

EMPOWERMENT WORKS in the South West

Empowerment Works for Older People Dorset Partnership for Older People Programme

Introduction

'By recognising older people's strengths and not focussing only on their needs, older people will respond and with some funding, can really make things happen.'

(Jackie Allen, Dorset POPP Board Member)

The Dorset Partnership for Older People Programme (POPP) is an excellent example of a multi-partnership initiative that has successfully achieved engagement on a huge scale and empowered older people to become involved in identifying and shaping services and activities to improve their own health and address their wellbeing needs. Each year the programme is in contact with over 53,000 older people, it has created 599 volunteer opportunities so far, and has saved the public sector money in preventative health savings. Now in its fifth year, Dorset POPP has achieved much acclaim for its empowerment work and recognition for delivering responsive and appropriate services at a local level.

Background

Older people make up an increasing proportion of our population. The south west had the highest total migration of people aged 60 and over moving in to the region of all English regions in 2008 and in the same year there were over 200,000 residents of or over retirement age within Dorset, equalling 28.6 per cent of the total population and representing the highest proportion of older people in the country at that time. Although higher incomes and medical advances are leading to older people enjoying

more years of healthy, active life, they currently comprise 75 per cent of users of the NHS and spending on social services for adults is expected to rise over the next 20 years from £10 to £11 billion as a result of demography and health status changes.

For the last two decades there has been an accelerating policy push to give older people a voice in local service planning and by 2000 there was a groundswell encouraging people aged over 50 to

develop their own local grassroots forums. These self-organised groups homed in on the issues directly affecting the mass of retired people; ageism, council tax, pensions, transport, safety, care charges and the rationing of health services. There are now more than 50 of these independent forums in the south west alone, and a range of other organisations and projects seeking to engage with older people.

Amongst these initiatives are the Partnership with Older People Programmes (POPP). They began life as 29 national



Portland Tea Dance

pilot initiatives, funded by the Department of Health, to involve older people in developing and testing new 'low level' local services aimed at promoting their independence and quality of life. Dorset POPP went live in May 2006, two others were also launched in the region then, in Poole and Somerset; three more followed in Devon, North Somerset and Gloucestershire in 2007. POPP was very much designed to be different in its approach, leaving behind the general tradition of reactive systems which had little focus on prevention.

The Project

'Older people are not sweet, fluffy and kind. They aren't grumpy and miserable. In common with people of any age, they are simply people'.

(Jackie Allen, Dorset POPP Board Member)

Dorset POPP is a partnership between Dorset County Council, Dorset Primary Care Trust, the voluntary sector, including organisations such as Help and Care, Age Concern and Dorset Community Action - and of course, older people themselves. The programme was launched in May 2006 and received £2.4 million over a two year period from the Department of Health to improve the health and well-being of older people and reduce their social exclusion and isolation.

The programme has eight desired outcomes which have since been adopted as standards of success by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, the Ageing Well in Dorset

Strategy and the Dorset Transforming Social Care agenda. The desired outcomes developed for Dorset POPP are equally relevant to all ages, and are being increasingly recognised as such.

- Older people have housing suitable for individual needs
- Older people are socially integrated and not isolated
- Older people are making a positive contribution and experiencing fulfilment as a result
- Older people feel secure and safe
- Older people feel free from discrimination
- Older people feel financially secure
- Older people are in good health in mind and body
- Older people have dignity, choice and control throughout their life, especially towards the end

The county itself has been broken down into 33 'clusters' based on parish council boundaries and demographic information to ensure the local focus of all elements of the project. There are three principal tiers of delivery, each contracted out for provision by voluntary sector organisations, who have all recruited a number of local older people to carry out clearly defined roles – some on a paid and some on a voluntary basis.

Leadership Programme - 21 paid staff working within each of the 33 local clusters, to challenge and change the way that services are provided to older people. Leaders work with service providers and older people to identify gaps in service delivery, as well as seeking opportunities to develop and improve the way services are provided locally.

They attend town and parish council meetings, safer neighbourhood meetings - anywhere that decisions are made about service provision.

Wayfinder Programme - 54 paid staff working within each of the 33 local clusters to provide signposting and support relating to any service that affects older people. That can range from information on welfare benefits and pensions to advice on social activities, exercise opportunities, transport, toe nail cutting, carer's issues, lunch clubs and coffee mornings. You are likely to find them anywhere that you might also expect to find older people requiring advice, such as GP practices, libraries, shopping centres, lunch clubs, carers groups, coffee mornings and forum meetings.

Evaluation Programme - 10 volunteers - predominantly older people working across the county to measure the impact of Dorset POPP on older people and services. This element of the programme is essential to the ongoing development of the programme as a whole. They conduct 'exit polls' at events, question those using the services and gather 'outcome stories' - seeking to establish the differences being made to people's lives.

The Community Initiatives Commissioning Fund - Initially a pot of £635,000 which was available over the first two years to 'seed fund' local initiatives that were identified by older people. Two application and appraisal processes were established, 'Community Wins' for



Mosterton Computer Club

applications up to £2000 and 'Leverage Funding' for projects over £2000, with no upper limit. Initiatives which have been supported include, lunch clubs, table tennis clubs, computer classes, dial-a-ride, neighbour care, first responders, exercise tutors, equipment and classes and memory cafés.

There is a Strategic Board which comprises seven voting members from Dorset County Council, Dorset NHS, Dorset Community Action, plus four older people. A Steering Group acts as an operational working group, an Exchange Group reviews and approves (or not) bids for funding from community projects and the Evaluation and Data Steering Group meets to access and review available data and

emerging trends. A core staff team have been employed through Dorset County Council led by the Dorset POPP Project Manager and supported by (currently) 3 Community Development Workers and a further team member who provides administrative support.

Empowerment of Older People

'We have developed a robust partnership with older people, we would not have achieved the reach or the breadth of services without taking this approach'.

(Sue Warr, Dorset POPP Programme Manager)

Dorset POPP achieves 53,000 contacts with older people each year. The programme's 'community-facing' philosophy of being led by the needs and aspirations of older people begins at the top, and runs right through its structure. Older people hold a majority on the Strategic Board with four members and they have a strong level of representation on the other groups which guide the project and in the delivery of the majority of funded projects. Older people have been reached through word of mouth, through the Dorset Citizens Panel which has over 2000 members and through targeted communication to residents aged over 50. Dorset POPP has a saying 'use your mates', meaning that they also rely on partner agencies helping to engage people with POPP activities, it's a reciprocal arrangement and helps achieve a much broader reach than working in isolation.

Dorset POPP has provided many opportunities for skilled, knowledgeable and experienced older people to become actively involved in delivering the aims of the programme.

'Involvement helps generally to give both structure and value to one's life as an older person, and enables me to retain more 'voice' and role in the wider world, as well as doing something really worthwhile both with, and for, others.' (Older Person Volunteer Local Evaluator)

'One of the most memorable achievements is the fact that older people had a direct influence on the type of housing that is being planned for and built for the older population. They said extra care housing as opposed to residential, and that is what's happening'. (Dorset POPP Board Member)

Jackie Allen, one of the Older People Board Members was involved in the Cabinet's refresh of the National Ageing Strategy, 'I was the only older person at the meetings as all others were Civil Servants, from the Department of Health, the Department of Works and Pensions, or officers from the voluntary sector. I think some people were rather surprised to see me there but I was determined to not to be patronised or overlooked'.

The POPP approach to engagement has been adopted within the Councils' broader Adult and Community Services, working towards 'Adult POPP' in the Social Care Innovation Fund and in the development of community based services.

Outcomes

The national evaluation of POPP published in October 2009, concluded that projects were widely thought 'to have delivered better services for older people in terms of their quality of life and well-being', and 'there was a greater awareness among older people of the services available, coupled with 'easier access to them'. Local evaluations of Dorset POPP state that:

Annually, there are over 53,000 contacts for information, services or support made by older people.

The programme has led to cost-reductions in secondary, primary and social care.

Dorset POPP has created 599 new volunteer opportunities across the county.

Through the Community Initiatives Commissioning Fund, over 240 sustainable new local groups have developed, all of which have been identified and are delivered by local people.

The contribution of Dorset POPP and the Dorset Age Partnership, secured Dorset the Green Flag award under the now ceased Comprehensive Area Assessment process.

A snapshot of achievements for the period April 2008 to March 2010 was recently completed by The National

Development Team for Inclusion and describes the outcomes or impacts for 560 people.

52% of POPP participants received low level help maintaining their home.

'The wife was very distressed, I arranged a general home assessment with emphasis on the bathroom changing to a shower room, I also asked for a member of the Telecare team to conduct a visit with a view to putting heat detectors in the kitchen and water detectors in the bathroom. (Wayfinder Leader)

75% of POPP participants increased their social contact through a new club/activity.

'I have met and spoken to more people in four months than in four years. I'm busier now than before I retired, but this has given me a reason to get up in the morning again'. (Service User)

67% of POPP participants had taken on a new formal volunteering role.

'I'm able to help people and go out and I enjoy doing the cooking'. (Volunteer)

49% of POPP participants felt an increased safety in their own home.

'Speakers were organised to attend the club. One such speaker was a Police Community Safety Officer. A woman who attended this talk had been robbed, she was reassured by the PCSO's visit, and made to feel safer.' (POPP Community Leader)

22% of POPP participants felt valued, able to contribute, where they otherwise might not.

'Andrea and her husband came forward as volunteers right at the start. They have been able to use their self- taught IT skills to help and enthuse others and have gained great satisfaction from this. Recently Andrea had a hip-replacement operation and says that being useful and needed by the group encouraged her recovery.' (POPP Community Leader)

36% of POPP participants are now receiving attendance allowance/back payment.

'I asked her permission to phone the pensions office from her home, when I returned 8 weeks later the client told me she had been awarded £800 back pay and £67 per week attendance allowance. This enabled her to have more help and to remain in her own home.' (Service Provider)

28% of POPP participants mentioned an improved mental health.

'It's a sort of liberation and it's social because being so localised you get to know everybody and you feel you belong to a community.' (Service User)

29% of POPP participants received information that has helped inform decisions.

'A client had asked for our help as his wife was severely disabled and he felt very depressed and trapped. Over a period of time he was persuaded to get help from Pension Service, Social Services and a number of other agencies. This made a big difference to his life and he was very

appreciative of our help. At one point he had felt that the only way out was suicide, but getting help made him feel less isolated.' (Wayfinder Service Provider)



Morcombelake Lunch Club

Investment

The national evaluation of POPP, conducted by the Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU) in 2009 provided evidence that investment in preventive social care services more than pays for itself in savings to the NHS and recommended the approach as a cost-effective policy option. According to the report, 'for every £1 spent on such services to support older people, hospitals save £1.20 in spending on emergency beds.' A cost and benefit analysis

of Dorset POPP was recently completed and concluded that 'POPP generates considerable value in terms of health benefits to individuals and communities, and also to those who are involved in managing the projects.'

In order to calculate potential financial savings, the report used the average costs of a variety of medical conditions to both acute and community care trusts and in order to weight the contribution of POPP they consulted statistics on the prevalence of these conditions. Although the NHS do not consider that the report provides robust medical evidence of savings, the report concluded that there were preventative health savings at an individual level totalling £49,485.70, with a total of £669,382.90 of financial benefits over the 14 funded programmes which were reviewed.

Whilst it is clear that the project has not generated cashable savings it is clear that the opportunistic savings generated will allow finance of both Dorset County Council and NHS Dorset to be redistributed, and more importantly for teams and services to deliver local services with the support of local people, for less money.

Conclusions

The ability of projects like Dorset POPP to endure beyond their initial funding period is clearly important to their long-term impact. Following the initial two year pilot period, funding has been continued jointly by Dorset County Council and Dorset Primary Care Trust, commissioning is

underway to ensure the continuation in its entirety, for the period 1 April 2011 - 31 March 2014.

The success of Dorset POPP is very much due to its bottom-up, localised, and person-centred approach. POPP is structured with community capacity building at its heart and the extensive involvement of older people from the start has led to a shared vision, enthusiasm for and commitment to the programme. Working in small clusters has led to locally designed services, tailored to address very local needs.

This case study highlights the importance of engagement of those, who perhaps would not normally have a strong voice in the community and confirms that when supported, older people form a powerful constituency and can make a positive contribution to society. The programme represents a different kind of relationship between citizen and government.

The overwhelming majority of the original POPP programmes from around the country have been sustained, from which you could conclude that this model of approach is working well. Moreover, given the considerable savings and efficiencies that the Dorset programme is already realising, you could also conclude that the investment being made reflects a cost-effective way for public authorities to make the very best decisions.

Find Out More

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