



Agewell Magazine

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89-year-old Joan is one of many older people benefitting from Agewell's newest service, a 12-month project supporting vulnerable and socially isolated older people in Smethwick.

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WELCOME



We are delighted to welcome you to another information packed Agewell magazine, which includes updates on a number of our projects across Sandwell showing how our work continues to have a positive effect on

the lives of many local, older people.

Our cover stars this issue are Agewell Community Pathfinder Michael Sutton and 89-year-old Joan. Michael heads-up our newest service which is a 12-month project focussing on supporting vulnerable older people in Smethwick. The service has really taken-off and you can find out more on pages 7, 8 and 9 inside.

Last issue we introduced our Sapphire Service which supports local, older people whilst they are in hospital, as well as during those important early days back at home following discharge.

We anticipated 200 referrals during the first year, but the service has been such a success that referrals soared and a total of 265 were received in the first six months alone. As we go to press, this number has risen to 725 which is a fabulous achievement, showing how necessary the service is. See page 4 where you can read more about how the service is doing.

Also inside is the latest news from Kingfisher Buddies, our 3-year lottery funded project which supports older people in the early stages of dementia as well as their carers and families.

Free training sessions are available for family carers, volunteers and professionals to learn more about how dementia affects individuals and those around them. Over 30 people have taken part so far, finding the sessions incredibly useful and informative.

We will be running more sessions during 2018. If you are interested in attending, please contact us to register your interest.

Weekly Kingfisher Buddies groups are now up and running for those with a diagnosis of dementia as well as their carers - see page 13 for details.

Also inside is a feature on getting active with Agewell. We currently run more than 25 exercise classes for older people across Sandwell. One of the most recent additions to our programme is a Pilates class at Portway Lifestyle Centre. Find out more on page 10.

Before I finish, I do want to mention our wonderful Chair, Edna Barker, who is fighting hard to recover from a stroke. Edna is an inspiration to us all and in true Edna fashion, she remains positive and is battling every step of the way. If you'd like to send Edna a get well message, please contact us and we will forward it to her.

Finally, I'd like to make you aware of some amazing community work being undertaken by a group of students from St Michael's C of E High School in Rowley Regis.



I met with them recently to find out about the clubs they run for older people. These include a weekly coffee morning - Miccies, Biccies and Brew – held every Monday and open to all and a monthly club called Links which sees the older and younger generation going on trips and undertaking workshops and projects together.

The students' aim is to reach out to those who don't have much company and for whom their clubs are sometimes the only time they leave their houses each week.

It was great to see young people wanting to help and support older people. They have lots of ideas for new projects and I feel sure we will be able to work together in some way. Watch this space!

Deborah Harrold

Deb Harrold, Agewell CEO ●

VOLUNTEERING FOR AGEWELL...

Agewell is looking forward to one of its busiest ever years – and it simply couldn't do it all without its team of amazing volunteers.

We are always on the lookout for new recruits and are very grateful indeed to those people who commit their time to the organisation year in, year out.

A number of new volunteers have recently been signed up, including some who've been recruited in the unlikeliest of places!

Agewell CEO, Deb Harrold, explains: "I was out walking my dog recently when I met a lovely lady who was walking her dalmation. We got talking about Agewell and she offered to volunteer in our hospital shop! I'm so grateful to her and to all our

wonderful volunteers who help us make such a difference to the lives of older people."

If you are interested in volunteering for Agewell, please give us a call on 0121 796 9333 and ask for a copy of our volunteering leaflet and application form. There are lots of opportunities available and all ages are welcome.



BRIGHTENING UP PATIENTS' LIVES



Volunteering is a way of giving something back for Agewell regulars, Mary and Michael Bartlett.

The couple thoroughly enjoy attending Agewell's exercise classes at Portway Lifestyle Centre in Oldbury, including the brand new weekly Pilates class. And they're now busy helping to run the ward-based trolley service at Sandwell Hospital.

Mary, aged 61, explains: "We do the trolley run together on a Tuesday and it takes us all morning to do all the wards.

"We have a good natter with the patients and they're ever so grateful for the opportunity to buy something to read, a snack or drink, or perhaps some toiletries they may have run out of.

"It's a busy morning but we know how much the service is valued and we're glad to help. I've been in hospital myself and I know how nice it is to see a smiling face.

"We're both a little tired by the end of it but it's very satisfying too."

SAPPHIRE SERVICE SMASHES TARGETS

Agewell's Sapphire Service at Sandwell Hospital has smashed its targets way ahead of schedule.

Launched last April in partnership with the West Bromwich African Caribbean Resource Centre, the Sapphire Service supports older patients during their hospital stay and helps to prevent their readmission.

Our aim was to receive 200 referrals during the first year, but the Sapphire Service began making such a difference that referrals soared and a total of 265 were received in the first six months alone.

This number has since risen to 725 which is a fabulous achievement, showing how necessary the service is.

"In addition to smashing our referral target, we are also seeing a reduction in both the length of hospital stays and the number of re-admissions as a result of the Sapphire Service which is great news," says Agewell CEO, Deb Harrold.

"Our team has built an excellent relationship with hospital staff who recognise the value of the Sapphire Service and work closely with us to identify patients who will benefit from the service."

All those referred receive advice about accessing local support services and are offered befriending visits whilst in hospital, as well as weekly visits at home for up to six weeks following their discharge from hospital.

There is an option for telephone befriending too. Carers have also benefitted from the service by receiving support.

THE Sapphire Service



Agewell's Sapphire workers, Jason Denny and Vivienne Allen, are enjoying their work.

"It's very rewarding to see that the service is really working," says Jason Denny. "Our help and support is helping patients to get back on their feet rather than being readmitted to hospital."

WHAT A SUCCESS

- Our target of 200 referrals during the first year has been smashed with the total number currently running at 725.
- Agewell Community Pathfinders have become an integral part of the daily hospital routine.
- Carers are also benefitting from the service by receiving support.
- A number of individuals have also benefitted from Agewell's home-based exercise sessions, whilst others have opted for Agewell's *Staying Steady Staying Safe* self-help guide to falls prevention.
- To help reduce isolation, older people have been supported to attend Agewell's community-based exercise groups, to register with Ring & Ride and to receive a West Midlands Fire Service Safe and Well check.
- Individuals have also been referred to other Agewell projects which can help including the Connected Care Project and Kingfisher Buddies.

FURTHER IMPROVEMENT FOR MARK



Life is getting better and better for Mark Beaman, cover star of our Summer 2017 issue.

Mark received extensive help and support through the Sapphire Service after he suffered a severe stroke. Life had been turned upside down for the active 60-year-old, but

Jason and Viv helped get him on the road to recovery.

Since the last magazine, Mark has moved into a new flat and, having got his driving licence back, has bought himself a car so he's mobile again. He's also started attending one of Agewell's community-based exercise classes and is enjoying being active again.

IN SAFE HANDS



A grateful daughter says Agewell's Sapphire Service totally transformed her father's final months.

Carole Dixon says that both her and her dad, Samuel Day, formed a strong relationship with Sapphire worker, Jason Denny.

"Jason got to know my father in hospital after he'd had a stroke, and made him feel very safe and secure in the hospital environment," explains Carole.

"He built up such a good relationship with him that whenever I couldn't be around, I knew he was in safe hands, which was good for my dad and good for me too."

Once he was discharged, Jason continued to visit him at home. "Samuel was very bent over when he came out of hospital and kept saying that he wanted to be able to walk again," says Jason.

"I introduced him to Agewell's home-based exercise service and after 8 weeks his posture and balance improved and he was able to walk without his frame.

"All he wanted was to be able to get out and enjoy his garden and on my last visit, he was sitting in the garden in the sunshine, which was lovely to see."

Samuel had expressed an interest in joining one of Agewell's community-based exercise classes, but sadly he was re-admitted to hospital following a further stroke and died a few weeks later, aged 83.

Carole says: "During dad's final stay in hospital, Jason was such a support. He was amazing.

"He always made sure dad got his daily newspaper and sometimes, when dad was due to see the doctors, he would ask Jason to be there as well.

"Jason's kindness and support was invaluable to all of us throughout that time."

Carole, who works as an Employability Tutor for University College Birmingham, was so impressed with her experience of the Sapphire Service that she has since been in discussions with Agewell about offering work experience placements to a group of her health and social care degree students.

SEND US YOUR RECIPES

Do you remember the Bread Pudding recipe featured in our Winter 2017 magazine?

It was supplied by Clive Atkins, Chair of Agewell's Rowley Regis Local Forum and has been so popular with our readers that it's prompted us to ask for more.

Do you have a favourite recipe you'd like to share with us? Traditional Black Country dishes, your favourite mid-week meal, or a celebratory cake or pudding – we'd like to hear about them all.

And how about some suggestions for a healthy and tasty meal for one?

We know how hard it can be to summon up the enthusiasm to cook for one, particularly when you

have been recently bereaved. But eating a balanced diet is so important in ensuring you remain fit and well and able to do all the things you enjoy doing.

Any suggestions will be gratefully received and shared with our members.



Contact us as follows:

1 Hand your recipes to us at the Agewell Shop in the Outpatients Department at Sandwell Hospital or at any of the groups we run across Sandwell

2 Post them to Agewell, T5 Office, 3rd Floor, Applewood Grove Training & Enterprise Centre, 13 Applewood Grove, Cradley Heath B64 6EW

3 Email us at: info@agewelluk.org.uk

DONATIONS MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

Making a donation to Agewell means making a big difference to the lives of older people across Sandwell.

Every donation received helps Agewell to deliver even more services to help older people stay as healthy and as happy as possible, and to ensure that their voices are heard and listened to.

Agewell recently received a donation in memory of Agewell supporter, Freda Poole. Gillian Ingram, Freda's daughter, wrote to say that Freda was a long time participant of Agewell's gentle exercise Extend class at Lodge Road and that she enjoyed the group and was very fond of the staff and other clients.

Freda's family and friends donated £200 to say thank you for the support and friendship provided by Agewell.

A further £140 was received in memory of Sapphire Service client Samuel Day.

Deb Harrold, Agewell Chief Executive Officer, says: "Donating in memory can be a comforting way to remember a loved one. Asking that donations are made to Agewell can offer some comfort in the knowledge that you are helping to support other older people."

If you would like to make an individual donation, or arrange a collection, call Agewell on 0121 796 9333.

You can also complete the Memory Donation Form online at www.agewelluk.org.uk



RAISING FUNDS FOR AGEWELL

Agewell's mission is to help older people to 'age well'. Our work enables them to live happier and healthier lives, remaining independent for as long as possible.

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

- Organising a fundraising event or activity
- Making a one-off or monthly donation online through **Local Giving**
- Shopping online through **Easyfundraising**
- Purchasing travel insurance, equity release, stairlifts, personal alarms, pre-paid funeral plans and flowers and gifts through **Advant-age**
- Making a donation to Agewell 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 local, older people. Contact us on 0121 796 9333 to find out more.

OUR SERVICES INCLUDE...

- Home visits to provide companionship and support with shopping, hospital and GP appointments, socialising and more.
- Visiting older people whilst in hospital and in those early days back at home after discharge.
- A telephone support service providing a weekly phone call.
- Community-based exercise classes and home-based strength and balance programmes to improve mobility and reduce the risk of older people having a fall.
- Support for older people who are in the early stages of dementia as well as their families and carers.

NEW SMETHWICK SERVICE TAKES OFF

Older people in Smethwick are safer and happier at home thanks to Agewell.

Last summer, Agewell secured funding from the Connected Care Partnership's Vanguard Programme (Sandwell and West Birmingham) for a new 12-month project focussing on vulnerable older people in Smethwick which aimed to encourage them to be more active physically and socially, and to help them to stay well and to live well with long term conditions.

As soon as Michael Sutton was appointed to head up the new service as Community Pathfinder, he hit the ground running and the results speak for themselves!

By November, Michael had already built such an excellent relationship with Smethwick Medical Centre that 39 patients had been referred. Many were receiving regular home visits from Michael and a host of help and support had been put in place.

"As this project is very similar to one I had previously been involved with, I've been able to get it up and running straight away," explains Michael.

"I'm working very closely with the staff at Smethwick

Medical Centre who identify patients who need some support. They may be calling the doctor regularly or living with a long term health condition.

I phone them first to introduce myself and to explain what we do and gain their confidence. Then I ask if they'd be happy for me to visit them.

"Sitting and chatting with them means I can ascertain things such as how they're living, whether they're eating properly, if they're managing to stay warm, if they'd benefit from any daily

living aids, and whether they're feeling isolated.

"I can then refer them to other services and initiatives which can help and try to get them integrated into local community groups. I visit them for up to six weeks, maybe weekly or fortnightly depending on their need.

"The project has already benefitted many local older people and I'm sure it will continue to grow this year," says Michael. "It gives you a real sense of satisfaction when you can help older people and make small changes which make a huge difference to their lives."

"The project has already benefitted many local older people and I'm sure it will continue to grow this year."

INTRODUCING MICHAEL

Michael Sutton, who is championing Agewell's new Smethwick service, is doing what he thoroughly enjoys.

Having worked for 20 years on the railways, he decided on a complete change of career when he was made redundant.

"I needed something to occupy my time so I began volunteering on the wards at Sandwell Hospital," he says. "The Royal Voluntary Service approached me to work in the hospital shop they ran at the time and I became a manager for the service, recruiting and training volunteers."

Through his work for RVS, Michael was seconded to

the Kaleidoscope Plus Group to help deliver their Community Offer in Smethwick. When that project came to an end, he began volunteering on the Sandwell Hospital trolley run for Agewell.

"I was really pleased when Agewell offered me a paid role as a Community Pathfinder," he says. "I love the fact that no two days are the same and I've come full circle now that I'm back working in the hospital shop as well as getting out and about visiting older people who need my support!"



JOAN TAKES A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE

Widow Joan admits that her visits from Agewell are the highlights of her week.

The 89-year-old, who has lived alone since her second husband died more than 20 years ago, says it is lovely to have someone to talk to about the past.

She says: "I'm housebound with osteoarthritis and various other ailments and I'm living on my memories now. I love talking about the way things used to be.

"Michael from Agewell is very easy to talk to. We both rattle away and the time goes so quickly. We have a real natter about this, that and the other."

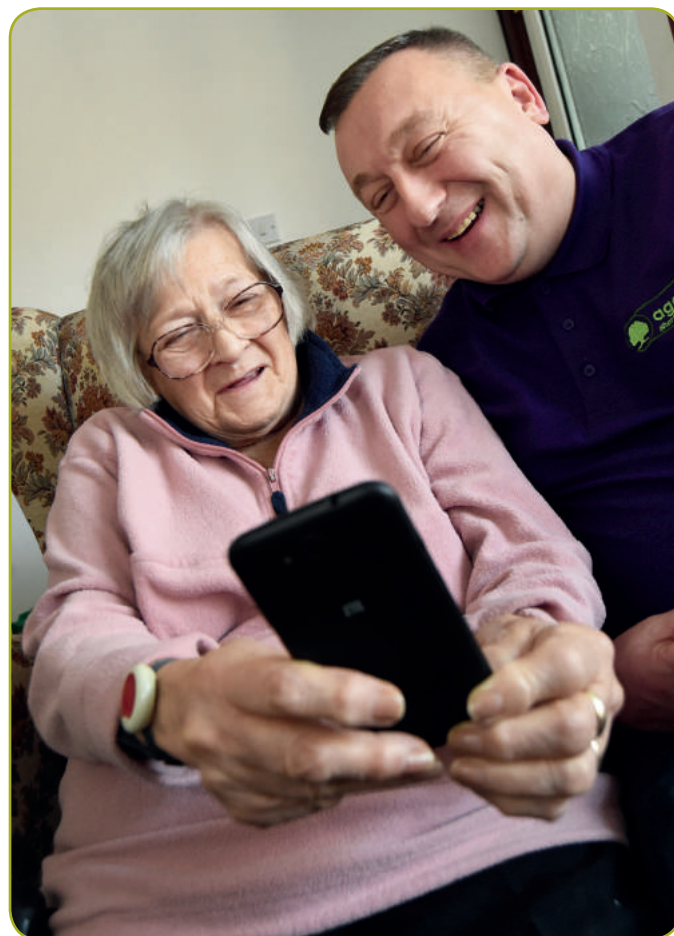
Joan, who was referred to Agewell by Smethwick Medical Centre, is delighted with the help and support she has already received. She gets a lot of calls and was always rushing to answer the telephone, putting herself at risk of tripping or falling.

Michael suggested she use a cordless phone which she keeps in her apron pocket.

"I'm often in the garden or the greenhouse as that's one of the things that keeps me going," says Joan, "and my new phone means I never miss a call."

It's often the little things which make a big impact. After one conversation about the food she loved as a child, Michael turned up with some pig's trotters!

She explains: "When I was a young girl, all the shops sold them, along with faggots and peas. I told Michael I hadn't had them in ages so he



said he'd bring me some.

"I boiled them up and had them with vinegar and they were just as I remembered them. Delicious!

"I'm so grateful to Michael for calling round. I'd certainly recommend Agewell to other older people."

PROFESSIONAL PRAISE

Gill Williams, Elderly Care Manager at Smethwick Medical Centre, explains there is a huge need for the elderly support project Agewell is delivering in Smethwick.

"If I see people in the course of my work who are socially isolated, I can now refer them on to Agewell, which is great," she says.

"We all know how many people there are out there who perhaps live alone and find it difficult to get out of the house. Having someone like Michael I can put people in touch with to help

them feel less isolated is a very positive step in the right direction."

Michael has already been able to help Gill's elderly patients with a range of services, including claiming benefits they were entitled to, obtaining appropriate mobility aids and adaptations, and accessing other existing services for the elderly.

She added: "What a lot of people really need is someone to call round on a regular basis and befriend them, so they don't feel so lonely and alone."

AGEWELL SUPPORTS CARERS TOO



A much-needed break is vitally important for the relatives of people with dementia, as even with a very supportive family, it can be difficult to get any time on your own.

Pam, aged 69, had been caring for her husband, Terry, for the past three years. As his illness progressed, it became increasingly difficult for him to cope with the simplest of things on a day to day basis.

When Terry was referred to Agewell by Smethwick Medical Centre, Michael went to meet Pam first to learn more about Terry.

Michael says: "With people with dementia, first impressions last. I was keen to know about Terry's interests so I could engage with him as soon as I met him.

"I wanted to give Pam the chance to go out but she was nervous about leaving Terry so we took small steps. The first time, Pam just popped out for half an hour, but over time she felt confident enough to go out for a couple of hours whilst I talked to Terry.

"He knew he was in a safe environment with me. We looked through his boxes of treasures he'd collected from his metal detecting."

Pam says that having Michael come in to talk to Terry for an hour or two enabled her to pop round to her sister's or simply to have a walk round or go up to the local café.

"I don't think people really understand what it's like to care for someone 24/7," she explains. "I couldn't take my eyes off him. Being able to get out on my own and just switch off for an hour or two was incredibly helpful."

Pam says she was lucky that her grown-up son and daughter helped out on a regular basis, but that both her and Terry also really appreciated Michael's visits.

She says: "Terry was a very outdoorsy person. He liked fishing and metal detecting and used to keep racing pigeons. It was good for him to have another man to talk to. Michael showed a real interest in Terry's life.

"The help offered by Agewell made subtle but important changes that made my life as a carer just that little bit easier."



Terry sadly passed away at the end of 2017. Our thoughts are with his wife and family and we'd like to thank them for their kind permission to include this article and photographs in our magazine.

GET ACTIVE WITH AGEWELL

Older people across Sandwell have plenty of opportunity to stay healthy and active, thanks to Agewell.

More than 25 exercise classes are currently running across the borough, suitable for a range of abilities and specifically designed with people aged 60 and above in mind.

One of the most recent additions to the programme is a new Pilates class at Portway Lifestyle Centre in Oldbury, run by Postural Stability Instructor, Alison Pickering.

Alison launched the class, which runs every Thursday from 9.15am to 10am, as a pilot project to see what the uptake would be - and she's been delighted with the response.

"The new Pilates class is already attracting between 12 and 15 people every week," Alison explains.

"Some of them have come to other Agewell classes and are looking for something new to try and others have simply come through the door and liked it!

"Several people have said they find going to other Pilates classes a bit daunting because they're often in the evening, when it's more difficult to get out of the house. They can also feel uncomfortable if everyone is younger.



"I think we've definitely proved that there's a demand for Pilates classes for older people in our community."

The Pilates class is followed by a popular exercise session, which runs from 10am to 10.45am.

Anyone is also welcome to turn up for coffee and biscuits between 10.45am and 11.30am to talk to Alison about their exercise needs and find out more about the sessions and facilities on offer.

If you're interested in finding an exercise class close to you, call Agewell on 0121 796 9333 or email info@agewelluk.org.uk



HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT ABOUT TRYING YOGA?

Yoga is an ancient form of exercise that focuses on strength, flexibility and breathing to boost physical and mental wellbeing.

Agewell has launched a new Yoga class for older people at Dorothy Parkes Community Centre in Smethwick every Monday from 3-4pm. Anyone can turn up and join in for just £3.

AGEWELL CLASS AT PORTWAY

by Chris Nugent

Agewell class at Portway, is the place to be,
If you want to exercise for a reasonable fee.
Alison is the leader, she gets us into line,
The music is lively and that suits me just fine.

We start the class by marching, then we walk around the room,
We must warm up gently and keep in time with the tune.
We go on to do some stretches, to get us wide awake,
We haven't practised much this week, that is a big mistake!

Alison and team, are encouraging and kind,
Although I must admit the sit to stands are a bit of a bind.
We go around the circuit, I like the steps the best,
Step up, step down, keep going, our balance is put to the test.

Next it is the press ups, we do this against the wall,
This is good for your posture and helps us get up if we fall.
The sit to stands are next in line - oh how I need a glass of wine,
It's change again and off we go, I really ache from head to toe.

It's sit to stand again I fear,
but this time it's a challenge – oh dear!
Sit to stand with extra weight,
I shall have a fit with this work rate!

It's time for us to leave now,
we put our chairs away,
Alison and the team have done us proud,
Three cheers – hip, hip hooray!



NEWS FROM KINGFISHER BUDDIES



Last April, Agewell launched Kingfisher Buddies to support older people who are in the early stages of dementia and their families.

Since then....

- More than 85 people with a diagnosis of dementia have been referred to the project's Community Pathfinders, who have been helping individuals to integrate into local community activities and groups, supporting them to continue to live life as fully as possible and to do more of the things they love.
- More than 25 carers have used the project to access vital information, guidance and support to help them care for a loved one both pre and post diagnosis.
- Dementia training has been provided to over 30 people from varied backgrounds, including carers, community workers, nurses, fire crews, hospital chaplains and Agewell staff.

- Weekly Kingfisher Buddies groups are now up and running in Blackheath, Wednesbury and Oldbury.

DID YOU KNOW...

- There are 850,000 people living with dementia in the UK.
- By 2025 this number is set to rise to over 1 million.
- One person will develop dementia every three minutes this year.
- One in six people over the age of 80 have dementia.
- 66% of people with dementia feel lonely.
- 77% suffer with anxiety and depression.

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT DEMENTIA?

More than 30 people have already attended free training sessions delivered by Dementia Pathfinders to learn more about how dementia affects individuals and those around them.

A one-day course 'Understanding Dementia and the Experience of Family Carers' is aimed at a wide range of participants, from family carers to community volunteers and professionals working in a variety of fields.

Clive Atkins, Chair of Agewell's Rowley Forum, said he and his wife attended a course recently and found it incredibly useful and informative.

"We were interested in gaining a better insight into what it is like to live with dementia and how we can help if we come across anyone in the early stages of dementia through our work with Rowley Forum," Clive says.

"The course ran for two half days and was very good indeed. We picked up lots of little hints and tips about dementia, and one of the things we

learned was how frustrated people can feel and how important it is to understand that and be patient with them."

Barbara Stephens, Chief Executive of Dementia Pathfinders, said she was very pleased with the take up of the training sessions, which had received a lot of positive feedback.

The plan is to run further sessions throughout 2018 in a number of different settings. In addition, Barbara said she would be running shorter dementia workshops at each of Agewell's six Local Forums.

She added: "The more the public is educated about dementia and the more people in frontline roles understand about dementia, the more supportive communities will be."

Interested? If you'd like to register your interest in attending a future course, please email info@agewelluk.org.uk or call us on 0121 796 9333.

WEEKLY KINGFISHER BUDDIES GROUPS ARE FUN FOR ALL

Kingfisher Buddies groups are up and running in the Sandwell area.

The groups are open to anyone with a diagnosis of dementia and their carers, and aim to provide a welcoming and stimulating environment where people can get together and socialise.

Community Pathfinder, Sandra Graham, runs the weekly Kingfisher Buddies group in Wednesbury.

She says: "We have about 10 regular attendees who never miss a week, but anyone is welcome to drop in at any time.

"We offer a range of activities and invite speakers to our meetings and keep the programme as varied as possible."

Recent activities have included a laughter yoga session, poetry, music, rag rugging, crafts and table top games.



Kingfisher Buddies groups currently run at:

- Blackheath Library – Mondays 2pm - 3.30pm
- The Old Post Office in Wednesbury – Tuesdays 10.30am to 12.30pm
- The Activity Room at Portway Lifestyle Centre in Oldbury - Wednesdays 1.30pm - 3.30pm

Other Kingfisher Buddies groups are in the process of being set-up. To find out more, keep an eye on the Agewell website. Or call us on 0121 796 9333.

WELCOMING SANDRA TO THE TEAM

It's time to say goodbye to one of our Community Pathfinders – and hello to a friendly new face.

Karen Allen, who has been with Kingfisher Buddies since its launch, is moving on to pastures new and we would like to wish her well.

Meanwhile, a big welcome to Sandra Graham who is now working on the project alongside Deb Pierson.

As well as offering information, advice and guidance to people with dementia and their carers, our Community Pathfinders are also able to introduce clients to activities and services in the community that can meet their needs, from community exercise groups and lunch clubs to

carer support services and Agewell's Kingfisher Buddies groups.

Sandra has been seconded to Agewell three days a week from her job as Resources Co-ordinator for partner organisation, Dementia Pathfinders.



Sandra, who has personal experience of caring for a loved one with dementia, says: "I've worked for organisations involved in supporting people with dementia since 2005 and it is very much a passion of mine.

"I'm already really enjoying getting out and meeting people and helping

them to find ways of reducing the social isolation that can come with a diagnosis of dementia."



HAMPERS HELP LONELINESS

With support from the Percy Bilton Charity, Agewell was able to brighten up Christmas for 50 older people at a time when many feel lonelier than ever.

Each year, the charity donates Christmas hampers to organisations such as Agewell who distribute them to older people living on low incomes.

The contents of the hampers are chosen so that the recipient can stock a cupboard with enough necessities to last over the holiday period. This could prove invaluable for older people who are returning home after being discharged from hospital or those who are frail or housebound and who rely on others for their shopping.

Through its Own Bed Instead (OBI) scheme, Agewell identified individuals who would benefit most from the hampers. OBI provides a range of services including hospital visits and befriending once patients return home, making a big difference to those who have no family and friends close by.

Reema Chande from the Percy Bilton Charity explains: "Our Christmas hamper programme has two main aims: to combat feelings of isolation amongst deprived older people who are alone at Christmas and to alleviate the practical problems of shopping faced by frail and disabled older people on low incomes, over the holiday period.

"For many, the most important thing the parcel brings is the feeling that somebody has thought of them. For a significant number of older people this may be the only gift and source of contact they have over the Christmas period."

Who was Percy Bilton?

The Percy Bilton Charity is a grant-making trust which gives help to organisations and individuals in need throughout the UK.

It was founded in 1962 by the late Percy Bilton, an entrepreneur who built up a group of successful property companies in the 1920s and 1930s. During his lifetime, Percy Bilton took a personal interest in the charity's activities and the trustees continue to meet his original charitable objectives today.

HOSPITAL TRUST CHOSEN FOR NEW PILOT

By working closely with Agewell, Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals Trust has been chosen as one of five Acute NHS Hospital Trusts to work with HelpForce, a new organisation set up to develop new volunteer roles.

Agewell has been involved in helping the Trust to become a pilot site for HelpForce, which is creating a best practice model for volunteering in hospitals and other patient settings. Agewell CEO, Deb Harrold, is also a member of the internal taskforce group which is advising the Trust on getting the project up and running.

HelpForce is aiming to double the number of volunteers working in the NHS by 2021 so that more patients and NHS staff can benefit from their time, help and care.

Trust Chief Executive, Toby Lewis, said: "I am pleased that we have been selected as one of the pioneer Trusts working with HelpForce to look at new opportunities for volunteers.

"We are greatly supported by hundreds of volunteers who support our hospital and community services and we work in partnership with a number of voluntary and community groups in Sandwell and West Birmingham.

"These strong links give us a good foundation for developing new volunteer roles that can make a difference to the experience of patients and their families."

WHAT A CELEBRATION!

Tipton Local Forum brought the whole community together for a fabulous festive celebration event in November.

Dot Abbey, Chair of the Local Forum, organised the event at Tipton Christian Fellowship Church as a pre-Christmas celebration for Forum members, residents and community leaders.

The Mayor of Sandwell and Councillor for Tipton Green, Cllr Ahmadul Haque, along with Princes End Councillor, Bill Cherrington and Great Bridge Councillor, Ann Jarvis, all came to meet local residents and wish them well for the festive season.

As well as watching the entertainment from local belly dancers and browsing the bring and buy sale,



everyone enjoying having a chat with old and new friends while tucking into the festive fayre.

And the festivities didn't stop there!!

Other events and activities organised by Dot included a Christmas shopping trip to Wellesbourne market and Stratford-Upon-Avon, a visit to Manchester's Christmas market and a festive day out at Cadbury World.

And at the last Forum of the year, members enjoyed a Christmas tea party when Santa and his elves handed out presents and, a week later, indulged in a Christmas meal at The Lodge in Dudley!

PARTY TIME AT ROWLEY FORUM

It was party time for members of Rowley Local Forum on 3rd January.

The Forum's annual post-Christmas party was held at Blackheath Conservative Club, with a variety of fun activities including a lucky draw, bring and share lunch and musical entertainment.

Kind-hearted members have also been raising vital funds for BBC Children in Need.

The group donated £40 to the national charity after running an information stall at the switch-on event for Blackheath's Christmas lights.

Chair, Clive Atkins said that as well as giving out information about Agewell, members took the opportunity to raise funds by selling leftover Christmas stock from the former Agewell shop in Old Hill.

WORKING WITH THE FIRE SERVICE

Agewell joined forces with West Midlands Fire Service to organise a Coffee Afternoon on Thursday 22nd February.

Held at St James C of E Church, Shelsley Avenue, Lion Farm Estate in Oldbury, all were welcome to drop in any time between 1pm and 4pm and learn more about safety in the home and personal safety, as well as finding out about the services and activities available for older people across Sandwell.

Coffee and cakes were available plus a Tai Chi style free taster exercise session.



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.



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

**STAYING
STEADY
STAYING
SAFE**



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 width apart and flat on the floor. Lift your toes to a slow count of 5, taking your weight on your heels. Then lower with control to a slow count of 5. Repeat 10 to 20 times.

Meet new friends at an Agewell Local Forum

These friendly and informative groups for older people meet monthly in each of the six Sandwell towns.

Oldbury - 3rd Thursday of the month at 10.30am

Rowley Regis - 1st Wednesday of the month at 1pm

Smethwick - Last Thursday of the month at 10.30am

Tipton - 2nd Tuesday of the month at 10.30am

Wednesbury - Last Wednesday of the month at 10.30am

West Bromwich - 3rd Tuesday of the month at 10.30am

Come along on your own or with a friend. Enjoy a cuppa and a chat, listen to key speakers discuss issues that matter to older people and find out all the latest news from Agewell.

Interested?

Call Agewell on 0121 796 9333 or email info@agewelluk.org.uk to find out more.



agewell
sharing experience

Contact Details

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

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W: www.agewelluk.org.uk

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Partnership working



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Sandwell and West Birmingham
Clinical Commissioning Group

Sandwell
Metropolitan Borough Council



Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust