

Meeting the needs of Older People

A Strategy for Older People in Chelmsford
2012-15 Refresh



Chelmsford
City Council

Foreword

This strategy '*Meeting the Needs of Older People*' is Chelmsford Council's refreshed strategy, which has been formulated to present how we will work to ensure that our older population is able to live in a safe environment and enjoy independence or support where necessary. This refresh has enabled us to consider key issues that have emerged since 2008 and has provided the opportunity to review the document and ensure that the document is specifically focused on meeting the needs of older people in Chelmsford.

An exercise to review the provision of older people's services was undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny Task and Finish Group in February 2012 and it was recognised that many of the strategic themes and priorities embedded within this strategy are being worked towards and still remain as relevant in 2012 as they were in 2008. These four themes are:

1. Improving communications and information
2. Supporting older people living in their own home
3. Helping older people to improve their health and wellbeing
4. Improving transport, mobility and access for older people

The previous strategy had initially acted as a key focus and helped to coordinate provision aimed at older people, however the review has concluded that in latter years the range of intervention to support older residents has been embedded within the Council's core services and is reflected in other strategic documents (e.g. Older Persons' Housing Strategy).

This refresh therefore purposefully does not include a supporting action plan and instead explains how a shorter work programme is to be led by the Older People's Partnership Action Group. The Older People's Partnership Action group has been consulted and support this refreshed document and with the role they are to play in ensuring its delivery.

This strategy will be reviewed every three years to ensure that the themes and priorities remain relevant.

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1. Introduction

1.1 What do we mean by 'older people'?

Our research has concluded that there is no consistent approach in defining older people. However having reviewed feedback from our residents, Councillors and partners, it has been decided that the strategy should focus on the needs of people of 65 years of age and over and should promote vulnerable older people as the highest priority.

1.2 Older people in our local community

People are now living longer than ever before and it is important that we recognise and support the contribution that older people already make in our community.

According to the June 2010 population estimates there are 27,300 persons at 65 years or older in the city (Source: ONS). This includes men and women and constitutes approximately 16% of the total population in the city and therefore already represents a significant proportion of our community.

Older people have a wide range of needs and aspirations depending on their circumstances. Many are very active and like other members of the community want facilities and opportunities that enable them to contribute to and enjoy life. Combating ageism, crime and the fear of crime are important issues but like all other members of the community older people want their community to have a good environment with excellent facilities and services. Services and facilities provided in the borough aim to meet these needs of the whole community including older people, e.g. theatres, restaurants, parks and open spaces, footpaths and sports facilities.

For some older people, however, their choices may be reduced by impaired mobility and health or low income and they are in need of help, care and support. Therefore specific services should be provided to these more vulnerable people. But equally their dignity should be respected and they should have choices. A mapping exercise has revealed a wide range of services and activities that are already provided for older people. This reflects their widely differing interests and needs. The ageing population of the borough will bring with it both economic and social consequences and if we harness the skills, experience and abilities of older people our society is likely to benefit both economically and in terms of quality of life. For example, the significant role that many older people play in voluntary and community activities is recognised and should be supported.

1.3 Why do we need a strategy for older people?

The Council, along with its partners in health, housing provision, social care, voluntary and community sectors, acknowledge that we need to further improve and constantly monitor how we provide services to better meet the needs of older people. In the past many older

people's services were reactive, responding to older people only when they were in need. Recent significant changes to the way health and social care services are provided show a move to a more preventative, 'whole person' approach.

This strategy sets out to support this approach by promoting health, independence and mobility for older people. It also stresses that older people must have a choice in the services and facilities available to them and they must have a voice so that their views are taken into account when decisions that affect them are made.

1.4 Links to Community and Corporate Plans

The priorities and actions described in this strategy are clearly linked to the priorities that form Chelmsford Council's Corporate Plan and Chelmsford Partnership's Community Plan. A range of service specific strategic plans also support the interests of older people, such as the Arts & Sports Strategy, Older People's Housing Strategy and Public Health Strategy and there is a duty as a Local Authority to ensure that equality and diversity is fully embedded.

1.6 Working in partnership.

In comparison to partners such as the NHS and Essex County Council, who have a particular emphasis on directly providing core services to older people, there are relatively few statutory functions vested in Borough / District Councils. It is not necessary for the Council to get involved in providing services that are delivered by others and are effective, but the Council can play an important role in facilitating and signposting services as well as connecting groups and services.

This facilitation role can be achieved through effective partnership working. The established Older People's Partnership Action Group supports collaborative project work and also has an advisory and lobbying function to ensure that the needs of older residents in Chelmsford are addressed. This group will be responsible for preparing a work programme to include how they will work collaboratively to support this strategy and will focus on providing added value.

The Partnership Action Group consists of officers from:

Age Concern (Chelmsford)
Age UK
Community, Homes, People (CHP)
Chelmsford Council
Central Essex Community Services
Chelmsford Star Cooperative
Chelmsford Shopmobility
Chelmsford Council for Voluntary Services
Essex County Council Social Services
Essex County Council Passenger Transport

2. Our Strategic Aims

2.1 Purpose of Strategy

The purpose of this strategy is to support older people in:

- maintaining independence
- maintaining a healthy lifestyle
- having good mobility and access
- having a choice of services and facilities available
- having a voice so their views are heard and taken into account.

These aims are endorsed by the Council and its partners and will be used as a guide for future initiatives and collaborative projects that we undertake.

2.2 Our key priorities

In collaboration with our partners and through consultation with older people we have investigated what actions will best meet our strategic aims. We have identified four key areas requiring action.

- **improving communications and information**
- **supporting older people living in their own home**
- **helping older people to improve their health and wellbeing**
- **improving transport, mobility and access for older people**

In order to comply with the law and to adopt best practice, Chelmsford Council is undertaking a comprehensive exercise to ensure that equality and diversity are an integral part of both service delivery and employment practice. This includes the need to seek to detect and remove discrimination against older people in all service delivery and policy documents. As such this is not a stand-alone priority, but is a theme that runs through each of the key areas outlined above.

3. Improving Communications and Information

3.1 Overview

Good communication between the Council, its partners and the older people they serve is necessary to properly engage with older people to produce policies and services that respond more directly to their needs. *Better Government for Older People* recommends that engagement should take place across the range of local government activity.

The Council's **Communications Strategy** stresses that our communication with residents should be inclusive, making special efforts to include traditionally "hard to reach" groups. It also states that information should be targeted by using appropriate methods and should be readily accessible to all. The Council's 'Statement of Community Involvement' also sets out how we will actively involve local residents including older people in the local planning process.

3.2 Current initiatives

Examples of where local partnership action has already delivered improvements to communication and information exchange between the Council, its partners and older people include:

Information days for older residents

Organised in partnership with public sector, community and voluntary organisations in the borough, these events give older residents the chance to meet representatives from a wide range of organisations that provide support and services to older people.

Personal Safety Workshops

Organised by the Safer Chelmsford Partnership, with sessions from Chelmsford Council, Essex Police, Essex Fire & Rescue Service and Trading Standards to communicate services, provide advice and receive feedback – specifically on issues relating to feeling safe.

3.3 Objectives

The overall objective is to ensure that older people receive the information that allows them to make informed choices about the support, services and activities available to them. We must ensure that older people's views and concerns are heard and acted upon. Key objectives for action are:

- ◆ Develop the role of the Older People's Champion for the lifetime of this strategy to develop support for the engagement of, and response to, older people.

- Make quality information (relevant, up to date and in a useable format) more easily available to older people about support, services and activities available to them.
- Work with older people and their organisations to maintain a partnership body to advise on policy issues affecting older people.
- Ensure that any consultation that we undertake with local residents takes full account of the views of older people.

4. Supporting older people living in their own home

4.1 Overview

The Council's **Older Persons' Housing Strategy** sets out housing provision, current and future housing needs, and care and support options. The strategy seeks to ensure outcomes for warm, comfortable and secure housing and a well designed, mixed housing stock (inc. sheltered, social and private housing) and is supported by a number of key actions.

4.2 Current initiatives

Examples of where local partnership action has already delivered improvements to the quality of life of older people living in their own homes include:

Swan Care and Repair Agency assists older people in accessing various sources of funding for essential repairs and adaptations and other services such as gardening and a handyperson for smaller jobs. The Agency also provides a Home from Hospital Scheme to help older people to successfully re-establish their lives at home following a stay in hospital.

Chelmsford Council administers **assistance and grants for older residents** who require improvements to their homes. These include home repair assistance grants, disabled facilities grants and renovation assistance grants.

The Age Concern Essex **Home Support Service** provides housework and shopping services for older people in their own homes. Referrals come from various sources such as social services, hospital discharges, service users and families, and there is a constant demand for the service. It helps people to remain living independently in their own home, combating isolation and depression.

4.3 Objectives

The overall objective is to support people to live in their own home where practical and if they have chosen to do so. Key objectives to support older people living in their own home are to:

- Identify requirements and establish actions that meets the housing needs and aspirations of older people within the borough.
- Promote the provision of new facilities, services and housing to meet the needs of older people through the Local Development Framework (LDF).
- Enable older people to maintain their independence and confidence whilst living in their own home by supporting existing schemes that provide low intensity support, and developing new ones.

- Promote inter-agency working with key partners concerned with the welfare of older people living in their own home.
- Explore the provision of intermediate care facilities for older people who are able to leave hospital but not ready to resume living independently in their own home.

5. Helping older people to improve their health and wellbeing

5.1 Overview

Older people are the main users of health and social care services. As people get older, remaining independent often depends on health and social care services being effective enough to support them. Significantly, our consultation indicates that of the older people who receive help, most get that help from members of their family and/or from friends and neighbours.

The Council aims to work in partnership to promote better health amongst older people. Our consultation results illustrate how important cultural activities are to older people, and we can also play a significant role in enabling older people to have an active life.

The new Arts & Sports Strategy 'Be Moved' ensures there is continued focus on the needs of older people. They not only provide a significant proportion of our outcomes within our theatres and leisure centres, but they also participate heavily in our community focused initiatives such as Heart & Sole Walks and schemes in residential care homes. The appointment of an Adult & Older Persons' Sports Development Officer in 2009 has had a significant impact on opportunities available for older people.

Essex County Council lead on the Prevention of Vulnerable Adults scheme. The scheme aims to raise awareness amongst staff of all agencies dealing with vulnerable adults to the possibility of abuse and neglect, and to promote and develop an effective protection scheme for them. There is a Mid Group that trains staff and provides support when they come across a situation of abuse towards an older or vulnerable person.

Through the work of the **Safer Chelmsford Partnership**, Chelmsford Council, and its partners are committed to further improving the quality of life for residents by continuing to reduce crime and the fear of crime, and offer a range of interventions and communications to residents relating to community safety issues.

5.2 Current initiatives

Examples of where **local partnership action** has already delivered improvements to the health and welfare of older people include:

The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership organise **Information Events for Older Residents** to advise on personal safety and crime reduction. The half day sessions consist of information, advice and interactive demonstrations by staff from local authorities and the emergency services.

Swan Care and Repair visit clients' homes to do a free home safety check, fit grab rails and carry out other work to reduce the risk of falls in their home.

Live Life GP Exercise Referral Scheme – Because exercise has been shown to improve health in older people, the Council and the NHS run GP exercise referral schemes as part of the government’s Choosing Health targets.

Heart and Sole Health Walks Scheme – Using the ‘Walking the Way to Health Initiative’ national guidelines for walking schemes Chelmsford Council in partnership with NHS North Essex has developed an effective scheme which has been awarded a 3 heart accreditation.

Young at Heart (Falls Prevention Programme) – 5 Classes per week provides gentle exercise and stability, targeting those aged 75+

Forever Active – Dedicated Council officers works to support a wide programme of support for adults and older people to access leisure and sporting opportunities.

The **Leisure and Cultural Services** team at Chelmsford Council conduct a continuous programme of research and consultation to try to make sure the services that are delivered, as far as possible, cater for people of all ages, including older people. These include opportunities for participating in sports, arts and cultural events. In line with the Council’s current Fees and Charges Policy, the Council offers a range of social concessions, including to those over 60 years of age, for example free swimming.

Through its **Carers Strategy** Essex County Council aims to work in partnership to support carers, for example through packages of care including short-term breaks, additional support at times of illness and training in manual handling techniques.

Essex County Council support many older peoples groups and groups supporting older people with mental health problems through grant aid and partnership funding with NHS North Essex.

5.3 Objectives

The overall priority is to promote healthier and more active lives in older age. Key objectives are to:

- Improve access and participation in leisure and cultural activities for older people.
- Promote the provision of new facilities and services to meet the needs of older people through the Local Development Framework (LDF).
- Seek ways to combat the loneliness and isolation that is experienced by some older people, by increasing their opportunities for social contact and improving their self-confidence.

6 Improving transport, mobility and access for older people

6.1 Overview

Transport is a vital lifeline to maintaining independence by providing an essential link to friends, family and the wider community. It can also impact upon others, such as carers and health agencies. A high proportion of older people will be dependent on public transport; however, evidence suggests that many experience difficulties in using bus and rail services. For example, our consultation indicates that a significant proportion of older people experience difficulty when getting on and off buses, particularly in areas where there is not the infrastructure for level access to buses or in areas that are not served by low-floor buses.

As the planning authority, Chelmsford Council works in partnership with Essex County Council as the transport authority to give people a choice of safe and convenient methods of transport that are accessible to all. We aim to maximise the opportunities to use bus and rail, and provide for safer and more convenient walking and cycling. It aims to provide for car use necessary to economic vitality, but its overall aim is to reduce the need for car travel and to restrict car use where necessary for safety and environmental reasons. An example of this is the introduction of Park and Ride for Chelmsford. Chelmsford Borough Council's Local Development Framework (LDF) will promote accessibility and social inclusion for all by improvements in the Borough's public transport infrastructure and include policies that ensure new developments are well linked to surrounding neighbourhoods and services.

In partnership with statutory, community and voluntary organisations in the borough, Essex County Council coordinate an **Accessibility Planning** programme to improve access to key services such as places of work, healthcare facilities, education and food shopping. This can be through improving transport links or by the service provider considering accessibility in all decisions affecting the provision, location, design and delivery of services. Improving accessibility can open up new opportunities and help to tackle problems of social exclusion caused by people being unable to access services that many people take for granted. The focus of accessibility planning in Chelmsford is on access to healthcare, for example to increase access to Broomfield Hospital, support ways of delivering more cost-effective patient transport, and encourage local Primary Care Trusts to consider the benefits of offering flexible opening hours.

Essex County Council administers a **travel concessions scheme** where permanent residents over pension age, or residents who have a disability and qualify under set criteria, are entitled to a free bus pass allowing free off-peak travel in Essex.

Chelmsford Council operates the **Chelmsford Shopmobility** scheme that provides electronic powered scooters to help those with mobility difficulties to get around Chelmsford town centre more easily.

6.2 Current Initiatives

Examples of where **local partnership action** has already delivered improvements to transport locally include:

Chelmsford Council has worked with Essex County Council and First Essex Buses to introduce **Quality Bus Partnerships** on a number of routes. This has included introducing new high quality, low floor buses and a number of on-street improvements such as raised kerbs, bus shelters and real-time passenger information.

Community Transport - through its grant aid scheme Chelmsford Council has been able to provide some financial support to Chelmsford Community Transport to contribute towards the staff costs of a Dial-A-Ride service in Chelmsford. This provides a reservations-based door-to-door transport service for residents who are unable to access conventional public transport.

Chelmsford Council provides financial support to the **Essex Rural Transport Partnership**, whose main aim is to reduce social exclusion in rural areas due to inadequate public transport.

6.3 Objectives

The overall objective is to promote sustainable, accessible and socially inclusive transport systems and to reduce car dependency. Key objectives for older people are to:

- Work in partnership to provide an inclusive public transport system that is a viable alternative to car use and that gives older people a choice of transport to travel within, to, and from the borough.
- Improve access for older people with limited mobility, physical or sensory impairment to everyday facilities by improvements to buildings, infrastructure and transport.