

# Ageing Well Partnership Community Consultation: Questionnaire survey results

## August 2023



## **Introduction**

Living in Stoke on Trent following the pandemic is likely to be very different than it was before the pandemic. The pandemic influenced and impacted our lives in ways that we could never have imagined, particularly on our ageing communities. Whilst one could make considered estimates as to what the key challenges were currently facing our older local, population, members of the Ageing Well Partnership (AWP) were collectively curious to know just what the key challenges were for our ageing communities; what would help to alleviate such challenges; what did healthy ageing mean to individuals, by engaging with them directly. Subsequently a simple four-point questionnaire was developed by the group, to enable a wider consultation opportunity. The aim of this consultation was to explore current perceptions of our local communities in Stoke on Trent. This report contains collated responses from the consultation questionnaires, as discussed and agreed by all member organisations of the AWP meeting on April 19, 2023.

### **Members of the 15 participating organisations include:**

1. Alzheimer's Society
2. Age UK
3. Approach Dementia Support
4. Age Friendly Stoke
5. Beat the Cold
6. Beth Johnson Foundation (BJF)
7. Honeycomb Group
8. Keele University
9. Methodist Housing Association (MHA)
10. New Vic Theatre
11. North Staffordshire Pensioners Convention
12. OLGBT
13. Saltbox
14. VAST
15. Young at Heart (Father Hudson's Care)

### **Questionnaires received**

We received completed questionnaires from 5 organisations.

## The findings are based upon the FOUR initial questions:

1. What is important to you, at the moment, living in Stoke-on-Trent?
2. What services would make your life easier and better, and please say why?
3. What does ageing well mean to you?
4. What do you see are the barriers to you ageing well?

Findings remain anonymous but contain geographical data based upon the first three digits of participants postcodes and the number of participants engaged both individually and in a group setting.

## Participation

Responses were reasonable; 93 questionnaire forms returned (11 group; 82 individual):

<b>Total participants</b>	<b>219</b>
Groups sessions held	11
Group participants	137
Individual participants	82

## Geographical locations

Postcode	Location	Total participants
ST1	Hanley & Etruria	53
ST2	Bucknall	43
ST3	Longton, Weston Coyney	14
ST4	Hartshill & Stoke	42
ST5	Newcastle-under-Lyme	5
ST6	Burslem, Tunstall, Baddeley, Milton & Norton	20
ST7	Kidsgrove, Chell & Packmoor	35
ST8	Biddulph	1
ST9	Werrington, Endon & Wetley Rocks	3
ST10	Cheadle	0
ST11	Blythe Bridge & Caverswall	1
ST12	Barlaston	0
ST13	Leek	1
No postcode given		1

The majority of completed questionnaires were from Hanley and Etruria, Bucknall, Hartshill and Stoke and Kidsgrove, Chell and Packmoor (total, 173:79%), and are presented demographically in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Map plotting the post code spread of questionnaire locations and numbers of members taking part.



**Responses to questions:**

**Key themes Question 1: What is important to you at the moment, living in Stoke on Trent?**

<b>Key themes</b>	<b>Specific examples</b>
<b>People</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family and friends</li> <li>• Keeping in touch / reunions from school and work</li> <li>• Religion / beliefs</li> <li>• Mobility</li> <li>• Independence</li> </ul>
<b>Places</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green spaces and parks</li> <li>• Nothing to entice people into the city, not a vibrant place anymore</li> <li>• Local facilities</li> </ul>
<b>Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good community/ people/ community spirit/ helping others</li> <li>• Mores shops in Hanley</li> <li>• Better roads/ condition of pavements</li> <li>• Community investments: day care, centers, activities</li> <li>• Volunteering activities and social involvement</li> </ul>
<b>Feeling safe</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being safe and feeling confident to go out (post-COVID/ personal safety)</li> <li>• Fixing potholes / pavement shops in</li> <li>• More Police</li> <li>• Having enough money to survive</li> <li>• Antisocial behaviour in the city</li> <li>• Dog fouling on the increase</li> </ul>
<b>Infrastructure: accessible community facilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping Bus passes/ better bus service</li> <li>• Better accessibility to services: transport, shops, banks, branches, recreational areas, footpaths, post offices</li> <li>• Health services: better access to Doctors, dentists, pharmacy.</li> <li>• Hospital waiting times, support services, free prescriptions</li> <li>• Public services</li> <li>• Affordable food</li> <li>• Mobility</li> <li>• Local councilors</li> </ul>
<b>Future</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate change planning / environment</li> <li>• Local history and valuing heritage</li> <li>• Cost of living</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowing what is going on in the city: events, courses support</li> </ul>

**Key themes Question 2: What services would make your life easier and better, and say why?**

Key themes	Specific examples
<b>Infrastructure: Transport</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bus services/public transport: more routes, affordability, better services after 7 pm to access cinema, theatre and to socialise</li> <li>• Better parking</li> <li>• Path from Fishponds Way to Leek Road needs to be open to aid accessibility</li> <li>• Keeping my car on the road</li> <li>• Improved accessibility to public transport to hospital to attend appointments</li> </ul>
<b>Healthcare</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to GP, more physical fitness opportunities, stop 8 am bookings, nutrition guidance</li> <li>• Digital health</li> <li>• Better social services</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge &amp; Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More physical fitness opportunities, nutrition guidance</li> <li>• Digital health</li> <li>• Form filling, groups for older people</li> <li>• Money advice including energy saving</li> <li>• Cheaper food</li> <li>• Environmental support: solar panels, green alternatives</li> </ul>
<b>Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social support: advocacy, form filling, groups for older people</li> <li>• Community support for people struggling e.g. homelessness</li> <li>• Free TV licences for those 75+</li> <li>• Affordable social events for pensioners</li> <li>• Being able to get in touch with people by telephone, not internet</li> <li>• Fair pension</li> <li>• Environmental support: solar panels, green alternatives</li> </ul>
<b>Involvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being involved with statutory services for user engagement</li> </ul>
<b>Future</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grants to make homes energy efficient: better accessibility</li> <li>• Access to local amenities and having places to go</li> </ul>
<b>Safety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More visible Police</li> <li>• Safer places for older people to go</li> <li>• Fix potholes</li> <li>• Safety improvements in in town centres (tackle antisocial behaviors)</li> <li>• More police support: speed and cutting antisocial behavior</li> </ul>
<b>Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More public toilets, libraries, museums</li> <li>• More communal spaces to visit, community centers</li> <li>• More shops, better facilities where you can speak to real people</li> <li>• Access to local bank branches</li> </ul>

### Key themes Question 3: What does ageing well mean to you?

Key themes	Specific examples
<b>Acceptance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being comfortable and happy with ageing</li> <li>• Enjoying things at my own pace</li> <li>• Growing older free from financial worries</li> </ul>
<b>People</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a group of trusted friends</li> <li>• Socialising with like-minded people</li> <li>• Opportunities to volunteer</li> <li>• Family and friends as support</li> </ul>
<b>Keeping healthy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being healthy and fit</li> <li>• Eating well</li> <li>• Maintaining mobility</li> <li>• Swimming</li> <li>• Keeping warm</li> <li>• Having a good GP and healthcare services</li> <li>• Regular wellbeing checks</li> </ul>
<b>Having hobbies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessing creative activities: music, art, photography</li> <li>• Holidays</li> </ul>
<b>Infrastructure: Accessibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local services easily accessible without transport</li> <li>• Access to green spaces and age friendly public services</li> <li>• Accessible support services e.g. helplines</li> <li>• Getting a better pension to pay food bills</li> <li>• Being able to get about and visit friends and the theatre</li> <li>• Knowing where to get support</li> <li>• A good bus service</li> <li>• Understanding technology</li> </ul>
<b>Independence and autonomy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participating in the community</li> <li>• Being valued and having something useful to do</li> <li>• Being an active member of the community: skills, knowledge</li> <li>• Expendable finance</li> <li>• Energy efficient home</li> <li>• Continuing to learn, meet new people trying new things</li> <li>• Feeling safe where I lived</li> <li>• Feeling confident and relaxed when walking down the street</li> <li>• Being treated as an adult with respect, dignity and courtesy</li> <li>• Not being means tested</li> <li>• Feeling less stressed about change (being able to speak to a person on the phone)</li> <li>• Being able to do the same thing you have always done,</li> <li>• Understanding technology</li> <li>• Not being lonely and isolated</li> <li>• Staying young at heart</li> </ul>

## Key themes Question 4: What do you see as the barriers to ageing well?

Key themes	Specific examples
<b>Knowledge and information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of information about events and activities</li> <li>• Lack of social care, health services and treatments</li> <li>• Having housing that can cope with severe weather changes</li> <li>• Government</li> </ul>
<b>Finances</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial struggles: rising costs, economy, impacts on savings and pensions, digital affordability, pension, healthy diet, keeping warm</li> <li>• Pension too late</li> </ul>
<b>Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illness: Poor health and mobility</li> <li>• Aches and pains, arthritis</li> <li>• Can't access GP</li> <li>• Access to NHS services such as physiotherapy</li> <li>• Lack of social interaction</li> <li>• Being housebound</li> <li>• Lifelong disability</li> <li>• Adjusting to the changes of getting around</li> </ul>
<b>Community and socialisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of places to meet friends</li> <li>• Lack of community facilities</li> <li>• Antisocial behaviour and safety</li> </ul>
<b>Self-worth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling of use to the community</li> <li>• Having to do things I don't want to do</li> <li>• Can no longer do the things I want to do</li> <li>• Loneliness and isolation</li> <li>• Losing friends</li> <li>• Living in a deprived area</li> <li>• Lack of social interaction</li> <li>• Being housebound</li> <li>• Lifelong disability</li> <li>• Negative attitudes towards older people</li> <li>• Attitudes of the younger generation</li> <li>• Having to move house after 40 + years</li> <li>• Having to move into a care home</li> <li>• Having to stop driving</li> </ul>
<b>Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age friendly public transport to attend appointments</li> <li>• Lack of community support</li> <li>• Living in a deprived area</li> <li>• Poor health of carer and carer support</li> <li>• Communication: need for printed information</li> <li>• Better bus service</li> <li>• Lack of age friendly public services such as waste collection</li> </ul>



## Summary of the consultation

Weakened mobility, death of loved ones, children growing up and moving away, deteriorating health problems, withdrawal from social and working life – these are just some of the most potential, significant issues affecting older people across the UK. One of the most noticeable and challenging aspects of aging is the physical decline that occurs over time. As we age, our bodies gradually lose their vitality and resilience. The once effortless activities may become more strenuous, and older people may find themselves battling ailments and accumulative chronic health conditions over time. Whilst the four most common emotional challenges that the elderly face are: **loss of independence**; cognitive decline; social isolation; and physical decline. Such challenges we expected to underpin some of the outcomes of this short consultation exercise.

There were 16 themes highlighted across the responses from the four questions posed in this consultation (see Table 1). These have been colour coded to simplistically illustrate common threads across the four questions.

**Table 1. Emergent themes across each of the four questions.**

### Question 1. Themes

People
Places
Community
Feeling safe
Accessible community facilities
Future
Knowledge

### Question 2. Themes

Transport
Healthcare
Knowledge & Education
Support
Involvement
Future
Safety
Community

### Question 3. Themes

Acceptance
People
Keeping healthy
Having hobbies
Accessibility
Independence and autonomy

### Question 4. Themes

Knowledge and information
Finances
Health
Community and socialisation
Self-worth
Resources

People remain important regardless of age, in fact they may become more important as one ages, and death becomes a regular companion amongst friends and family as everyone ages. The infrastructures surrounding community living seemingly become increasingly complex and important as one ages. Factors that compound these infrastructures threaded across all these questions and included:

- Accessibility
- Transport
- Community services
- Safety and feeling safe
- Social involvement

Community remained important, particularly as services are perceived as changing and dwindling, following the pandemic. Such factors become barriers to ease of accessibility and impact profoundly on social activities if older communities do not feel confident and safe travelling about. Such infrastructures are important to this population. People wanted to feel physically and emotionally safe to continue to connect with wider social networks, and indeed to make new, different, valuable and meaningful connections. Travel is an important element around accessibility and feeling safe. As many older people become unable to drive and lose their established dependence; as public transport reduces; when many older people are faced with the increasing expense of private hire travel; it becomes easier (and feels safer) to simply stay at home.

Community facilities have changed, with reductions in museums and libraries; different and difficult access to GP's and hospital support many reliant on digital technology; and with access to banks and rail services becoming more digitalised which can be off putting to many older community members. Maintaining connected to the wider society seemed challenging but important to this older population, as they recognised the issues related to the environment, and wanted involvement in consultation and advice to be available to inform their thinking around their involvement. They recognised the need for information around solar panels, green alternatives, energy saving etc. which would be welcomed.

The future is important to us all, and older members demonstrated reasoned insight into common challenges to our future. Climate changes, appropriate housing and the preservation of future history and heritage remained important in a somewhat changing landscape of the local economy and society.

Knowledge, information, and support are common features across three of the questions posed. It was recognised that the need for knowledge around (for example) nutrition, physical health, digital health, form filling, financial advice does not decrease with age but is likely to increase.

As physical health is likely to decline as one grows older, it remained a common theme or sub theme throughout this consultation, from a personal and indeed future perspective. Accessing GP's, understanding digital health and becoming aware of its features, and increased social support was fully recognised.

Underpinning the outcomes of this short exercise, attitudes to ageing well remains paramount if our ageing communities are to feel comfortable about themselves as they grow older. They need to feel able to enjoy activities and engagement at their own pace and in their own space. They need others to recognise and value that older people are simply part of a healthy continuum of life. They also indicate the need for a collaborative approach from organisations to ensure specific needs can be met holistically.



