

**AGE-FRIENDLY BOROUGH - UPDATE****Report of the Director of Public Health****1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 In 2018, Stockport committed to becoming an age-friendly borough by agreeing its Ageing Well Strategy; this has been taken forward through a subsequent action plan developed in 2019.
- 1.2 Since 2020, however, the pandemic has had a great impact on older people, through higher vulnerability to illness and death from Coronavirus, bereavement, reduced activity and social engagement and participation, as well as changes in the labour market.
- 1.3 The Borough Plan and its associated delivery plans – the Health and Care Plan, Economic Plan, and Local Plan – provide a fresh opportunity for partnership organisations and communities to achieve our age-friendly aspirations. Whereas the age-friendly agenda is core to the Health and Care Plan, the opportunities for an age-friendly borough provided in policy areas beyond health and care – such as economy and skills, planning, but also education, and wider civic participation - are vital.
- 1.4 This paper constitutes a brief stocktake of our age-friendly work so far, and an opportunity for partner organisations to refresh our age-friendly ambitions and commitments as a borough, as we invite partners to contribute to the strategy refresh in the coming months.

**2. AGEING WELL STRATEGY 2018 AND ACTION PLAN 2019**

- 2.1 The Ageing Well Strategy was signed off by the Health and Wellbeing Board in 2018, having been developed by the Age-Friendly Board – a cross-sector partnership from council and partner organisations.
- 2.2 The strategic objectives are:
  - To become an age-friendly borough and develop age-friendly communities
  - To enable and promote independence in our older population
  - To support healthy and active ageing for our population
- 2.3 These ambitions decidedly reach well beyond providing care and services for older people, to ensuring people are enabled to remain active, retain their independence, sense of wellbeing, purpose, and belonging in the community and society.
- 2.4 The strategy, as well as the action plan the Age-Friendly Board agreed in 2019, follow the World Health Organization's age-friendly cities framework, which highlights that actions are needed in eight policy areas to create an age-friendly place:

- Outdoor spaces and buildings
- Transport
- Housing
- Social Participation
- Respect and social inclusion
- Civic participation and employment
- Communication and information
- Community support and health services

2.5 Actions were developed under each of these eight areas, as well as 'Active Ageing'.

### 3. UPDATE ON PROGRESS WITH AGE-FRIENDLY ACTIONS

3.1 The 2019 Action Plan was soon overtaken by pandemic events. Nevertheless, progress on the agreed actions has been considerable and is summarised here under the headings of the above policy areas:

#### 3.2 Respect and social inclusion:

- In 2019, Stockport received funding for a Culture Champions programme from the Great Place Greater Manchester project; funding was aimed at developing age-friendly volunteering and engagement in cultural activities in Stockport. Culture Champions were recruited by a number of small partner organisations and developed cultural offers for others, including a creative writing group, drawing, hula dance, social cinema etc. The pandemic significantly interrupted the delivery of this programme, which was transferred to ARC in June 2020. Despite these adversities, ARC was able to undertake further consultation with older people and deliver a highly imaginative and successful second phase of the programme in winter 2020/21, which included a newsletter and online presence, as well as a range of exciting projects, including the Culture Buddies programme launched in December, a book club for scripts hosted by NK Theatre, quilt making project 'Threads of Creativity', and artist Jason Taylor working with Reddish Men in Sheds to explore sculpture making from bike parts. Stockport Storytellers creative writing group has developed from the Culture Champions programme (see some of their creative output here: [Stockport Storytellers | About \(keepingustogether.org.uk\)](https://www.keepingustogether.org.uk)).
- Work on social inclusion and respect also included efforts to counteract ageist views and stigmatisation, particularly during the pandemic. Public health staff worked with colleagues from the Greater Manchester Ageing Hub and other localities on different campaigns to reduce the stigma of ageing. The theme for the International Older Persons Day in 2020 was '*Valuable, not Vulnerable*'. Stockport contributed stories of older volunteers and staff who had come together to support people during the pandemic. Needless to say, there is much to celebrate in terms of the contributions from older people themselves to the humanitarian response during the pandemic, particularly as volunteers and in mutual aids groups.

#### 3.3 Outdoor spaces and buildings:

- There are vital opportunities to get outdoor spaces and buildings right to ensure they are age-friendly, particularly at the planning stage. We have a well thought through approach to this:

- An Age-Friendly Checklist has been developed to embed age-friendly approaches into the Local Plan.
- Age-friendly considerations are part of planning approval processes for major applications [10 or more dwellings / >1000 sq metres of non-residential development].
- The Local Plan will be a key instrument for ensuring age-friendly considerations have influenced policy evolution. Consultation will take account of this, and the Age-Friendly Board will feed into this and be briefed on progress.
- Design guidance supporting the Local Plan will reflect age friendly requirements for buildings and spaces.

### **3.4 Transport:**

- Good transportation is vital for age-friendly surroundings. It supports changing mobility patterns in older age (particularly when these can change suddenly and radically in later life). It enables access to vital resources and services that support health and wellbeing. Moreover, good transportation encourages more equal access to the resources of the borough and wider conurbation.
- The Highways Improvements Programme and pavement surfacing work to make users more confident about surfacing quality has encountered delays due to the lockdown and initial close down of the construction sector as a consequence of Covid-19. However, it is still anticipated that the Highways Improvement Programme will meet its performance targets by 2024.
- There have been continued improvements to walking and cycling routes in the borough as part of the Mayoral Challenge Fund. This in being guided by a mixture of the Bee Network project and input from local WalkRide groups. The Mayoral Challenge Fund has seen schemes already delivered on the ground and work is ongoing in other locations. The Gillbent Road, parts of the Bramhall to A6 route and the Offerton Lane toucan and related work in St Thomas's and St Marys way are complete. Work is ongoing on a range of other locations.
- The Walking and Cycling Forum and the Disability Stockport Transport and Access Forum capture comments from the users on developing plans for council assets. These meetings have continued through the pandemic to support our residents.
- We also ensure that our asset management policy recognises the needs of older residents, as part of equality impact assessments.

### **3.5 Housing:**

- Good quality, affordable, well-designed housing is an important element in an age-friendly borough: helping redress health inequalities in later life; supporting wellbeing; and reinforcing a sense of identity and stability in older age. Given the growing proportion of time spent in the home in older age, housing and the meanings attached to 'home' take on considerable importance. However, in a changing and increasingly complicated climate of housing provision, tenure and support, there are real concerns around the possibility of genuine housing choice and constructive transition in later life.
- In 2019 a Housing Needs Assessment was successfully completed, as well as a mapping exercise of all accommodation (sheltered, extra care, residential/nursing care), combined with information on age, property type, value, income.
- We endeavour to build all specialist housing (housing specifically developed for vulnerable groups) to category 2 standard (equivalent to Lifetime homes

standard) and where possible to category 3 standard. For large sites (more than 30 units) a minimum of 5% of accommodation should be fully wheelchair accessible subject to demand and financial viability.

- Stockport Council – in partnership with others – is delivering the LEAP project (Local Energy Assistance Programme) for residents of Stockport across tenure, including older people.
- Stockport Homes Group, in partnership with Strategic Housing & Social Care, is developing replacement exemplar extra care housing on the site of Edinburgh Close. This development will have 49 units, approximately a third are for shared ownership, a third for affordable rent and a third for social rent.
- The Living Well at Home scheme has been developed with registered provider partners to grow their pledges for this work and this is ongoing work. A project to engage in the ‘Big Conversation’ with older people is currently being planned to address issues of barriers to moving, wrap around support, technology and enabled living.
- It has been three years since the Council launched the Prospectus for All Age Living in 2018-2035 (Happy, Healthy Homes to Age Well in Stockport). Since this time, there have been significant developments and progress made to bring the visions of this strategy into reality. A key element of this work has been the development of our beacon of excellence for care the ‘Academy of Living Well.’ This entails the acquisition and development of the St Thomas’ site and has resulted in architectural plans, operating models and financial viability work to provide a state-of-the-art intermediate care facility in Stockport. Other key elements are:
  - The launch of the universal offer of technology-enabled living
  - Design of the household model of care, including flexible and efficient approaches to supporting the workforce
  - Ethnographic study that included 20+ days desktop research, 12 remote workshops, 12 hours video footage review, and 10 co-creation workshops with residents.

### 3.6 CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENT:

- People are working longer during their lifetime. Working longer should also be working better. Age-friendly workplaces support people to remain in work, and find new solutions to support those aged 50 and over to return to work.
- Employment for people aged 50 and over was particularly negatively affected by the pandemic, and there are other financial consequences for this age group that cause concern<sup>1</sup>. The number of older workers seeking unemployment related benefits doubled during the lockdown; older workers who lose their jobs are far more likely to slip into long term worklessness; and the pandemic has already had a significant impact on older workers’ finances. Two out of five older workers say that they are concerned that their finances will get worse because of the pandemic.
- For Stockport, the claimant count data for over 50’s over the pandemic has changed as per the data in the table below:

Date	No. of Claimants	Stockport %	NW %	GB%
Mar-20	1,185	2	2.6	2.4
Sep-21	1,910	3.3	3.9	3.9

<sup>1</sup> [Tackling-worklessness-among-over-50s-after-covid-report.pdf \(ageing-better.org.uk\)](https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Tackling-worklessness-among-over-50s-after-covid-report.pdf)

- Stockport Jobs Match was established as a crisis response to employment issues caused by the pandemic and has been developed into a longer-term support for employers seeking to recruit workforce and for residents seeking work. This resource can be used to tailor support and target sectors, opportunities and age groups for help with getting into work, The Service will support career changers and those looking to get back into work after a break in employment. The market for jobs is very buoyant as the economy starts to recover from the effects of the pandemic and the Stockport Jobs Match site now has around 51,500 jobs advertised each month with over 1,000 job seekers and nearly 200 employers registered with the site.
- Stockport Jobs Match also offers careers advice and information as well as support with putting together a CV, something that over 50s may struggle with.
- In 2022, Stockport Jobs Match will run campaigns and targeted activity to support over 50s to get into good quality work so that the number of claimants is reduced.
- Throughout the last year, Adult Social Care have been working with Signpost for Carer as part of pilot approach to develop a robust offer for carers across Stockport, including carers' assessment, peer support, training and group. This work has been primarily focused on the assessment aspects to identify the specific areas of support and needs of carers. This has not been limited to traditional aspects of getting a break or emotional support but also includes training and employment opportunities.
- As part of the preventative commissioning work led by Adult Social Care, carers services are a specific strand and a new carers offer and approach will be developed.

### **3.7 COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND HEALTH SERVICES:**

- Work continues on major areas of work led by health and care partners, including the palliative care strategy, enhanced care in care homes, the frailty pathway, dementia work stream, and falls prevention, including improving access to exercise offers for older people.
- Four Team Around the Place captains have supported their neighbourhoods to gain age-friendly status. The intersectoral collaboration which was part of the place-based humanitarian response to the pandemic generated new learning and relationships on which to build.
- We have developed a range of self-care resources, both online (Healthy Stockport) and in print, accessible to older age groups (see also pandemic response below).

### **3.8 SOCIAL PARTICIPATION:**

- Having and maintaining social relations, feeling part of a network of family, friends and community, being involved in social activities that are meaningful, productive, stimulating, having people you can rely on to talk about things that matter to you – these are all a basic aspect of life.
- We have started the development of a Stockport One Stockport Age Friendly Network. Engagement events organised by Age UK Stockport had been planned for March 2020, but had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. The development of the One Stockport Borough Plan provided an opportunity to engage with older residents and organisations, so the first online meeting was held in September 2020. The Network has met online since January 2021 focusing on issues

raised by its members, including communication, digital access, avoiding scams, activities for older residents. As part of the Community Champions programme Age UK Stockport have been funded to continue the Network and increase engagement.

- During the early phase of the pandemic, older residents were encouraged to stay at home where possible and get support with shopping and medication. A Greater Manchester booklet 'Keeping Well at Home' was produced and distributed widely to support these residents. This included information about getting support, mental wellbeing and exercising at home. As lockdown restrictions started to be lifted, we heard reports that some residents had lost confidence in going out and about. Public Health produced a guide which covered – using public transport, shopping, social activities, meeting friends and family, and exercising outside. The guide was mainly for professionals and was made available through different networks.
- During the pandemic a *Digiknow* helpline was established supporting over 4,700 calls. A lending library was also established providing loans of digital devices and data for those most in need to reduce social isolation and much more. Currently there have been over 1,500 loans with an average of 360 items on loan per week. We also established a device recycle scheme with Renewal North West with over 900 devices being donated, refurbished and either offered to the lending library, or sold at discounted rates.

### **3.9 ACTIVE AGEING:**

- By any method you measure physical activity and healthy ageing, it is clear that physical activity is one of the single biggest thing that can improve the odds of healthy ageing (by up to 40%). As well as being more physically active in general, we know that maintaining and improving muscle strength and balance can help people in later life continue to carry out activities of daily living and reduce their risk of falls.
- The Stockport Active Communities Strategy – Active Ageing Programme has included:
  - Peer mentor training and support
  - SMILE programme
  - I Wish I'd Tried programme
  - iCan programme
- This programme has resulted in:
  - 150 inactive participants becoming active
  - 20 volunteers recruited
  - 500 hours of participant mentoring sessions
  - 40 promotional events attended annually
  - 10 case studies
- This learning is now being integrated into the Stockport Active Communities Strategy work to support older inactive people to become more active on a sustainable basis as part of system improvement.

### **3.10 COMMUNICATION:**

- During the pandemic, and particularly during lockdowns, communication with and for older people was a significant challenge. We developed online resources and the Coronavirus Helpline, but remained conscious that many older people still prefer print media (see next section on development and delivery of relevant materials).

- The renewed commitment to an age-friendly borough as part of the One Health and Care Plan and Borough Plan provided a new impetus to develop our age-friendly [webpages](#) further also.

## 4 IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC AND RESPONSE

4.1 A survey after the early months of the pandemic found that:

- 23% of people in their 50s & 60s have seen their physical health deteriorate during the lockdown period (20% in Greater Manchester)
- 39% of people in their 50s & 60s state that their mental health has deteriorated during the lockdown period (33% in Greater Manchester)
- 37% of people in their 50s & 60s have been drinking more alcohol (33% in Greater Manchester)
- 39% of people in their 50s & 60s have been smoking more (32% in Greater Manchester)

4.2 The humanitarian response in Stockport, although not limited to older people, included:

- Council Coronavirus Helpline with support from a wide range of partner agencies, including VCSE and community groups.
- Welfare calls by a variety of agencies (to own clients, and others), and support for those shielding, and anyone else in need, including shopping, food deliveries, prescription deliveries etc.
- At the outset of the first lockdown, an early letter from the council to all residents aged 70 and over, with key advice and support options.
- Development of Council webpages for easy signposting to support.
- Appreciating older people's preference for printed media, specific print materials were developed by a number of agencies, including Age UK, Stockport Homes, the Health and Nutrition Programme, as well as the Greater Manchester 'Keep Well at Home' booklet, and these were distributed by a variety of routes and services.
- In autumn 2020, we distributed over 11,000 copies of our own Stockport *Age-Friendly Bulletins* (essentially a short directory of key services for a variety of potential needs) via vaccination clinics and key services and partners, alongside a smaller number of Greater Manchester *Keeping Well this Winter* booklets. We have just completed a 2021 version of the Age-Friendly Bulletin which will be printed and distributed similarly this winter.
- Digital Inclusion Alliance supported residents to get online; Digital Champions supported residents remotely; distribution of tablets to care homes etc.
- Considerable work on food supply and help with shopping during the early lockdown period.
- Stockport Dementia Care Training set up a telephone helpline for carers looking after someone with dementia and the Memory Service distributed wellbeing packs.
- Support for carers was provided by Signpost for Carers and Age UK Stockport and other VCSE partners.
- A range of support was provided by Council and CCG for care homes and residents during the pandemic.

- Some 1,500 creative care kits were distributed to vulnerable older people via a variety of frontline agencies.
- Day care providers and many other services have maintained contact with their older and vulnerable clients during periods of lockdown.
- Libraries have offered home delivery and a range of digital services.

4.3 The Community Champions programme has identified older people as a cohort requiring more support, which will be developed by Age UK Stockport, including help with recovery. This will also support the further development of the emerging Age-Friendly Network for Stockport.

4.4 Last but by no means least, whereas older people have rightly been a focus of much support during the pandemic, they have also contributed greatly to the community-based support provided by mutual aid groups, and many VCSE organisations and groups, and over 600 volunteers, which was so vital to protecting the vulnerable and contributed to a spirit of togetherness.

## 5 NEXT STEPS

5.1 Our One Health and Care Plan references our age-friendly ambitions and includes actions identified by staff and communities engaged in its development (see box below).

### An Age-Friendly Borough

**Objectives:** To embed a culture of fairness and an environment that supports people to start well, live well, and age well.

**Actions:**

- Ageing Well Strategy
- 'Big Conversation' to plan for a happy, healthy older age
- ONE Stockport Age-Friendly Network
- Active Ageing Programme
- Promote and support inclusive employment practices
- Volunteer Hub development
- Invest in lifelong learning, skills and training
- Develop an all age living campus, including intergenerational housing and an Academy of Living Well
- Planning for green spaces and land use through our Local Plan
- Deliver our Active Communities Strategy
- Invest in tele-care, health and technology assisted living
- Invest in digital platforms for care homes
- Development of the Frailty Pathway
- Inter-generational programmes
- Activity-based social prescribing
- Support for carers

**Outcome Measures:**

- Consistently high service user experience
- Reduce the proportion of people reporting loneliness and isolation
- Increase the proportion of people who are active
- Reduce the average age of people entering permanent care
- Improved market sustainability
- People enabled to live well at home for longer.



- 5.2 The Ageing Well Strategy needs to be refreshed to take account of these aspirations, and the changed realities following the pandemic. This does not mean that the strategic objectives of our original strategy change significantly, but rather updates and adds to the actions required to achieve them, given the new contexts.
- 5.3 It will also be vital to ensure the age-friendly aspirations are clearly understood by everyone to reach far beyond the health and care agenda, and that in particular the Economic Plan and Local Plan fully take account of our commitment to an age-friendly borough.
- 5.4 The Age-Friendly Board will oversee this work going forward, and partners will be invited to contribute to the review of the Strategy.

## **6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 The Board is invited to:

1. note this update report
2. re-affirm its commitment to Stockport as an age-friendly borough
3. contribute to renewing the strategy over the coming months, and
4. receive a refreshed strategy document in early 2022.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

There are none

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Judith Strobl on telephone number Tel: 0161-474-2535 or alternatively email [Judith.Strobl@stockport.gov.uk](mailto:Judith.Strobl@stockport.gov.uk)