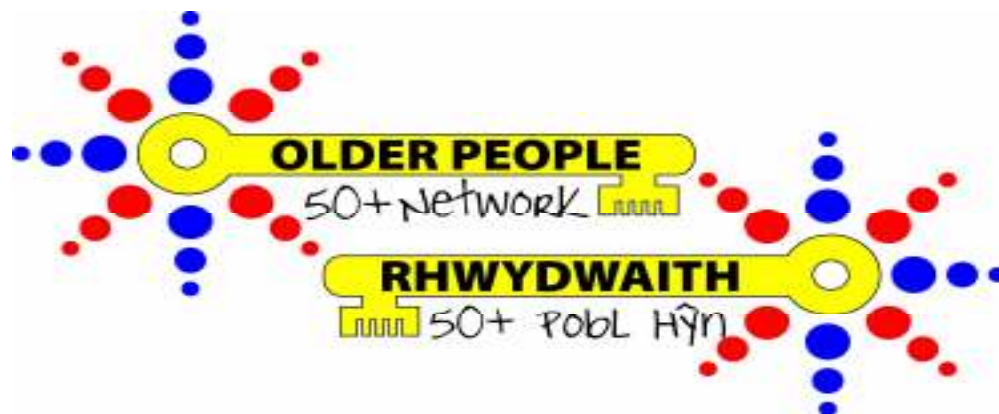


The Strategy for Older People in Wales

Living Longer / Living Better Implementation within Blaenau Gwent



Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Strategy for Older People – Living Longer – Living Better.
Annual Report 08/09

Introduction

In accord with Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) advice, this year's annual report has been prepared in a different format to that which has been used over recent years. WAG notes that it is aware that there has been significant activity in each local authority and that this has contributed directly to the achievement of the four key objectives of the Strategy for Older People (SfOP) Phase 2. Based upon advice received, this year's annual report takes the format of presenting case studies that demonstrate how the four key objectives are being achieved, with a focus on the outcomes that have been achieved to date under the auspices of the Strategy. This differs to previous reporting arrangements that have concentrated mainly on the volume and range of activities undertaken. Advice received requested that evidence may either relate to all four key objectives or if appropriate, any one of the objectives prioritised for this year. Additionally it was noted that the SfOP Phase 2 has a commitment to take forward 'Indicators of Change' (National Performance Indicators). It was suggested that some consideration should be given as to how the Indicators of Change are reflected in achievement of the four key objectives of the Strategy, although it was acknowledged that whilst this may be difficult to do retrospectively ... 'a reflection of them in principle' only is required and not an approach that draws upon research based evidence.

Within Blaenau Gwent, the approach taken towards implementation of the SfOP over recent years has been thematic, reflecting the overarching key national objectives. Production of previous annual development plans have clearly reflected initiatives that have concentrated upon:

1. Valuing Older People: Maintaining and Developing Engagement.
 - Series of Involvement Events
 - Ongoing work addressing ageism/discrimination
2. Changing Society: The Economic Status and Contribution of Older People
 - Development of Life Long Learning Initiatives
 - Supporting Initiatives assisting people remain/return to employment
 - Maximising Income Initiatives
3. Well Being and Independence:
 - Independent Living (Health, Social Care and Housing initiatives)
4. Making it Happen:
 - Review and revision of local SfOP, heavily influenced by feedback received from older people through involvement events organised (Valuing Older People).

- Production of an agreed multi-agency Strategy 'Making Aspirations a Reality – the Older People 50+ Agenda in Blaenau Gwent' (Published February 2009).

The adoption of the above agreed strategy by a range of locality partners really provides a renewed emphasis to the local authority and its partners in taking forward the objectives outlined. Its implementation is supported by arrangements that will keep it under regular review and updated through the production of future annual development plans. These, as before, will continue to be structured around the overarching key national objectives.

This annual report commences by providing local evidence to the 'Making it Happen' objective, as this provides the overarching 'strategic steer' to local implementation of the strategy over the next few years. Additional evidence is provided however, (through the production of one selected case study to each of the other key objectives) which hopefully provides example of outcomes and benefits being achieved on some of the very specific areas of work being carried out.

The final part of this Annual Report provides a financial breakdown of how the Older People 50+ Network within Blaenau Gwent has used its allocation of development funding from Welsh Assembly Government during 2008/2009. The evidence provided demonstrates that although the overall level of funding available has been limited, nevertheless, it has provided a strong impetus for effective implementation of the strategy at local level.

Strategy for Older People in Wales – Living Longer / Living Better

Making it Happen: The Implementation of the Strategy

Making Aspirations a Reality – the Older People 50+ Agenda in Blaenau Gwent (2008 – 2013)

Strategy for Older People in Wales Theme: Making it Happen: The Implementation of the Strategy. The value of strategic frameworks influencing the development and implementation of policies and action plans. Implementing the SfOP in Wales with support funding to ensure that it continues to be a catalyst for change and innovation across all sectors, improving services for older people, providing the basis for effective planning for an ageing population and reflecting the concerns of older people.

Why introduced: The second phase of the SfOP in Wales was launched in March 2008 with the publication of Living Longer - Living Better 2008 – 2013. Within this phase of the strategy the aims are refined to build on the accomplishments of the first phase. It calls on renewed efforts from local authorities and partners and emphasises ‘the mainstreaming’ of older people concerns across all policy areas. Against this backcloth it was felt necessary to update Blaenau Gwent’s Development Plan for the SfOP and importantly put in place a revised strategy that reflected the current needs, concerns and aspirations of people aged 50+.

Description: In order to put in place a revised strategy that ‘starts’ from what people aged 50+ have been saying to the authority and its partners at a series of 50+ Older People involvement events over the past couple of years (providing additional evidence to needs assessment activity), an analysis of the feedback received at these events was undertaken. This was seen as being central to the process to ensure better understanding of issues from perspectives of people aged 50+ and place aspirations and concerns at the centre of the strategy importantly assisting the ‘mainstreaming process’.

In response to the issues raised a revised local strategy was produced that links with national strategic objectives and also one that clearly demonstrates how those local issues and concerns raised would aim to be addressed, specifying actions and responsibilities within the future production of annual development plans.

Additionally in the review held achievements were listed in order to demonstrate progress made to date.

Overall to ensure that the revised strategy clearly represented the local perspectives of older people rather than purely service led perspectives and that ‘outcomes’ achieved would assist improve quality of life.

Making it Happen: The Implementation of the Strategy

Outcomes and Benefits	<p>Importantly the production of an agreed multi agency strategy that aims to continue implementing the underpinning themes of the strategy for older people in Wales as they link to those issues identified by older people 50+.</p> <p>Commitment to maintain Blaenau Gwent Older People 50+ Network as the key multi agency reference group for implementation of the strategy.</p> <p>Commitment that the concerns of older people will be 'mainstreamed' / integrated into all policy area.</p> <p>Agreement to review the progress on strategy implementation at the end of each calendar year and produce a revised annual development plan to ensure an appropriate response to changing needs and requirements of people aged 50+.</p> <p>Production of Older People 50+ Network logo.</p> <p>Closer work with Welsh Assembly Government and Welsh Local Government Association; linkage with the Older People Commissioner.</p>
Lessons Learnt	<p>Need to demonstrate clearer linkage between national and local strategies and how they link to the understanding of local people in relation to their issues and concerns.</p> <p>Need to constantly review and check effectiveness of existing communication arrangements to further strengthen partnership arrangements particularly at time of major structural change.</p>
Evaluation	<p>Internal review and evaluation of Blaenau Gwent's Development Plan leading to issue of 'Making Aspiration a Reality – the Older People 50+ Agenda in Blaenau Gwent. (2008 – 2013)</p>

Valuing Older People: Maintaining and Developing Engagement

Project Name	Retired Seniors and Volunteer Programme (RSVP) Intergenerational Initiatives within Blaenau Gwent
Strategy for Older People in Wales Theme	<p>Valuing Older People: Maintaining and Developing Engagement.</p> <p>Promote positive images of ageing and ensure that the over 50's are able to participate as fully as they wish in their communities, giving them a stronger sense of engagement and influence.</p>
Why was the Project introduced	<p>Welsh Assembly Government's launch of an Intergenerational Strategy during October 2008.</p> <p>Blaenau Gwent Older People 50+ Network's approach to the local implementation of the Strategy for Older People.</p> <p>Response to certain issues drawn to the fore at involvement events by older people themselves viz the need to ensure that there is greater understanding and respect between the generations and the need to promote positive images of the over 50's.</p>
Partnership and Collaboration (including engaging and involving older people)	<p>In partnership with RSVP, the Older People 50+ Network increased its level of support to this specific area of work during 2008/09 in order to make greater impact on local issues and concerns raised.</p> <p>Additional to an annual grant of £2,000 (to enable RSVP to maintain a local presence and ensure all activities and volunteers continue to offer optimal value in the area) an allocation of £4,394 was made to enable the fixed term appointment of a part time development worker who concentrated efforts on recruiting volunteer organisers. This has enabled a structure to remain in place to oversee intergenerational activities in the longer term. Some examples of work undertaken include the following:</p> <p>In partnership with local schools the Reminiscence Organiser has played an active role in developing heritage sessions. All schools in the area were forwarded project literature and this helped realise requests for sessions to be arranged.</p> <p>Additionally, under the 'Cooking in Schools Project' the Development worker has liaised with Communities First with the aim of extending this project to include wider participation within the community.</p> <p>Development work undertaken also has included volunteer recruitment activity to further develop the knitting in schools programme.</p>

Outcomes and Benefits	<p>243 volunteers registered with RSVP in Blaenau Gwent with schools based intergenerational projects and the knitting project.</p> <p>RSVP aims to develop a service which is led and managed by the older volunteers themselves supported by a small core of professional Development Workers; genuine engagement of older people delivered helping them to identify and respond to local need as volunteers, working in partnership with the local authority.</p> <p>Reminiscence Project – RSVP were successful in bringing £48,000 to the area in 2006 – 2008 to develop this project funded by the Heritage Lottery fund. With some support, the schools aspect of this project will continue into the longer term future.</p>
Lessons Learnt	<p>RSVP have been particularly successful in developing a number of intergenerational projects in Blaenau Gwent, enjoying a positive relationship with most primary and secondary schools but concentrating their work in three key areas viz 'Reading in Schools'; 'Knitting Schools' and a Reminiscence Project.</p> <p>Also RSVP runs a highly successful knitting project that engages a range of less mobile and elderly people. It encourages social interaction by meeting regularly in different venues throughout Blaenau Gwent and encourages 'non-typical' volunteers to contribute and enjoy the many health benefits of volunteering.</p> <p>In relation to the Reminiscence Project –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The take up of training by older people was varied. Some volunteers did not want formal training, hence more informal 'softer' learning opportunities would have been a better option in this case. - Extra school sessions were delivered at short notice due to a high demand from schools for the project. Need to limit the number of sessions and ensure a varied use of volunteers who can offer different perspectives of the World War 2 period. - Older volunteers with living memories of the war are becoming more scarce or immobile. The subject area should have also included the post war period with the effects of the war still being felt by local people within that time.
Awards	None

Evaluation

An evaluation of the Blaenau Gwent Reminiscence Project (which was developed to deliver structured intergenerational activities / events to encourage people of all ages to celebrate their local history together, building mutual respect for each other and a shared stake in local heritage) has been carried out.

During 2006 – 2008 the project delivered 24 heritage activities, comprising of 15 schools based sessions and 9 community based sessions. It engaged 23 volunteers, 622 school children and 795 members of the general public.

Project produced a booklet of war time recollections and an intergenerational DVD of Wartime Memories, which features young people narrating and illustrating the 'real life' stories of local older people. Both are available in local libraries, participating schools and have been distributed to local day centres and community centres. The project also recorded a wartime tea dance and an intergenerational concert on DVD.

Bryn Gwyn School 10th January 2008

School Session 27 Children Yr 6
4 Volunteers



Following on from the reminiscence session, volunteers attended the school to participate in digital history recordings with the children. The volunteers related stories of their wartime memories to the children who then illustrated and recorded the stories into digital format.

Roseheyworth Millennium School 14th May 2008

School Session 14 children Yr 6
5 volunteers

Following the very successful session the children invited the volunteers to join them for tea while they entertained us with the 40s style 'swing dance' they'd been practising.



Pen Y Cwm Special School 3rd June 2008

School Session 25 children ages 11-19
3 volunteers

Following a request from the school, the Reminiscence Project attended Pen Y Cwm special school. The children and volunteers spent the afternoon looking at and discussing the wide range of artefacts taken in to the school. The uniforms and gas masks proved very popular with the children, as did the old-fashioned ink pens.

Pont Y Goff 10th June 2008

School Session 19 Children Yr 6

3 Volunteers

The Reminiscence Project was invited to Pont Y Goff to take part in their celebrations of their 150th anniversary. Following the session the volunteers were invited to join the children in a wartime tea.

Glyn Coed Comprehensive 1st 2nd 3rd July 2008

School Sessions 110 children (5 classes over 3 days Yrs 8, 9,10)

3 Volunteers

The Reminiscence project was requested by the history department at Glyncloed Comprehensive to attend over a 3 day period for sessions with three different year groups.

School Sessions' Statistics for Yr 2

Project workers	No. Of schools	Volunteers	children
1	8	10	277



Telling tales of how life used to be during wartime



Report on Community Event 3rd March 2008

This dual event celebrated St David's Day while reminiscing on the war years. The event was organised in partnership with Blaenau Gwent Older Person's Strategy Group and included a range of information stands on organisations of interest to older people living in the Local Authority area. RSVP volunteers were on hand to decorate the venue and serve lunch. The attendees were given a buffet, following which the Willowtown School Choir came along to sing a mixture of songs from the 40s and a selection of Welsh cultural songs in celebration of St. David's Day. A local entertainer, Lyndon Jones, continued the musical entertainment with a selection of wartime songs in which the school children and older audience were invited to join in. A range of instruments (tambourines shakers etc) were issued to the children and audience.

Project workers	Volunteers	Participants School & entertainers	Audience	Totals
2	4	51	100	157



Changing Society: The Economic Status and Contribution of Older People

Project Name	Adult Learning 50+ Initiatives
Strategy for Older People in Wales Themes	<p>Changing society – the economic status and contribution of older people. Develop policies to increase the capacity of the over 50's to work, learn....</p> <p>Wellbeing and Independence – Improve Health and Wellbeing through initiatives....</p>
Why was the project introduced?	<p>Following a local review of implementation of the Strategy for Older People in 2006, a thematic approach was adopted towards the utilisation of WAG development funding, in order to make greater impact. Key projects supported fell within the following themes of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participation and Involvement• Life Long Learning• Returning to active employment and• Health and Wellbeing.
Partnership and Collaboration (Including engaging and involving older people)	<p>Since 2006, approximately £13,000 annually of Strategy funding has been allocated to employ an Adult Learning Life Long Learning Coordinator for 15 hours a week. The Coordinator acts as an advocate for adult life long learning, working with providers, voluntary agencies such as GAVO, Age Concern and U3A and Learning Action Centres to develop opportunities.</p> <p>The Coordinator also carries out outreach work, to consult with and attract people who might not become involved in life long learning otherwise. A wide ranging approach in engaging with individuals and various community groups. (e.g. Male Voice Choirs as men are traditionally under-represented in adult learning sessions) has been undertaken.</p> <p>The Coordinator is based with the Older People's Strategy Participation / Involvement Officer. This means they can share resources and time for outreach work, and have a shared database of older people.</p> <p>Work with the Corporate Communications team is ongoing in trying to achieve a higher profile on the work of the Older People 50+ Network within the authority.</p>

Outcomes and Benefits	<p>The Coordinator has secured small but useful amounts of funding for various groups and courses. Amounts range from £300 to £4,500 from sources such as Comic Relief, NIACE, Community Chest etc. This includes funding for 'culture club' sessions for non-accredited learning on subjects such as music, history, creative writing or IT as well as support enabling the continuation of various culture related activities / groups. Many people attend these sessions (who would not attend accredited learning sessions), such as learning IT in order to shop or send emails to family, rather than learning IT for a work based situation. To sum up, the activities arranged enable people to remain active mentally, physically and socially in the way that they want to.</p> <p>As a result of the success of this post, alternative funding has been secured so that the post will continue after April 2009 and allow consolidation of work carried out to date.</p>
Lessons learnt	<p>The approach of this project has been, wherever possible, to respond to what people say they actually need or would benefit from. Consequently it has been necessary to go at the pace of the individual or group involved, and acknowledge that whilst sometimes there may be differences, it is vital to stand back and let older people have a real say and influence over the way in which developments take place.</p>
Awards	<p>None</p>
Evaluation	<p>No formal evaluation undertaken since commencement of this project, however, the Adult Learning Coordinator has been successful in securing nine small grant allocations amounting to £8,390. Additionally supporting nine projects secure £13,695.</p> <p>In total realising the sum of £22,085 through 18 small grant applications.</p> <p>During 2008/09 a total of 52 activities have been held involving 413 older people.</p> <p>17 activities have been funded via NIACE.</p> <p>31 activities have been funded via SfOP Development monies.</p> <p>4 activities through lifelong learning arrangements.</p>

Following Taking Control taster sessions at Brynithel Community Centre the NIA group successfully applied for a community chest grant. They were awarded £1000 to continue with weekly “Energise Body and Mind” sessions.



At Blaina 2 groups of 10 learners completed an IT for beginners course. Four of the participants have progressed to improvers IT courses run by the Bridges Into Work project.



A group of residents from Llys y Capel sheltered housing scheme in Blaina applied for a Gwanwyn grant to hold further learning sessions in the lounge area. They have received £500 to fund music activities.





Arranged in partnership with the Big Pit, Blaenavon, residents in Blaina, Tredegar and Abertillery enjoyed outreach visits from museum staff learning about the development of this important heritage site. They also heard a selection of emotive, inspiring stories collected from the former miners and staff who worked at coal mines in the area.



Abertillery Culture Club members successfully applied for Comic Relief funding to continue with educational activities in the lounge area of the sheltered accommodation. They received £4000 in July 2008 and hold bi-monthly informal learning sessions in various subjects including history, art and craft.

Project Name	“Living Independently within Blaenau Gwent in the 21 st Century”
Strategy for Older People in Wales Theme	<p>“Well-being and Independence”</p> <p>Improve the health and well-being of older people through initiatives to promote health, as well as high quality, responsive and appropriately regulated health, social care and housing services</p>
Why was the project introduced?	<p>The project was established to meet one of the strategic aims of the “well-being and independence” theme, namely to “promote the development of a range of housing, domiciliary care, support and advisory services to offer older people different types of support as their needs change, while preserving their independence”.</p> <p>Within the local strategy, “Living Independently within Blaenau Gwent in the 21st Century”, the Authority identified the need for the “development of ExtraCare Housing initiatives in line with implementation of the Living Independently Strategy – promoting new approaches to accommodation with care”.</p> <p>The Authority also recognised there is an increasing desire and expectation for social care services and support to be delivered in a person’s own home, helping them to maintain their independence and introduced an additional element into the strategy, namely to “help people remain in their own homes through the provision of adaptations, repairs, heating, assistive technology and community equipment services”.</p>
Partnership and Collaboration (including engaging and involving older people)	<p>The extra Care initiatives are at different stages of development. The funding for two complexes has been agreed by WAG and construction on the first of the two complexes (Ebbw Vale) commenced in January 2009 with an anticipated opening date in July 2010. This facility is being developed in partnership with Linc-Cymru. The second complex (Nantyglo) which is to be developed by United Welsh is currently the subject of a planning application to the Local Authority. Construction of this complex is due to commence in January 2010 and it is anticipated that the facility will open in April 2011. An application for a third facility in Tredegar is currently being considered by WAG.</p> <p>In formulating the Strategy for Living Independently in Blaenau Gwent in the 21st Century, the Authority acknowledged that the elderly and vulnerable will also need assistance with home repairs to facilitate independent living.</p> <p>In 2008/9, the Authority allocated £340,231 in capital</p>

funding for Living Independently Repair Grants and £196,120 for Minor Works. These budgets have been fully allocated and spent. This assistance programme is delivered in partnership with Care & Repair and the organisation has successfully delivered the Minor Works (Grant) Scheme since May 2008, in partnership with the Authority.

Outcomes and Benefits

The opening of the ExtraCare facilities will create a new dimension for care and support to vulnerable people in the Borough. The opening of the ExtraCare facilities will coincide with the closure of 4 residential homes for older people owned and managed by the Council. One of these homes, Hafod Dawel, Nantyglo closed in 2008 and a concentrated effort is taking place to re-settle residents from Plas-y-coed, Ebbw Vale. The Authority will continue to contract with the independent sector for residential care placements for older people.

In 2008/9, Care & Repair assisted over 3,200 clients, consisting of advice, minor adaptations or small works by the Agency's handypersons. The vast majority of the Agency's clients are aged 65+ or vulnerable disabled.

It is worth noting that fewer older people are now seeking residential care as a result of the approach of the staff within the Authority to place greater emphasis and provide the necessary support, that enable older people to retain their independence and remain within their home / local community.

Lessons Learnt

The direction for the "Living Independently" strategy is consistently being reinforced in the practices of the community social work teams; occupational therapy; re-ablement and Home Care and the emphasis in supporting people to remain at home is helping Social Services to limit the numbers of people being admitted to residential care. Overall this has resulted in a continuing reduction in demand for residential services.

The **ethos and early promotion of ExtraCare** to groups of older people is being positively received with many commenting on this service being a more appropriate option and setting - for people where change in their personal circumstances may result in close 24 hour care and support being needed.

The **Living Independently Home Repair Scheme** will continue to target older vulnerable people and it will build on the success and added value achieved by working in partnership with Care & Repair. It will enable also some larger-scale repairs to be undertaken to achieve sustainable living conditions.

Awards

None

Evaluation

The initiatives have not been the subject to any formal evaluations.

**Strategy for Older People in Wales – Living Longer / Living Better
Use of Funding 2008 - 09**

	Expenditure Item	Amount	£
1.	<u>Valuing Older People: Maintaining and Developing Engagement</u> Engagement / Involvement / Participation		
	a) Part time Public Participation / Involvement	Outreach – Employee costs	16,353.69
		Mileage	559.80
		Transport Fees	56.00
		Hospitality	89.32
	b) RSVP: Engagement / Intergenerational Activities		2,000.00
	Development Worker (Fixed term) Costs		4,394.00
	Additional Activities		200.00
		<u>Subtotal</u>	23,652.81
2.	<u>Changing Society</u>		
	a) Improving Access to Life Long Learning Opportunities		
	Part time Adult Learning Development Coordinator	Outreach – Employee Costs	13,239.35
		Mileage	386.36
	Educational and Cultural Activities (Culture Club)		1,685.36
	b) Support initiatives that assist older people remain / return to active employment for as long as they wish to / are able.		
	Prime Cymru – Volunteer Mentor Scheme.		5,000.00
		<u>Subtotal</u>	20,311.07

**Strategy for Older People in Wales – Living Longer / Living Better
Use of Funding 2008 – 09**

	Expenditure Item	Amount	£
3.	<u>Wellbeing and Independence</u>		
	British Red Cross – Community Equipment Services (help assist older people in practical tasks)	2,117.00	
	<u>Subtotal</u>	2,117.00	
4.	<u>Making it Happen</u>		
	(Core Costs Contribution towards employment of full time Strategy Coordinator)	35,000.00	
	Service Support Costs enabling implementation of strategy arrangements / events / fees / admin support etc.		
	- Better Government for Older People BGfOP Annual Membership Costs	340.43	
	- Stationery	73.82	
	- IT Equipment	146.20	
	- Office Equipment	278.00	
	<u>Subtotal</u>	35,838.45	

**Strategy for Older People in Wales – Living Longer / Living Better
Use of Funding 2008 – 09**

<u>Summary on Income and Expenditure</u>		£
Expenditure		
Valuing Older People: Maintaining and Developing Engagement		23,652.81
Changing Society: Life Long Learning / Employment		20,311.07
Wellbeing and Independence		2,117.00
Making it Happen		35,838.45
Remaining Budget		14.67
	<u>Total</u>	81,934.00
Income		
WAG Core Services		35,000.00
SSSA Formula – Older People		42,540.00
Agreed Carry Forward to 2008/09		4,394.00
	<u>Total</u>	81,934.00