



agewell
sharing experience

Agewell Magazine

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Our Thinking Differently About Dementia project helped our cover stars to find laughter again.

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Special Feature on
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WELCOME



I'm delighted to welcome you to another Agewell magazine, which once again is packed with information about our services and the difference we are making to the lives of older people and their families across Sandwell.

It's been 18 months since the last issue and I'd like to start by thanking our staff and volunteers for their continued hard work and dedication. We are a small but highly skilled and experienced team. As we go to press our team totals some 15 members of staff and 15 volunteers. See pages 4 & 5 to hear in their own words what it's like to be an Agewell volunteer.

Last September we said goodbye to a very special member of staff, Louise Jones. Lou had been with Agewell for more than 14 years as Operations Manager. A joy to work with, she always went the extra mile for us, whilst somehow finding the time outside of work to train and qualify as a counsellor.

An opportunity arose for Lou to join Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and continue her counselling journey. Whilst we were extremely sad to see her go, we knew this was the right next step for her and we wish her all the best.

Our main feature this issue is our Thinking Differently About Dementia (TDAD) project, funded by The Big Lottery and now in its third year of operation, providing support for people in Sandwell living with mild or moderate dementia and their family carers.

Referrals increased by nearly 60% last year and our client base includes people living with mixed dementia, vascular dementia and dementia with Lewy Bodies as well as the more commonly known dementias such as Alzheimer's.

On pages 6 to 11 you will read about the social groups and online activities our clients have been accessing as part of this project and hear directly from some of our group members including our cover stars Rose and Michael.

Agewell is also one of the provider organisations delivering the Sandwell Community Dementia Service, which received the good news in May that the service is continuing for another two - three years under the leadership of Murray Hall Community Trust.

The popular Sapphire Service is now in its sixth year and is an integral part of the discharge process at Sandwell Hospital, preventing many older patients from being readmitted. See pages 12 & 13 to meet the team and hear why they feel the service is so successful.

There's news of our work as part of Sandwell's Community Offer on page 14 and on page 3 you can read about our three Local Forums in Rowley, Wednesbury and Tipton. A huge thank you to the chairs and vice chairs of these forums, who volunteer their time month in month out, for older people across the borough.

And finally you'll see on page 15 information about the exercise classes for older people that we run across Sandwell. Keeping moving as we get older is so important for our mobility, strength and balance. If you'd like to get involved, do give us a call and join a class that's right for you.

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.

Good reading!

Deb Harrold, Agewell CEO ●

FORUM FOCUS

Agewell's popular monthly Local Forums in Rowley, Tipton and Wednesbury offer a whole variety of activities for older people to get involved with. Here's a snapshot of some of the recent happenings ...

WEDNESBURY LOCAL FORUM

The brand new Nugent Health Centre, which Forum members have been campaigning for, is due to open soon.

"We've been shown the plans for the new health centre, which will be sited at the back of Wednesbury Leisure Centre," explains Chair, John Allen. "The Planning Department came to talk to Forum members to explain more about the project, particularly disabled access. This is something we've been asking for for a very long time and it shows that we are listened to."

A speaker from the Health Authority also visited the Forum to discuss the new Midland Metropolitan

University Hospital which is in the pipeline. Members heard all about the plans for this state-of-the-art hospital which will bring together all acute and emergency care services currently at City and Sandwell Hospitals.

New members are always welcome at the Wednesbury Forum meetings which take place on the last Wednesday of the month from 10.30am to 12.30 pm at the Old Post Office.

Did you know?

Wednesbury Forum members never give up! They've been pushing for a new health centre for 15 years and now it's set to open.

TIPTON LOCAL FORUM

New community activities have been starting up thanks to Tipton Forum.

Chair, Sue Goodyear, has begun a Knit & Natter group to bring local people together at Glebefields Library, along with a monthly flower arranging class at the same venue. "We started by making posies for Mother's Day in March," says Sue, "and have also done oasis blocks and other arrangements. Some of the posies have been sold in the Agewell Shop at Sandwell Hospital."

Forum members have also heard speakers from

Sandwell Health Watch and Diabetes UK, and have been enjoying getting to know each other following the merger of the Forum with the Tipton Diabetes Group.

Tipton Forum meetings take place on the second Wednesday of the month from 10am to 12 noon at Glebefields Library.

Did you know?

Tipton Forum was Chaired by Dot Abbey for around six years before her daughter, Sue, took on the role.

ROWLEY LOCAL FORUM

Rowley Forum's monthly film shows have become a regular fixture with around 30 people attending.

They're staged in conjunction with Black Country Touring, who provide all the equipment and a projectionist, and are held on the last Tuesday of the month at Rowley Regis Disability Centre. "Our most popular films so far have been the comedies, "Dream Horse" and "Fisherman's Friends", explains Forum Chair, Clive Atkins.

Forum members have also enjoyed day trips to

Weston Super Mare and Llandudno, plus a sold-out Rat Pack tribute act which saw an audience of more than 100!

Rowley Forum meetings take place on the first Wednesday of the month from 1pm to 3pm at Rowley Disability Centre.

Did you know?

Rowley Forum started with just 12 members and now has over 70. Its oldest is aged 93.

If you'd like to come along to one of our monthly Local Forums, call Agewell on 0121 796 9333.

OUR VOLUNTEERS ARE AMAZING

Pauline Withey, Agewell Services Manager, can't speak highly enough of the volunteers who support Agewell in so many ways.

Four long-standing volunteers are an integral part of the team running the Agewell Shop at Sandwell Hospital, along with a new starter who's fitting right in. Agewell's monthly Local Forums in Rowley, Wednesbury and Tipton are run by volunteers and our Thinking Differently About Dementia (TDAD) team is supported weekly by a volunteer too.

Here's what some of them had to say

MAKES ME HAPPY

A familiar face in Rowley Regis, Clive has been the volunteer Chair of Agewell's Rowley Forum for around six years now and says he's still loving it.

He's used to volunteering, having been involved with his local Neighbourhood Watch in the past, as well as chairing the Town Team Forum which enabled local residents to air their views with leaders from the council.

"When I was asked to Chair the Local Forum, I thought I'd give it a go," says Clive. "I look at myself as a fortunate fella. I'm 81 and able-bodied and a lot of people aren't as fortunate. The Local Forum gives them a chance to get out of their four walls and that's the joy I get out of it."



"I have an excellent Vice Chair, Josie, which makes a big difference and am supported in everything I do by my wife Joan. Two of our members who have lost their partners have now become a couple and it's lovely that the Forum has helped them to find happiness again. It makes me happy."

MY LIFE HAS NEW MEANING

Volunteering has improved my confidence and given my life new meaning," says 57-year-old TDAD volunteer Gail, who joins us every week at our Thursday Meeting Centre.

Eight years ago Gail was made redundant. Combined with her daughter's ongoing ill health and the Covid lockdown all her confidence disappeared and she felt invisible.

"I'd forgotten I had any skills at all and felt like I was on the scrapheap. I'm so grateful to Agewell for accepting me as a volunteer however, as my life has new meaning now. I love my Thursdays and I feel so much better about myself," she says.

"Gail is a great asset to the TDAD team," says Debra Pierson. "She's a great listener and so natural with everyone. She's our Jenga and Dominoes Queen. Both games are popular with members – especially the men, aka The Jenga Boys, who are relaxed and



confident in each other's company and whilst playing share snippets about their lives which sparks off all sorts of conversations and a lot of laughs."

"Gail is fabulous," says TDAD member Dawn who attended the Thursday Meeting Centre with her Dad

Roy. "She is a great volunteer who helped my Dad every week."

Gail's advice to others thinking about volunteering? "Don't feel daunted, everyone has something to contribute when volunteering. I've been made to feel so welcome and part of a big family. As well as helping others, volunteering is helping me too."



A SENSE OF PURPOSE

For Shirley, being an Agewell volunteer gave her a focus after she retired at 63. She doesn't have any grandchildren, so she wanted something to keep herself occupied.

"I started on the hospital trolley round in 2016 but the trolley got bigger and bigger and I'm only just over five foot tall so was struggling to see over the top of it!" Shirley says. "Agewell asked if I'd work in the shop and I've been there ever since.

"I was the first volunteer back in the shop after

Covid. I really did miss it during that time, but we just carried on where we'd left off. The shop was quiet at first but has now picked up again. You don't have time to breathe some days. I like it that way as the time goes very quickly.

TIME TO CHAT

Shop volunteer, Brenda, says just chatting to lots of different people while staffing the till is a lovely way to spend the day.

"The 81-year-old used to provide drinks on the wards before deciding to volunteer in the Agewell shop when it opened seven years ago.

She says: "I love it. I like being occupied and speaking to people, so the shop is perfect. Some customers are really pleased to have someone to listen to them so they tell me their life stories!

"I catch the bus here, meet some new people, then get the bus home. It's ideal!"

"There's none of the pressure you get at work when you're volunteering, and the others are all absolutely lovely. If you can say you enjoy something you do, then that's good. I'll certainly be carrying on volunteering as long as I'm able."

We are always on the look-out for more volunteers. If you are interested in finding out more, please call Agewell on 0121 796 9333.

THINKING DIFFERENTLY ABOUT DEMENTIA

July 2023 marked the beginning of the third year of our Big Lottery funded project, Thinking Differently About Dementia (TDAD) which provides support for people living with mild or moderate dementia and their family carers.

Delivered by Agewell in partnership with Dementia Pathfinders, referrals increased by nearly 60% last year. Our client base includes people living with mixed dementia, vascular dementia and dementia with Lewy Bodies as well as the more commonly known dementias such as Alzheimer's.

10% of our clients are aged under 65. The number of male clients doubled from year one to year two and the male / female split is currently 54% female and 46% male. People living with dementia account for 85% of our clients and carers 15%.

We work with people from all over Sandwell and our criteria allows us to support carers of Sandwell residents who themselves live outside the borough often in neighbouring areas e.g., Birmingham



and Dudley, so long as they are registered with a Sandwell GP.

Our referrals are predominately from our colleagues in the Sandwell Community Dementia Service but also from the wider community. People are also very welcome to self-refer. We work with a number of people who live alone as well as those living with family or in supported housing.

Overall, we had 2,185 attendances across all of our groups in the past year, both in person and within our online activities.

THE TDAD TEAM

The TDAD Team currently comprises five staff, Debra Pierson, Faye White, Viv Allen, Amy Cowley and Mel Charters, along with Gail our volunteer, who between them have a wealth of experience and a skill base which offers something unique to the families we work with.

This includes qualifications in Cognitive Stimulation Therapy, Dementia Awareness, Move it or Lose it Exercise Instruction, Mindfulness and Complementary Therapies.

Staff also undertake ongoing CPD training, which includes Meeting Centre training, Health Walk

Leadership training, My Future Care Buddy training and Mental Health First Aider training.



JANET CAN'T WAIT FOR WEDNESDAYS

69-year-old Janet, a former landlady and talented crafter who used to have her own market stall, is a regular at TDAD's groups. She comes to the Wednesday DEEP group as well as the Thursday Meeting Centre. She also attends the monthly De-cafe and wishes this was weekly too.

"The groups add a structure to my week which I find really helps lift my mood," she explains. "By the time I get to Sunday, I can't wait for Wednesday to come round again. I always arrive early so I can help set up the rooms and do whatever I can to make myself useful. On a Wednesday I enjoy sitting in the restaurant area before DEEP starts and chatting to the residents – I love listening to old people.

"The groups get me out the house and talking to people. I love Deb and Faye."

"Janet is a real help and a valued group member," says Debra Pierson. "She loves making things for other group members like bead pictures and tray bake cakes. She does get a little down at times but coming to our groups really helps her."



TDAD SOCIAL GROUPS AND ONLINE ACTIVITIES

Meeting Centres

TDAD runs two Meeting Centres per week, from 11am to 3pm, on a Monday and a Thursday at The Flame Community Church in Blackheath.

Meeting Centres are social clubs for people living with early stage dementia and their family carers / friends, with activities including gentle exercise, crafting, quizzes, jenga, dominoes and much more. A light lunch is included too.

Agewell is the only organisation within Sandwell and Birmingham providing Meeting Centres as part of the UK Meeting Centre Support Programme in partnership with the Association of Dementia Studies at Worcester University.

Drop-in De-Cafe

On the last Tuesday in the month, TDAD runs a popular drop-in De-Cafe at Elizabeth Prout Gardens in Rowley Regis, where people can get together with others in the same boat, enjoy a cuppa and a chat and get some advice too.

DEEP Group

As part of our TDAD project, we have set up and support a weekly group called 'DEEP Dreamers' which meets every Wednesday afternoon at Queensridge Court in Oldbury.

The group is 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.

Online Group Activities

TDAD also provides a number of online activities for people living with early stage dementia and their family carers to access and enjoy, operated on a digital platform such as Zoom. These have included art sessions, lifestory workshops, variety hour and more.

If you like the sound of any of the above and would like to find out more, give Agewell a call on 0121 796 9333.

TDAD HELPED US FIND LAUGHTER AGAIN



For our cover stars, Rose and Michael, Agewell's TDAD project has been 'like a breath of fresh air'.

Having endured years of fighting to get a diagnosis of dementia for Michael, followed by a long, lonely struggle to come to terms with it, Rose finally started laughing again thanks to Agewell.

It took eight years for Rose to persuade the medical profession that Michael wasn't suffering from depression. In fact, he had frontotemporal dementia, despite only being 58.

"Michael finally got the diagnosis just before Covid but all the befriending services had shut down due to the pandemic and we felt very isolated and found it hard to cope."

Rose began phoning around to try and find some support and came across Agewell.

She explains: "Debra Pierson got in touch but I was feeling quite angry about the situation I was in. Deb didn't give up though and began phoning me regularly. It was so good to have someone to chat to. When the dementia groups started up again Deb spent a lot of time persuading us to give them a go, but I thought we were too young. Eventually

we began going to the Wednesday DEEP group, then the Thursday Meeting Centre too.

"The groups have saved us. Deb and the TDAD team go above and beyond and we'd be lost without them.

"They get to know everyone individually and just bring everyone out of themselves.

"Just talking to other people who are all suffering the same thing makes a big difference. No one stands out and it doesn't matter if you can't remember the right word or how to do something. We always play bingo and 'what did you do this week?' when everyone has five minutes to talk. There are lots of activities and games. For Michael's 70th birthday the team organised a lovely party with a buffet."

"For Michael, the groups are something to aim for in the week, something to fill the day. We always come away laughing. It's getting harder as Michael's not as well now. Things progress but we're trying to make the most of each day. Agewell got us back out there and have been a lifeline for us."

THE MY FUTURE CARE HANDBOOK HAS BEEN A GODSEND

Agewell have been working with Zoe Harris from My Care Matters who pioneered the production of the My Future Care Handbook. TDAD member Dawn found it a godsend as you can read in her own words below ...

“ My Dad, Roy, who was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s and vascular dementia some 4 years ago, and I have been TDAD clients since the beginning of the project. During one of our chats, Debra Pierson mentioned the My Future Care Handbook and asked if I’d be interested in finding out more.

I had a couple of one to one sessions with Deb where she gave me priceless advice on how to fill it in with my Dad. Over a period of time on days where my Dad was having brighter days we went through it together.

Some of it I found daunting and if I’m honest I didn’t like some of his answers as I would not have made the same choices, but they were my father’s answers and reflected what he wanted. I learned a lot.

We persevered and worked through the book. Not long after the book was filled in, Dad was taken ill and hospitalised and then had to have 24 hour nursing care in a residential home.

I was devastated and overwhelmed by the questions that needed to be answered. All of the answers were in the My Future Care Handbook. I let the hospital and then the care home copy the book so they had full access to my Dad’s likes, dislikes, preferences and wishes. The book let them know who my Dad is. It’s been a godsend and covers everything everyone needs to know.

If you are a carer, you need this book. It helps you become your loved one’s voice. It also helped me understand my Dad’s wishes and has taken the burden away of making choices for him.

If you need this book to fill in for yourself, don’t do it alone. Find a friend and do it together over a cuppa and make it fun. It doesn’t have to be completed in one go but do it over a few weeks. ”

Roy sadly passed away at the end of October. Our thoughts are with Dawn and family and we’d like to thank Dawn for her kind permission to include this article and photograph in our magazine.



If you’d be interested in receiving a copy of the handbook, as well as some support in how to fill it in, please call the TDAD team on 0121 796 9333.

COLOURING BOOK BRINGS JOY

In May last year, Parveen and her mum took part in TDAD's weekly online art sessions which they really enjoyed. More recently they've been sent an Asian colouring book from Dementia Pathfinders, designed by artist Jatinder Ghataora, which has been a real hit with them both.

"Mum has coloured a few drawings in already," explained Parveen. "She started off with the vase and I think that may be because the shape is unique to Asian sub-continent decoration pieces. Also, she likes flowery stuff as she used to do a fair bit of embroidery and crochet in her time. She used to make these beautiful doilies to go on the sofas.

"The pictures represent mum's life before she came to the UK many years ago. You can't get these books on the high street. I think the idea behind it is brilliant. The activity itself becomes a talking point and helps her to reminisce about the past life.

"She likes colouring in anyway and is always ready to dive into it. Having two copies allows me to do my own version of colouring and also motivates mum to keep going. I particularly liked the fact that on one side the drawing was coloured in so there was less



"Thank you for helping bring joyful moments into people's lives."

stress on mum to try and remember what should be coloured in as well.

"We will continue to use the books together and I can see many more enjoyable moments together. I am sure the grandkids will have questions to ask mum about the drawings in the book and what they represent."

KEN LOVES HIS NEW MUSIC BOX

Music has the power to give someone living with dementia flashes of joy and that's what's happened for Ken who's recently received his new Music Box with his own personalised play list saved to it.

Ken lives and breathes music. Together with his wife Norma he attends many local concerts and performances, so he was an ideal candidate to benefit from the funding Agewell received from the Paul and Nick Harvey Fund via Dementia Pathfinders for 20 Music Boxes.

Agewell's Faye White and Dementia Pathfinders Sharon Baker are working together on this project to identify likely candidates and work with them to compile a playlist of songs that are meaningful to them. The playlist is then uploaded to the easy to operate Music Box which can also be used as a radio with favourite stations pre-programmed for ease of use.

"Ken was so excited and is absolutely thrilled with his new Music Box - and it is such a lovely sound!" said Norma.



"He has been test driving it for a full week now with great results and much happiness - he is still amazed by it all.

"He has been telling everyone about how clever it is and how kind you all are. He is so pleased when it plays his all time favourite - Al Martino - 'Spanish Eyes'. He seems to have got the hang of using it independently as it is so simple and he has not failed to get it to work, nor broken it nor dismantled it or even removed the back cover (as yet !) as it comes on straight away with such simple controls."

"I am sure that it will give him much joy and immense pleasure for a long time to come."

NEW MONDAY MEETING CENTRE MEMBERS

76-year-old Annette and her husband Michael joined TDAD's Monday Meeting Centre when it launched in May this year and are both benefitting from meeting new people with a shared experience.

"Michael really enjoys the group and looks forward to going each week," said Annette. "From my point of view, it's helpful to meet other carers. While Mike's

playing dominoes or joining in with another activity, I can chat to other people or go and make a cup of tea, knowing I don't need to be with him constantly, checking he's ok."

Activities include table top games, gentle exercise, films and art sessions, which were introduced after Annette recommended a local artist. She's also been busy baking cakes for members to enjoy.

SANDWELL COMMUNITY DEMENTIA SERVICE UPDATE

In addition to our TDAD project, Agewell is also one of the eight voluntary sector organisations working together, with Murray Hall Community Trust as the lead, to deliver the Sandwell Community Dementia Service (SCDS).

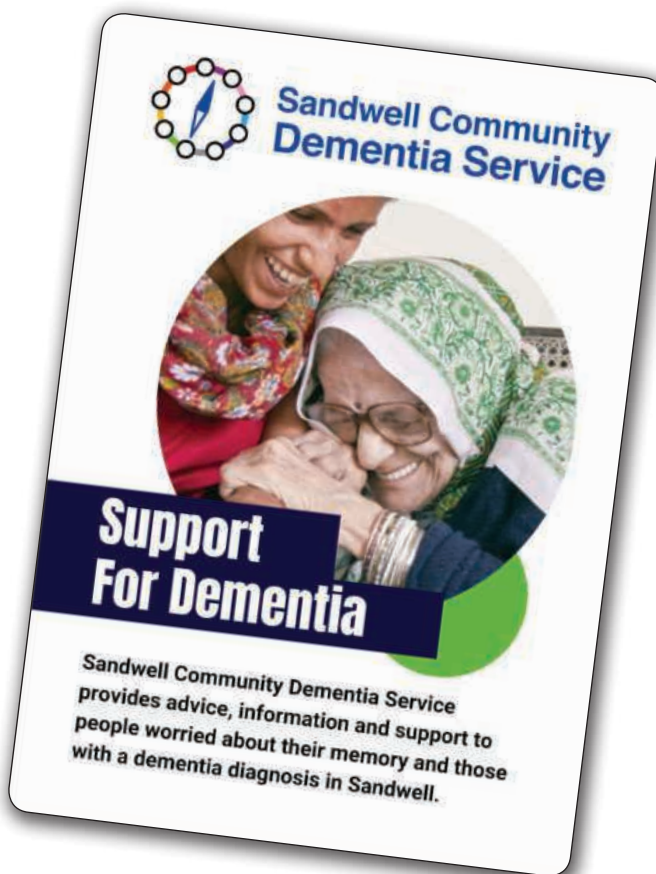
In June this year it was confirmed that the contract had been secured for another 2/3 years, which is great news.

Manjula Patel, from Murray Hall Community Trust said: "On behalf of all our partners we are extremely pleased to be able to continue to provide this valuable support to people living with dementia and their carers to live as well as possible."

SCDS is free to access for people living in Sandwell who are registered with a Sandwell GP or living in Sandwell and have a dementia diagnosis or have memory loss or other cognitive symptoms, or are a family member/carer of someone living with dementia.

The service aims to support from pre diagnosis onwards, helping make informed decisions and to plan for the future. Support is offered based on individual assessment of need by Dementia Navigators and Dementia Advisors who work for their respective organisations within SCDS with the common goal of supporting families living with dementia in Sandwell.

Agewell Dementia Advisor, Jo Pegler-Hadlington, covers Rowley Regis.



Currently most of Agewell's TDAD referrals are from SCDS and TDAD staff aim to work collaboratively to ensure a good outcome for our Sandwell residents.

To access the SCDS service you can call 01902 826 655 or email bcicb.dementiasupport@nhs.net

MEET THE SAPPHIRE TEAM

The popular Sapphire Service, now in its sixth year of operation, is a partnership service between Agewell and the West Bromwich African Caribbean Resource Centre (WBACRC).



The service is embedded in Sandwell Hospital's Discharge to Assess (D2A) Integrated Hub and forms part of the Intermediate Care Pathway.

In October 2022, the D2A Hub won the 'Partnership in the Community' award for transforming the way that discharges are delivered at Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals (SWBH) NHS Trust 'Star Awards', held at the Aston Villa Football Stadium.

The Sapphire Service helps prevent many older patients from being readmitted to hospital. Over the

last 12 months, some 920 referrals were received by the service, which contributed to a 48% reduction in readmissions overall.

Our seven current members of staff, (pictured above), work a mixture of part and full time hours.

They provide a whole range of help and support to those being discharged and are passionate about the service we provide and the difference we are making to the lives of older patients.

Here's a snapshot of their thoughts...

"The most rewarding aspect of my job is being able to make a difference for patients at a time when they probably feel the most vulnerable in their lives. I enjoy building a rapport with them and putting a smile on their face when they look sad on the hospital wards.

I particularly enjoy visiting my patients when they are discharged home. I get the opportunity to see them in their living environment which enables me to identify and access additional

support services for them and their informal family carers that will improve their quality of life.

Sapphire is successful because we work as a team and in partnership with the Hospital's D2A Hub and other local organisations. We also have a strong management and leadership team, who work tirelessly with our health and social care system leaders to develop and expand the range of services and support we provide.

Merlin Benain

“ I enjoy attending the daily Discharge to Assess (D2A) Integrated Hub meetings. We are seen as an equal partner and I enjoy working in a multi-disciplinary health and social care team.

It is good to have a service like Sapphire embedded in the NHS. We aim to support both the patients and their wider family in a hospital, intermediate care and community setting which creates a seamless service from hospital to home. ”

Etna Campbell-Powell

“ What I enjoy the most is the satisfaction you feel when all that you have tried to put in place is done and the client is safe and happy.

I think that Sapphire is so successful because we all work together as a team. We share our knowledge and expertise with each other.

We see most of our clients from the beginning, on the ward, and we follow them all the way to their home and for 6 weeks after, supporting them all the way, and trying to ensure that they can gain access to all service providers. As a team, we can turn our hands to anything to try and improve our clients' quality of life. ”

Jacqueline Wyton

“ I enjoy supporting older and vulnerable adults to help reduce their readmission into hospital. Identifying and focusing on each individual's care needs and communicating with their family carers to effectively provide additional support in the community so they can live safely, happily, and independently at home.

I think the success of Sapphire is partly due to WBACRC and Agewell management, who work hard to continuously develop the service. As a staff team, we utilise the training, skills, and knowledge we have gained to deliver a successful service to the patients. ”

Hayley R Taylor

“ Sapphire is successful because we all work hard to build a trusting relationship with the patient and their families. This means they are more likely to agree to other services that will benefit their lives moving forward. If these services were offered without this relationship they may be more hesitant and isolate themselves further.

You really see the improvement in the individual from when they are in hospital and at the end of our 6 week service. ”

Charlotte Wildman

“ Meeting new people and giving them the best service we can, through listening and talking to them on the phone, or going out and visiting them in their homes and helping to get other services in to help on their pathway.

Sapphire works because as a team we take time to listen and try to give as much help as we can, when people are at their lowest point in life. It's a great achievement. ”

Jason Denny

“ I think the Sapphire Service is successful because of our person centred approach to our clients' health and wellbeing; the management and leadership of those at the helm of the service; the collaborative working that takes place with all the services involved; the ability to signpost care and aftercare to any department within the borough and surrounding areas and the outstanding commitment and work ethic of all the workers within the service.

It is evident that the service is well sought after due to the number of referrals and the take up of the components of service provision. ”

Julie Smith-Jones

COMMUNITY OFFER UPDATE...

Individuals with problems as diverse as loneliness, debt, substance abuse and poor housing, have had their lives turned around by Sandwell's Community Offer.

Agewell is a member organisation of Communities In Sync (CIS), which is a consortium of local third sector organisations delivering health and social care related services throughout Sandwell. One of the services that CIS delivers is the Sandwell Community Offer and Agewell has been a key delivery partner for this service since March 2020.

Agewell's three Community Navigators, Nicola Groves, Kim Smith and Faye White work alongside Navigators from other organisations (Crossroads and Ideal for All) to give people in Wednesbury and Oldbury access to local activities and vital services. Navigators from other local organisations cover the other four towns in Sandwell.

Community Navigator, Nicola Groves, said the aim, where possible, is to connect with people in need as early as possible.

She explains: "If we can catch someone in the early days before there is a knock-on effect, it can be really helpful. However, things were pretty bad after Covid when services weren't available and people's problems really escalated.

"One of the advantages of our project is that we have less red tape so we're able to help in innovative ways and really persevere on someone's behalf."

One of the clients helped recently by the project is Dave who was struggling to manage financially and couldn't afford furniture, curtains or carpets for his home. His washing machine had broken and he had no phone.

Thanks to the Community Offer, Dave was referred to Welfare Rights to try and maximise his income, along with two energy saving companies for advice about keeping his home warm. A new washing machine was delivered and fitted, free of charge, by a charity, and Dave was also awarded a new fridge freezer. He is currently awaiting the delivery of some nearly new furniture and furnishings and he has a reconditioned 'pay as you go' mobile phone.

Community Offer



He says: "I cannot thank the Community Offer enough. They have helped me with keeping warm, with white goods and with having more money to live off. My home feels more homely too.

"The service is fantastic. There are a lot of people like me struggling during these difficult times and none of this would have been possible without this service."



Kim Joins The Team

Since the last Agewell Magazine, Kim Smith has joined Agewell as a Community Navigator for the Community Offer.

She previously worked with young adults with learning difficulties and really enjoyed the care work but found the night shifts didn't fit with her family life. When a friend told her about the Community Offer role at Agewell, it sounded ideal.

"Working on the Community Offer means I can provide a wide range of support to suit an individual's needs," says Kim. "I love being able to help people in so many different ways, such as by arranging food parcels, helping them access support for mental health issues, and signposting to many different organisations."

If you would 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 anyone aged 18 and over. You can contact the service on behalf of yourself or someone else, whether it is a friend, neighbour, colleague, family member of someone you are supporting.



EXERCISE CLASSES IN THE COMMUNITY

Would you like to be more active but you don't know where to start?

Agewell runs a number of weekly exercise sessions for the over 60s and less able of all ages.

Sessions last 1-2 hours and are held at various community venues across Sandwell. They cost from £4 per session (prices may vary) and activities on offer include gentle exercise, strength and balance, yoga and tai chi.

Meet up with friends old and new, and have fun whilst improving your strength, balance and mobility.

Interested? Call Agewell on 0121 796 9333 to find out which session is best for you.

EXERCISING AT HOME

Did you know that as we age, it's more important than ever to keep moving? Muscles become weaker with inactivity, which affect our balance, and moving every day helps to keep the blood moving around our bodies.

Our 'Keep Moving with Agewell' leaflet features 14 gentle exercises that can be done regularly in the comfort of your own home.

Full instructions are included for how to do them safely, with the focus being on completing each exercise correctly, always starting with the correct postural alignment and building up the number of repetitions gradually.

If you would like a copy, call Agewell on 0121 796 9333.



CORONATION PARTY

A fun time was held by all at our Coronation Party back in May which was held at Queensridge Court and attended by over 35 people from our groups for people living with dementia.

We decorated the dining area, put on a buffet, including a fabulous Union Jack styled cake made by Janet, one of our members. Light hearted and funny entertainment was provided by a father and son act.



It was all possible thanks to a donation of some £350 from the Come Together Group based at George Road Community Church in Oldbury. They donated money raised from their annual auction and we were delighted they chose to support Agewell and our Thinking Differently About Dementia Project this year.

Established in 2001, Come Together meet on Mondays, 2pm-4pm, enjoying chatting, crafts, music afternoons, meals out, presentations and more.

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.

Recent donations have included £246.20 in memory of the late Stephen Andrew Boucher and £200 in memory of the late John Parsons. Both individuals attended our Thinking Differently About Dementia (TDAD) groups and the donations will be used towards TDAD. Thank you for supporting us.

If you'd like to make a donation, please give us a call on 0121 796 9333.

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 Raises

Sit tall on the chair, feet hip flat on the floor to a slow count of 5, taking your weight on your 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



agewell
sharing experience