

Getting wiser about growing older



The Centre for Public Scrutiny

The Centre for Public Scrutiny (an independent charity) is the leading national organisation for ideas, thinking and the application and development of policy and practice to promote transparent, inclusive and accountable public services. We support individuals, organisations and communities to put our principles into practice in the design, delivery and monitoring of public services in ways that build knowledge, skills and trust so that effective solutions are identified together by decision-makers, practitioners and people who use services.

The Ageing Well programme

The Ageing Well programme has been delivered by the Local Government Association. The programme supported local authorities to improve their services for older people within a challenging environment of reductions in public sector funding and an unprecedented increase in the number of older people. The programme encouraged local authorities to take the lead to work in partnership with other local organisations to develop imaginative approaches to the issues faced by their particular communities.

An essential aspect of the programme was to help them to improve efficiency whilst still delivering quality services. The sector-led programme consolidated current best practice from local authorities and the lessons learned from earlier pilot activities, as well as harnessing leading innovative thinking.

Acknowledgements

CfPS is grateful to all the councils that expressed an interest in taking part in this overview and scrutiny support programme and to the councillors, council officers and other partners that took part in the various supported activities. We are also grateful to the CfPS expert advisers who carried out the work and provided reports about what was achieved in each of the areas.

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Contents

Introduction	4
What was done?	5
Special attributes – what made the work interesting?	10
Key learning points	12
Tools and techniques	15
Early impacts	17
Conclusion	18

Introduction

The work described in this document was commissioned from the CfPS by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as part of a wider programme to help overview and scrutiny committees review how local areas are addressing the needs of older people.

The support delivered by CfPS advisers in 26 council areas (a mix of counties, districts, unitaries and London boroughs) was commissioned through the Local Government Association's Ageing Well programme to complement a practice guide¹ and a '10 questions'² guide published for overview and scrutiny committees in January 2011 named A Good Place to Grow Older. The support was designed to help councils appreciate the value that their scrutiny functions can add to tackling the challenges of the ageing society, by using the published guides as a springboard to action.

This publication summarises what happened in the 26 areas, setting out a selection of examples of special attributes of the work, key lessons about the impact that scrutiny can have and some of the early impacts.

Ageing Well is not just about services for older people

Building a good place to grow older involves much more than effective services for older people. And the wellbeing of older people goes far beyond health and social care, extending to the many factors that make an area a good place to grow old. These factors include public services, but also the contribution of the voluntary sector and civil society, private businesses, employers and the character of local communities and neighbourhoods.

As the number and diversity of the older population increases, responding to the needs of older people, and planning for an ageing society is becoming an even higher priority. Against a background of severe financial constraints on public services, the CfPS support helped councils take a step forward through overview and scrutiny to assess the extent to which councils and, importantly, their partners in other sectors are anticipating and responding to the needs of the ageing population and how older people themselves are being enabled to contribute to this response. In many cases a cross-sector response, bringing in emerging health and wellbeing boards and LINK/local Healthwatch, was beneficial.

1 'A Good Place to Grow Older? 10 Questions to ask if you are scrutinising local preparation for the ageing society,' <http://cfps.org.uk/publications?item=6981&offset=25>

2 'A Good Place to Grow Older? Practice Guide for Overview and Scrutiny Committees,' <http://cfps.org.uk.surface3.vm.bytemark.co.uk/publications?item=111&offset=50>

What was done?

The support from CfPS was available between October 2011 and March 2012 and short summaries of the approach in each of the 26 areas are set out below. The resources available meant that only a few days of support were able to be provided in each area.

A small number of examples are used in subsequent sections to highlight special attributes of the work undertaken, key learning points and early impacts.

Council	What they did
Barnsley	To prepare for a review about whether Barnsley is a good place to grow old, the council was keen to identify good practice to inform their consultation plan for the review. The CfPS adviser provided tips for good consultation, potential consultation questions and advice about reaching seldom-heard people and groups.
Bradford	The overview and scrutiny committee wanted to find out about support for older people in Bradford and the progress towards personalisation. A drama about the interaction between an older resident and an adult social care worker highlighted some key messages about personalisation, co-production and alternative delivery models.
Brighton and Hove	The council wanted to boost the capacity of the Older People's Council (OPC). Themes from individual interviews were shared, together with recommendations for changing approach to become more effective, to raise the profile of the OPC and to better represent older people.
Calderdale	The overview and scrutiny committee wanted to revisit the outcomes from a recent review of services for people with dementia to challenge the emerging findings. The CfPS adviser facilitated an interactive session about how to use scrutiny effectively to make a difference to ageing well.

Council	What they did
Darlington	The council wanted to develop ageing well as a focus for planning and scoping scrutiny reviews and to use the CfPS four principles of good scrutiny as a framework for questioning. Small groups planned a review, identified witnesses and prepared a questioning strategy.
Derby	The council wanted to revisit the principles behind ageing well, looking at how scrutiny could be used as a lever to make improvements to promote ageing well in a holistic sense rather than focusing solely on health.
Devon	County and district councillors attended an ageing well summit, along with health service professionals and people from the voluntary and community sector. The emphasis was on sharing experiences and ideas. An action plan was considered by corporate scrutiny to identify how to follow up the ideas through relevant scrutiny committees.
Halton	By comparing local and national data, the overview and scrutiny committee used the CfPS '10 questions' guide to identify housing and the environment as key local priorities and a work programme building in next steps was developed collaboratively, identifying how scrutiny could add impact.
Barnet	Using the CfPS '10 questions' guide to identify and prioritise to demonstrate value, the overview and scrutiny committee developed a framework to embed older people's needs and concerns in to scrutiny by designing a protocol, flow chart and prioritisation matrix, setting out key lines of enquiry.
Haringey	Using the council's Ageing Well Strategy, the overview and scrutiny committee looked at how to evaluate, develop and implement scrutiny work previously carried out. The CfPS adviser also supported a review of proposals to close a rehabilitation unit. NHS Haringey built overview and scrutiny committee recommendations into a service tender specification.
Havering	Following a Mapping the Health Horizon for an Ageing Population event, scrutiny committee chairs met to consider the outcomes. Reports from the event are being considered by scrutiny committees to identify topics for future scrutiny that revolve around ageing well.

Council	What they did
Hillingdon	The council held an event about the impact of dementia to inform a subsequent scrutiny review about diagnosis, early intervention and support in crisis for people with dementia. The outcomes were collated and presented to a dementia working group to influence the direction of the review and the recommendations made by the group.
Merton	The overview and scrutiny committee wanted to strengthen the process for choosing scrutiny topics and setting objectives for task group reviews, defining questions more tightly to focus reviews through a gold standard approach. More rigorous scoping of reviews now takes place, based on a strong evidence base rather than relying on anecdotal knowledge.
Luton	An interactive learning event had input from a neighbouring council with differing demographics, the local voluntary sector and local authority commissioning teams and was followed by a session for the health overview and scrutiny committee. Both sessions highlighted the need for councillors to be proactive in building ageing well into scrutiny activity that recognises different life stages.
Norfolk	The overview and scrutiny committee wanted to know how non-executive councillors can support the development of services relating to the ageing well agenda and how the council and its partners can work better together (especially in the context of best practice across other two-tier rural counties) and in the context of reducing budgets.
North East Lincolnshire	An interactive event brought together the health overview and scrutiny committee and the shadow health and wellbeing board. The older people's needs assessment within the JSNA was a key resource. Councillors recognised that they need to engage with the voluntary sector and review their work programme and range of methods available for scrutiny of the ageing well agenda.
Northampton	The CfPS adviser helped the overview and scrutiny committee review the draft independent living strategy for older people, providing a critical friend role to challenge whether there are better ways of undertaking scrutiny. Refocused questioning ensured evidence related more effectively to outcomes around independent living and ageing well, to help articulate recommendations more clearly.

Council	What they did
Oldham and Rochdale	This was an innovative joint approach to scrutiny of ageing well, moving away from conventional ways of scrutiny. The councils took an asset-based approach to identify common ambitions and ways to achieve them. An informal joint scrutiny group was established to hear expert advice and make recommendations.
Redcar and Cleveland	Councillors wanted to develop scrutiny of neighbourhood based ageing well pilots in two deprived wards by developing research and analytical skills to undertake effective scrutiny, working in groups looking at different sources of research. A second workshop was used to hold a scrutiny meeting in order to apply some of the questions raised.
Sandwell	Using the CfPS guide Walk a Mile in my Shoes (http://cfps.org.uk.surface3.vm.bytemark.co.uk/publications?item=6960&offset=75), Sandwell looked at different perspectives of the council's ageing well policies, strategies and services from the point of view of vulnerable groups in order to build a scrutiny review of the issues into the work programme for next year.
Sefton and NHS Sefton	Interactive sessions to develop awareness of impending challenges of the ageing society helped to contextualise scrutiny work programmes, including input from NHS Sefton's Public Health Intelligence Team. Facilitation allowed debate to look not only at the issues of ageing society, but how scrutiny can add value to this agenda.
Sheffield	Using a fictional case study, Sheffield examined how the ageing well agenda can be embedded at three levels – city, ward and community – so that councillors feel empowered to challenge services both inside and outside the council to increase the focus on prevention and downstream investment with an understanding of the strategic benefits.
Solihull	Identifying issues to develop a scrutiny action plan, Solihull recognised that the health and wellbeing board is best placed to lead on the ageing well partnership strategy but that scrutiny should both hold the board to account and contribute to policy development by exploring key issues and engaging with older people.
Southend	The council built ageing well into a review about using volunteers to improve the quality of life of older people. A focus group looked at the challenges and benefits of volunteering, and the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed volunteers strategy and recruitment pack.

Council	What they did
Stevenage	The council wanted to improve ageing, make Stevenage a good place to grow older and begin to develop a strategy for independent living. The council used growing support for a survey or consultation to identify the key issues for local people that impact on ageing well and used this information to inform the development of a strategy.
York	Members shared their experiences and identified key ageing well issues in their wards. The CfPS guides helped put these in to context – ageing well is about life experience, the challenges and changes from birth and the support, services and resource put into place by the council and other agencies.

“Our workshops were themed around the personalisation agenda and demonstrating the assets of an ageing population and this definitely did seem to have impact through thought-provoking presentations, drama and discussions.”

Bradford Council

“We gained a roadmap for improvement for the Older People’s Council. Having an external review made this possible.”

Brighton and Hove Council

“It supported members to identify solutions that overview and scrutiny can bring to the challenges of an ageing society and enabled them to develop a next steps plan.”

Halton Council

Special attributes – what made this work interesting?

Advisers supporting councils were asked to describe what was special about the work in each of the areas. The following selection captures the flavour of the diversity of the work carried out.

Brighton and Hove

The Older People's Council (OPC) is unique – the only elected older people's body in the UK. The OPC is an independent group supported by Brighton and Hove Council that works to ensure all older people in Brighton and Hove are treated with respect and dignity and have access to services, support and opportunity to lead a fulfilling life. Older people in Brighton and Hove elect members to the OPC every four years.³

Southend

Southend wanted to explore the value that working with volunteers can bring to services aimed at improving the quality of life of older people. It also wanted to establish the value of volunteering to the quality of life for older people who volunteer – to make sure it is recognised, valued and celebrated – and to bring together local people from within communities, volunteering groups and the voluntary and community sectors.⁴

³ More information about the OPC can be found at: www.olderpeoplescouncil.org/index.html

⁴ Information on the value of volunteering in Southend can be found at: www.savs-southend.org/files/Economic%20Impact%20of%20the%20Third%20Sector%20in%20Southend%20on%20Sea_0.pdf

Oldham and Rochdale

These councils recognised that working together to address common issues could have benefits for both areas. Using an asset-based approach to scrutiny helped to identify what works well in communities and how to build on it. The stories that were shared through the exercise highlighted excellent examples of informal help that already exist in communities and pointed to the importance of mutual support and strong relationships between local people.⁵

London Borough of Barnet

Barnet developed a framework to help councillors decide what should be in their forward work programme and to take a more robust approach to scoping scrutiny reviews to improve impact – asking questions about topics that have not been asked before, based around gold standard questions – developing a defined link to the potential for significant change on outcomes directly affecting older people.

Sefton

Older people are often regarded as consumers of resources, users of services or problems that need fixing. Sefton wanted to change that thinking, using a different approach to thinking about older people, the issues and

⁵ More information about asset based approaches to community wellbeing can be found at: www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/18410498

challenges they face and the concept of ageing well, recognising that older people should be appreciated as assets who can strengthen and bring value to communities.

Sandwell

The CfPS guides A Good Place to Grow Older and Walk a Mile in My Shoes helped develop a rounded picture of older people's experiences in their communities and the circumstances when they use services. From there, councillors explored issues from the perspectives of a number of vulnerable groups.

Bradford

Scrutiny of older people's issues, health and social care and the personalisation agenda can be daunting and it is often difficult to carry it out in a stimulating and engaging way. Bradford was keen to use a variety of techniques to stimulate discussions and enhance the impact of the sessions. By using drama to explore the interaction between older people and public agencies, the issues for older people in Bradford were brought alive.

Luton

Involving a councillor and council officer from another council demonstrated a commitment to avoid the attitude of 'not invented here' when thinking about solutions to older people's issues and ways to carry out scrutiny. The value of tackling the issues of ageing well by looking at ageing across generations, cultural and ethnic groups was valuable to understand the different ways that ageing is regarded through stages in life.

Devon, Northampton and Stevenage

Getting district councils involved in scrutiny of older people's issues, these councils recognised that ageing well relies on factors that are not all under the influence of top tier councils and extend beyond social care services. In Devon, the county and districts received support together. In Northampton and Stevenage, the district councils separately examined the contribution they can make.

Sheffield

Councillors were able to share their own experiences and think about their role as councillors in terms of promoting lifelong wellbeing, challenging services inside and outside the council to embed older people's issues at city, ward and community levels. A fictional case study based on a real location in the same Office of National Statistics cluster as Sheffield helped councillors think about what to consider when examining how scrutiny could help embed the ageing well agenda across the council.

"Raised awareness of the positive aspects of ageing addressed some of the myths and negative stereotypes about older people. Thinking of ageing well more as a process, rather than just an age."

Luton Council

Key learning points

Advisers supporting councils were asked to describe some of the key learning points to emerge from their work. The following selection captures the flavour of the diversity of the work carried out. Although the learning points set out here were generated through individual support to councils in their own context, they represent a set of principles that all councils can incorporate in to their approach to ageing well.

Sandwell

- Ageing starts when we're young – to tackle ageing well effectively, it is important to consider the whole life journey and how councils and their partners can add value at each stage.
- It is important to bring generations together to understand and tackle ageing well issues. Myths and fears can exist in and across communities about people from different generations and these can be tackled to develop cohesion.
- Councils and their partners need to beware of labelling older people – people are individuals with experiences to share and stories to tell.

York

- Councillors are well connected in their communities, but as well as helping to solve problems in their wards, it is important for them to think strategically about how a wide range of services can add value over the whole of the council's area.
- Popular places to retire have many strengths to ageing well including quality of life and economic benefits, but in these areas there can also be hidden pockets of deprivation or demand for services.
- Consider the employment and economic dimension to ageing well – about whether it's possible to extend the years of work whilst providing opportunities for younger people.

Sheffield

- Don't rely on reports and management information – the value of scrutiny is best demonstrated when a range of evidence is considered and data is combined with hearing people's stories and experiences to build a rich picture.
- Ageing well issues are complex and solutions can be elusive. It's important to hear a wide range of perspectives and evidence by engaging with older people and communities themselves.

- Some solutions to issues can lie within communities themselves, but sometimes intergenerational relationships need to be improved before change can happen. Bringing people together across generations can be valuable.

Oldham and Rochdale

- Using an asset-based approach, respecting people as valuable and setting out to demonstrate what is good about communities can be a powerful way to get people on board.
- Sharing success stories that focus on what's positive about places or communities can build momentum for change.
- Traditional approaches to scrutiny might not be suited to tackling ageing well issues, so consider moving towards innovative approaches.

Southend

- Tackling ageing well issues means valuing the insight of local people, volunteering groups and the voluntary and community sectors.
- Volunteering adds value to society and encouraging volunteering is important, but sometimes good intentions might actually discourage volunteering, for example through overly bureaucratic approaches.
- Working with volunteers brings benefits and challenges. Good support and communication can improve the quality of volunteering.

Northampton

- Engaging with a wide range of people through scrutiny is valuable, but it is important to identify a range of core questions to ask everyone that you ask to provide evidence to enable a thread of continuity.
- It is important to think about the value added through the questions you ask – make sure that questions relate effectively to independent living and ageing well.
- Although recommendations about service improvement are important, focus on recommendations aimed at improving strategy and influencing opportunities for local people to age well.

Luton

- Significant value can be added to strategies for tackling ageing well issues by including ageing well as an integral principle of scrutiny, rather than focusing on individual service issues.
- Think about how best to use scrutiny to future proof approaches to ageing well rather than focusing only on current problems that need fixing.
- It's important to look at ageing across generations and ethnic groups as there are different cultural aspects to ageing that need to be considered.

Solihull

- It's important to identify isolated people in time to provide support before crises develop and scrutiny can encourage care services to look for ways to do this effectively, along with the voluntary and community sector.
- Support for people to help them plan their finances for different stages of life can be a valuable way to make the most of scarce public resources and help keep people healthy and living independently.
- Councils and their partners should develop a range of transparent and inclusive ways for older people to be involved in decision making, either about aspects of their care or about broader strategic issues.

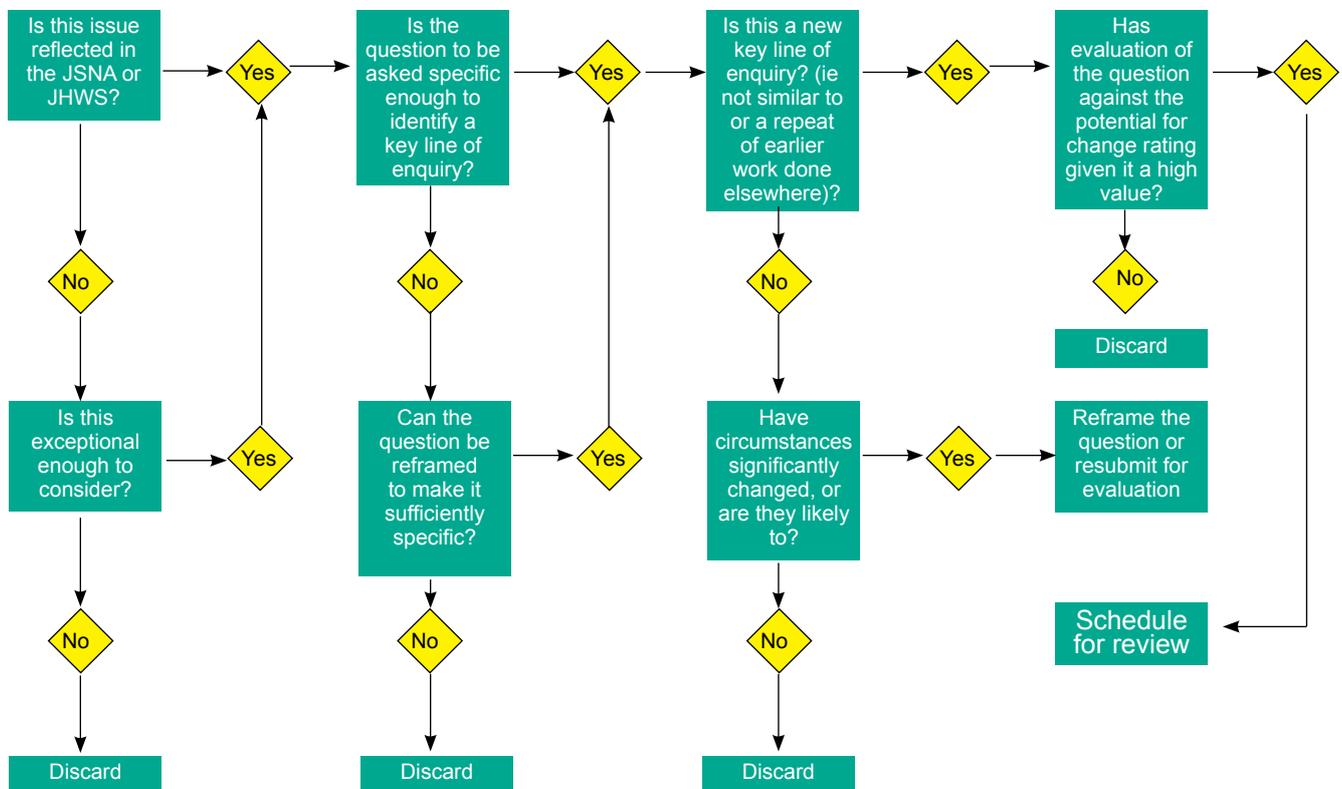
“Councillors are more aware of the need to consider ageing well as part of all scrutiny work – not just health and social care issues.”

Sheffield Council

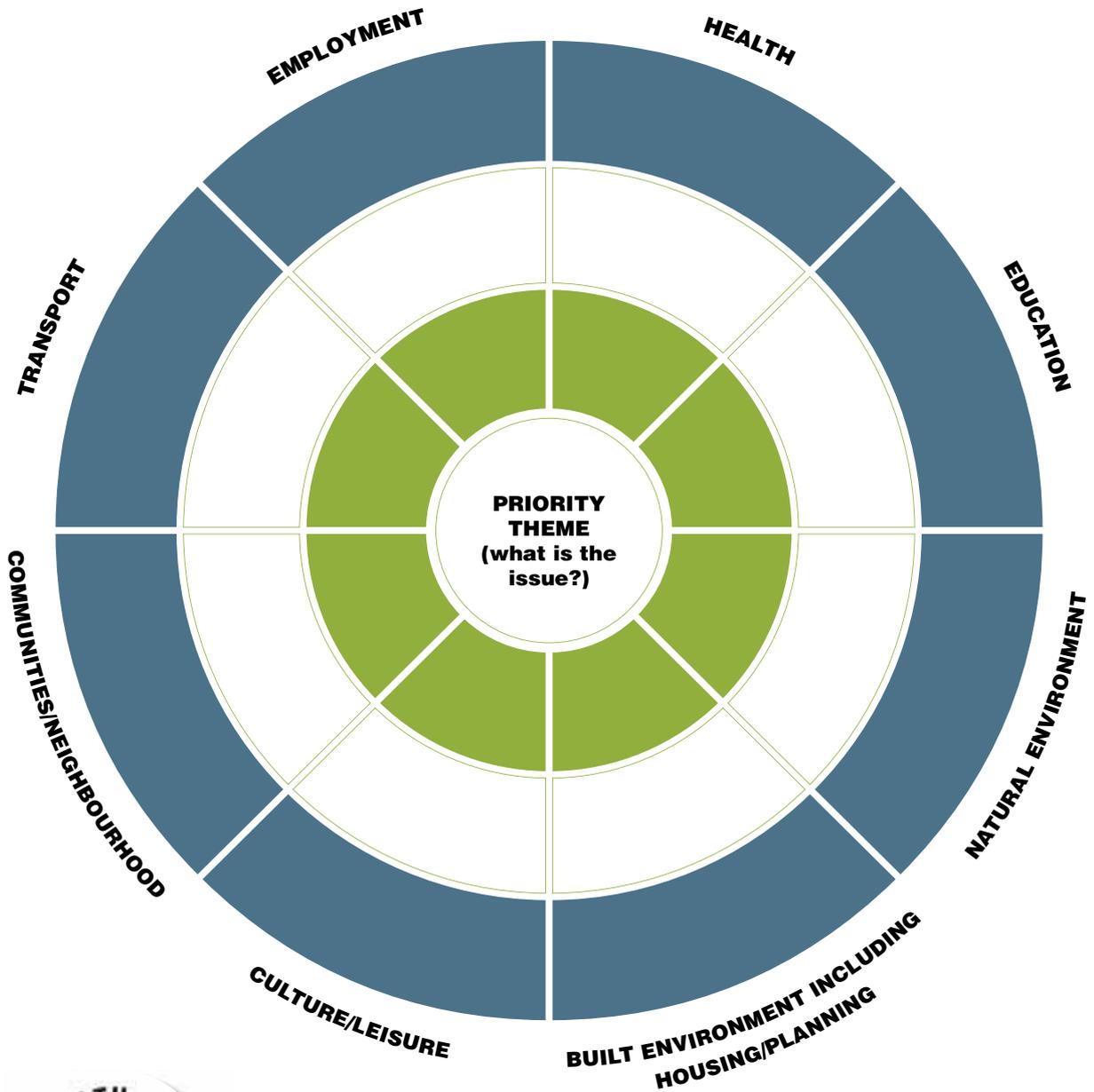
Tools and techniques

A couple of particularly helpful tools and techniques emerged from the work and these are illustrated below.

Barnet's flowchart framework



CfPS 'engagement wheel'



Key

- inner circle - individual
- mid circle - community + vs
- outer circle - org/agency

Early impacts

Advisers supporting councils were asked to describe some of the early impacts to emerge from their work. The following selection captures the flavour of the diversity of the work carried out.

“The presumption was that this was a health related issue only, but providing an environment where everyone can age well should be factored into all decisions.”

York Council

- become a ‘go-to’ consultee for older people’s issues
- communicate to a wider audience, for example through letters to local newspapers
- university students helping to develop a website
- recruit two co-opted members to better reflect the city’s demographics
- undertake scrutiny type enquiries into topics of interest.

Haringey

Haringey looked back at some of their previous work, considered some of the broader issues around ageing well and also carried out a specific review of proposals to close a rehabilitation facility. As a result of the work supported through this programme, NHS Haringey built recommendations from the scrutiny review of rehabilitation services into a tender specification for service provision.

Brighton and Hove

The support from the programme aimed to develop the capacity of the Older People’s Council. As a result of the support provided, the council agreed to:

- develop a work plan with three or four key issues

Southend

As a result of the support through the programme, Southend is reviewing the information and support given to volunteers, for example the local volunteer pack is being reviewed to avoid the good intentions of the council to encourage and support volunteering having the effect of discouraging volunteering.

Barnet

As a result of the support through the programme, Barnet developed an innovative framework to assist in scrutinising outcomes rather than structures and processes. The framework has the concept of a gold standard question at its heart, a thread that runs through scrutiny from start to finish.

Conclusion

The development work undertaken through the programme in 26 areas around England provided a rich diversity of support that was targeted at the requirements of each of the councils in their own context, rather than providing a one-size-fits-all solution to scrutiny of ageing well issues.

The descriptions of the work carried out and examples of special attributes, learning points and early impacts only scratches the surface – more information is available from the Centre for Public Scrutiny and from the councils themselves.

Although the support was provided in context, in this report we have tried to pick out common themes and learning points that we think all councils can incorporate in to their approach to scrutiny of ageing well. Taken together with the CfPS guides about ageing well – A Good Place to Grow Older and Walk a Mile in My Shoes – and the outcomes from the wider LGA Ageing Well programme, we hope that councils have a comprehensive set of resources to tackle the challenges of the ageing society in their areas.

For more information see www.cfps.org.uk and www.local.gov.uk/ageing-well





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