again."

Members have been updated on the plans for the new health centre being built at the back of the existing health centre. "Around 15 years ago Agewell members pressed for a new health centre," explains

John. "Now it's actually happening and should open later this year. Before lockdown the Forum was shown the plans so we're following its progress."

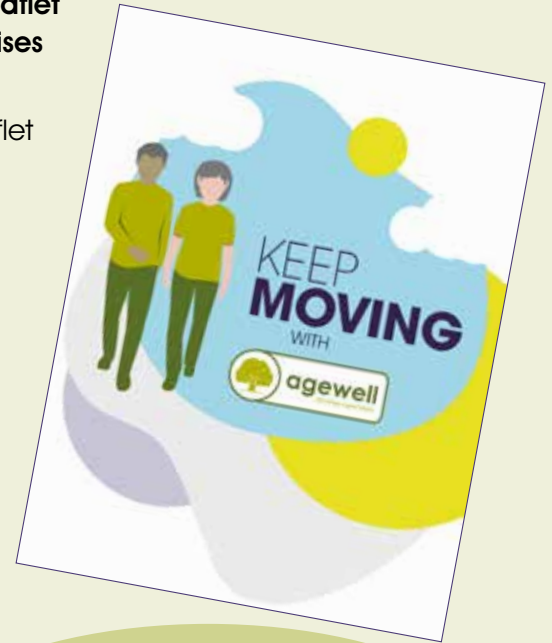
The Forum meets on the last Wednesday of the month at The Old Post Office on Holyhead Road from 1-3pm. A variety of speakers are planned for forthcoming meetings including a talk on healthy walks around Wednesbury. New members are always welcome and can just turn up.

Tipton Forum is also up and running again. See page 6 for details.

KEEP MOVING WITH AGEWELL

Since its launch in May last year, our 'Keep Moving With Agewell' leaflet has been helping people to grow in confidence when doing exercises at home, to strengthen their muscles and improve their balance.

Agewell's Postural Stability Instructor, Alison Pickering, designed the leaflet which features 14 gentle exercises with full instructions of how people can do them safely in the comfort of their own homes.



“On a bad day it's about just gently mobilising and on a good day people can work on strength and balance. As we age, it's more important than ever to keep moving. Muscles become weaker with inactivity. People need to move every day to get the blood moving around the body.”

“The feedback I get when people come to the classes is that they're cautious of doing exercises at home because they don't think they're doing them right,” she says.

“I had a lady with a knee problem and she was given exercises by her physio but she didn't know if she was doing them properly so she didn't want to do them. If you're not doing them right, they won't be of any benefit.

“Agewell's leaflet gives guidance on how to do lots of exercises but the focus must be on completing each exercise correctly, always starting with the correct postural alignment and building up the number of repetitions gradually.”

Alison is a great advocate of proprioception. This is the body's ability to sense movement and action and it is present in every muscle movement made. It allows us to walk without thinking where to place our foot next and gives us a sense of balance.

“Proprioception is our deep emotional brain so we can't learn it, we need to feel it,” explains Alison. “It's about repetition of movement so people need to practice daily. I'm here to use my energies to keep everyone motivated. If people believe they can get better, then they can.”

Over the last couple of years many people have struggled mentally and physically when the community exercise classes were forced to stop because of Covid. Throughout lockdown we've been posting gentle exercise videos on Facebook and holding online classes though Zoom.

While the online sessions have provided a lifeline during the pandemic, many people couldn't wait for the community classes to get started again.

There are now 10 classes up and running once more including a standing, more aerobic group and a chair-based class for those with more limited movement.

All participants are given a copy of the 'Keep Moving With Agewell' leaflet so they're not just doing exercises once a week.

To find out more about the exercise classes near you, or to request your copy of our Keep Moving With Agewell leaflet, call 0121 796 9333 or email info@agewelluk.org.uk

EXERCISING AT HOME

Now that we've helped Ray feel confident in doing exercises at home, there's no stopping him!

Ray was feeling quite isolated as he was not going out of his home due to poor balance. He was keen to start exercising but wanted to make sure he was doing it properly so we provided our Keep Moving With Agewell leaflet and Postural Stability Instructor, Alison, has kept in contact with Ray with regular wellbeing calls.

"I started doing the exercises for five minutes every morning and five minutes every night and I soon got into the routine," Ray says. "I can feel the blood moving to my feet and it really helps. I then began walking a six minute route around the estate every day and when I told people what I was doing they wanted to do the same! If I didn't do my walks I wouldn't ever go anywhere or see people.

"My balance is getting a bit better and my son and daughter say they can see a difference so that makes me want to do it more. If you're doing something that makes you feel healthy, you feel better overall. I'm 82 but I don't want to think like an old man."



GAINING CONFIDENCE

Our community exercise classes have made the world of difference to Roger, both physically and mentally.

Having had a stroke five years ago, Roger was referred to us to improve his strength and balance and help maintain his independence. He found he enjoyed the classes so much that he began attending two a week, along with his wife, Margaret.

Roger explains: "We go to Portway and West Bromwich Leisure Centre and I find the exercises make a big difference both with my movement

"These classes are the only ones where I've been able to get up and walk without a stick. They just fill me with confidence."

and stability. They really keep my strength up and I absolutely love them. I really enjoy the social side too and me and my wife both look forward to going." Alison has also helped Roger to have an induction at the gym at Portway and he can now walk for eight minutes on the treadmill and his gait has really improved.

SAPPHIRE SERVICE NEWS...



Many hospital readmissions are being prevented thanks to our Sapphire Service which goes from strength to strength at Sandwell Hospital.

Delivered in partnership with the West Bromwich African Caribbean Resource Centre, the Sapphire Service is now in its fifth year and helps to stop patients having to return to hospital by providing up to six weeks of support after their discharge.

The service is embedded into the D2A Hospital's Integrated Discharge HUB. Our team, which comprises Hayley Taylor, Etna Campbell-Powell, Julie Smith-Jones, Jason Denny, Charlotte Wildman and Jackie Tresler, attend the meetings and receive new cases and referrals daily.

"Prior to the pandemic, we were meeting patients on the wards through the trolley run and getting to know them before they left hospital," says Jason. "Now we can't go on the wards due to Covid, we've built a close relationship with the HUB where members of the nursing and medical team meet to discuss a patient's needs once they're discharged.

"Since last spring, we've been attending the daily discharge meetings and discussing the patients from Sandwell who will be returning to their own homes and might need our support."

Patients are initially given a welfare call to find out whether they have family and friends to help and whether they require support from the Sapphire Service. At the start of the pandemic home visits had to be stopped, but these were able to start up again last autumn which has made a big difference.

Charlotte adds: "There's a range of support we can offer patients when they're first discharged, such as providing food parcels and ensuring they are safe and warm at home. We then give them a call four days later to see if they're coping. If they don't need our help, we do follow up calls after one month and three months to check they've not been readmitted to hospital.

"We can access various services for people who are struggling and make home visits for up to six weeks."

Recent support has included arranging for hot meals to be regularly delivered to a man with dementia and contacting British Gas to fix a faulty boiler. The

Discharge Hub also asked the Sapphire Team to make welfare calls to a lady between carer visits. As her landline was not working properly, the team helped her purchase a mobile phone and keep it topped up so she could always contact someone if needed.

Claire Blackburn, Senior Commissioning Manager at Sandwell Better Care Fund, says: "The Sapphire Service helps provide a level of assurance that people are supported on their return home following an acute hospital stay and supports the wider health and social care community teams."

Jackie joins the team

Four years ago, Jackie's father, was befriended by the Sapphire Service while in hospital following a stroke. On his return home, he received several weeks of support which meant his family knew he was in safe hands when they couldn't be around.

The excellent support her father received inspired Jackie to become a volunteer in the Agewell shop at Sandwell Hospital the following year. When a vacancy came up on the Sapphire Team last August, she didn't hesitate to apply.

She says: "I love it! I never realised how lonely some people are so it's been a real eye opener. I really enjoy visiting people, having a chat and signposting them to other services. It gives me a real sense of doing good.

"People love it when I mention things we've talked about previously and they say 'you've remembered!' I've helped a lady get thermometers to monitor how warm her home is and arranged permits for another lady so the nurses can park outside her house when they visit. I also see if people need any equipment for their home once they leave hospital and supply them with Agewell's Staying Steady, Staying Safe booklet to help prevent them having a fall.

"It's a joy to come to work!"



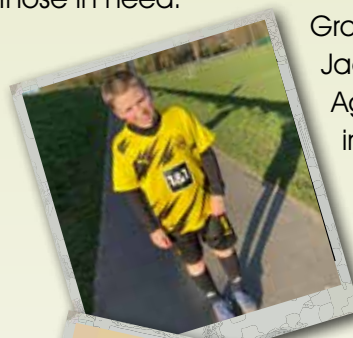
YOUNGSTERS SUPPORT AGEWELL

Two big-hearted youngsters followed in their mother's footsteps by supporting Agewell during lockdown last year.

11-year-old Grace Cowley and her 10-year-old brother, Jack, decided to put their spare time to good use by raising funds for Agewell while their schools were closed. Their mum, Amy, is a Project Support Officer at Agewell.



Grace asked her family, friends and neighbours for donations of non-perishable food items and collected bags and bags of food. All the items were stored at our shop at Sandwell Hospital and given to those in need.



Grace's younger brother, Jack, raised £385 for Agewell by running 50 miles in a month in February.

Jack is a keen football player, but when lockdown meant all training and matches stopped, he began running several times a week in all weathers.

A huge thank you to you both from all of us at Agewell.



Recent donations have included £925 from the members of our exercise classes in appreciation of the effort being made to keep them fit and healthy. And £100 from Jo and Anita Cooper for all the excellent support provided by the Dementia Navigator service. Thank you to you all.

A big thank you also to Laura Bishton for donating £200 in memory of her mum, Irene and Jonathan Skelton for donating £500 in memory of his dad who had vascular dementia.

If you'd like to make an individual donation, or to arrange a collection and send us the donations, please give us a call on 0121 796 9333.

VOLUNTEERING AS COVID MARSHALLS

A huge shout out to all Agewell staff who volunteered as Covid Marshalls in January and February last year, to support the vaccination programme at Whiteheath Medical Centre in Oldbury.

We were based in the car park greeting patients and showing them where to go as well as ensuring everyone was socially distanced, had their masks on properly and had used hand sanitiser before entering the building.

It was a real team effort, with Agewell CEO Deb Harrold volunteering her time too.

"I'm very proud of my team for providing this essential support to the vaccination programme taking place at Whiteheath Medical Centre which is part of the Your Health Partnership," she said. "We braved the cold weather, working in teams of two for two hours at a time and keeping everyone's spirits up. It's all part of our desire to help older people across Sandwell get through this pandemic."

DONATING TO AGEWELL

There are many ways you can raise much needed funds for Agewell including:

- Organising a fundraising event or activity
- Making a one-off donation
- Making a donation in memory of a loved one
- Leaving a gift to Agewell in your will

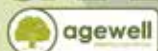
Any support you can provide will help us to deliver more services to more local, older people.

Having a fall **IS NOT** an inevitable part of ageing.

With the right knowledge and support, you can help yourself to stay steady on your feet and protect your health and independence.

Whether you're 65 or 95, there are many positive and easy steps you can take to age well and reduce your risk of falling.

**STAYING
STEADY
STAYING
SAFE**



Call Agewell today for your **FREE** copy of our 'Staying Steady, Staying Safe' self-help guide for older people.

Available for everyone aged 65 and over, who lives in Sandwell, or is registered with a Sandwell GP.



0121 796 9333



info@agewelluk.org.uk

www.agewelluk.org.uk

Balance Exercises

These exercises will help improve balance regularly.



Heel Raises

Stand tall, feet hip width apart and flat on the floor, holding the back of a sturdy chair or the kitchen sink. Lift your heels off the floor to a slow count of 5, taking your weight onto your big toes. Then lower with control to a slow count of 5. Repeat 10 to 20 times.

Toe Raise

Sit tall on the chair, feet hip flat on the floor to a slow count of 5, taking your weight on your feet with control to a slow count of 5. Repeat 10 to 20 times.

Are you a Sandwell resident aged 18+?

The Community Offer will provide, information, advice, guidance and low level practical support to meet your individual needs.

- The Community Offer will help you to play an active role in your community
- Support will be available to access local opportunities and activities and is based across the borough in each of the six towns.

Community Offer



For more information please call the Single Point of Access

0121 726 3983

or email: ifa1996.community_offer@nhs.net

Contact Details

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

T: 0121 796 9333 F: 0121 217 0025

E: info@agewelluk.org.uk

W: www.agewelluk.org.uk

Partnership working



Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust



agewell
sharing experience