

In June to August 2022 Age Concern with Go North Devon and Barnstaple Library undertook a community survey for people living in Barnstaple and District aged 60+. **154** surveys were completed and the following data/information was collected.

Summary

Available services are not well known about and transport to access services does not meet community need. The vast majority of older people are living independently in their own homes; IT use is higher in the younger age groups in the survey; only 36% of respondents feel well connected to community; 55% have good wellbeing but 45% do not. The correlation between good wellbeing, being well informed about community services and feeling well connected to community would imply that wellbeing could be improved by better service marketing and providing transport and support to improve community connection.

Work needs to be done to help older/more vulnerable people to feel confident about leaving their homes alone. The impact of Covid-19 is still visible in the survey and improving antisocial behaviour and police presence (especially at night), town pavements, seating, disabled parking and general town appearance would help the most vulnerable; however, some of these problems will be difficult to solve.

Over 50% of respondents are happy with the offer of local services. Go North Devon's Ring and Ride is the most popular transport service and it has 11 requests for more information; Age Concern's Community Transport, Social Activities and Befriending are its most well known services and it has 54 requests for more information; Barnstaple Library is used by 59% of all respondents with Book/Audio Lending, Mobile Library and Computer Support being the most popular services, there were 24 requests to know more about library services. All 3 service providers need to invest in marketing their services and making them more accessible; transport remains the main issue for service accessibility.

Most requested service developments, apart from improved marketing and transport, are Pub Lunch Clubs, Friendship Café and Day Clubs.

Only 34% of respondents think that quality of life for older people in and around Barnstaple is good, 66% think it could be better; this survey highlights action that can be taken to improve this statistic.

Next Steps

The results of this survey will be published and shared with the statutory and voluntary sector to help formulate transport, service and town development plans to meet the needs of older people.

The next phase of this project will produce a strategy and action plan to improve service marketing, transport development, social opportunities and community connection for older people in and around Barnstaple.

Detailed Results

Age and Gender

68% of respondents were aged 75 and older.

32% of respondents were aged 60 to 74.

29% were male, 71% were female

In general the older age groups had higher use/awareness of Age Concern services, the middle age groups had higher use/awareness of Go North Devon services, the younger age groups had higher use/awareness of Library services.

Home living circumstances

54% live alone

36% live with a partner – more common in the younger age groups

8% identify as carers – this is a low number, it was clear from the survey data that more people were caring for another person than identified as carers

2% live with family

2% live in sheltered/supported housing – this low number is representative of census data and reflects national and local Government policy to support people to live independently at home rather than in care homes/supported housing schemes.

Use of technology

108 people use a mobile telephone – 70%

73 people use a computer/ipad/laptop – 47%

The younger end of the age scale, aged 60-74 were the largest users of technology. Only 4 people who did not use IT stated that they wanted to. Only 3 people aged 80+ used a computer.

People who attended the Library had a higher IT usage.

Wellbeing

Wellbeing was defined as 'feeling well, satisfied and happy'

45% have good wellbeing

44% felt their wellbeing could be better

11% felt their wellbeing was poor

55% wanted to improve their wellbeing

Connection to your community

36% felt very connected to community

46% felt a little connected to community

16% felt not at all connected to community

2% did not want to be connected to community

There is a correlation between good wellbeing, feeling well informed about available services and connection to community.

Confidence to leave the house alone – 10 being the most confident, 1 being the least confident

69% are between 6-10 in confidence to leave the house alone

31% are between 1-5 in confidence to leave the house alone

The older age groups, aged 75+, were less confident to leave the house alone.

There were 6 comments on the survey where people explained that they felt vulnerable in Barnstaple outside of day-time with antisocial behaviour (alcohol/drugs related behaviour) affecting their ability to enjoy the town.

There were 5 comments about pavements being uneven and difficult to navigate and 2 comments about the poor accessibility of shops for people with limited mobility. There were 2 comments about the lack of disabled parking close to the market/shops.

There were 3 comments about the lack of seating in the town for older people and 3 comments about the litter and scruffiness of the town affecting general 'health and wellbeing' of residents.

There were 2 comments about lack of visible policing in the town which was felt would increase confidence for older/vulnerable people.

Transport Services

Ring & Ride is the most well known/used transport service – 34% shopping, 26% for social trips

Volunteer car for medical journeys 18%

Cancer Car 14%

Shopmobility 12%

Volunteer Car for shopping journeys 10%

Other services are 8% and less

There were 32 requests to know more about transport services – 21%

Volunteer Car and Ring and Ride had the most interest at 16 and 11 requests

There were 6 requests asking for better public bus services and comments about poor bus co-ordination for getting in and out of town at sensible times and the complexity/difficulty of bus changes to access hospital appointments with long walks and waits. There were 2 comments about lack of bus services on Sunday's and Bank Holidays.

Age Concern Services

Community Transport was the most well known Age Concern Service, 18% medical and 10% shopping

Social Activities 17%

Befriending 15%

Hospital Support 12%

Care Line 10%

Carer Support 9%

Other services were 8% and less

There were 54 requests to know more about Age Concern services – 35%

Transport and Social Activities had the most interest at 16 and 14 requests

There were 8 comments that although these services were not currently needed they would be in the future.

Barnstaple Library

12% often visit Barnstaple Library

18% sometimes visit

29% occasionally visit

41% never visit

59% have some use of the library

Book/Audio lending is the most well known/used service 33%

Mobile Library 16%

Computer Support 12%

Knit and Mix 11%

Creative Writing 9%

Singing 9%

Walking 9%

Memory Club 9%

Others are 8% and less

There were 24 requests to know more about Library services – 16%

Singing has the most requests – 7

There were 2 comments that the Library was too difficult to access due to long walks from bus stops.

Feeling informed about the services, support and activities that are available

31% felt well informed

41% felt only a little informed

28% did not feel informed

69% felt only a little or not informed

Requests for better information/marketing of available services was the 2nd most common survey request with 18 people asking for this.

Barriers to service use (in addition to lack of service knowledge)

Respondents listed 129 barriers to service use.

These are:

Transport 56%

Covid-19 43%

Being a full-time carer 11%

Needing better health 8%

Needing funding 5%

Needing one to one support 5%

Are people happy with the local offer of services, support and activities?

54% are very/quite happy about the offer of local services

46% are not happy/don't know – a reflection of the 69% who do not feel well informed about the local services on offer.

Requested new services/activities

In order of popularity:

Pub Lunch Clubs (low cost sociable meal with others) 26%

Friendship Café (low cost community café for older people who would like to meet others) 22%

Day Clubs (with lunch and activities for people who need a little more support) 14%

Men in Sheds / She Shed (making and mending with other like minded people) 7%

Walking Sports (walking football and netball, keeping fit in a sport you enjoy with others) 6%

Tea Dance 5%

Quality of life in and around Barnstaple for older people

Good 34%

Could be better 47%

Poor 19%

66% would like to see an improvement to the quality of life for older people in and around Barnstaple