



Whose decision is it anyway?

Older people from across Sandwell flocked to the annual AgeWell Conference on 10th October 2006 for a day of discussion and debate plus lots of fun.

Titled 'Whose Decision Is It Anyway?' the Conference looked in detail at the Age Discrimination Act which came into force on 1st October 2006, along with the Mental Capacity Act which will come into force from 1st April 2007, and aimed to explain more about these complex policies in a lively, interactive way.

As ever, the Conference proved extremely popular and delegates packed the hall at the Bethel Convention Centre in West Bromwich.

Following a welcome from AgeWell Chair, John Allen MBE, the Mayor of Sandwell, Councillor Sadie Smith declared the Conference officially open with the words "I'm glad our generation is known as the awkward squad!"

She explained that AgeWell covers a huge spectrum of ages from 50 upwards, and everyone is asking



questions, which is the sign of a healthy society. She believes it's important for older people to make their voices heard, just as the Conference delegates are doing.

AgeWell were delighted that a group of sixth formers from Manor High School,

Friar Park were able to attend the Conference for the first time, interacting with delegates and finding out more about the issues which are important to them. Many of the students are keen to work with older people in the future.





Fingers Poised!

And now for something completely different...

For the first time, the 2006 Conference helped all delegates to take in a huge amount of important information through the use of hand held keypads. In true 'Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?' style, delegates all took part in a keypad opinion poll followed by an interactive DVD presentation, thanks to a great deal of hard work by Bob Tidmarsh, Older People's Champion for West Bromwich, and Agewell Lay Group Member, Sandra Tyrrell.

Opinion Poll Results

The opinion poll revealed some interesting statistics. Delegates were asked a series of questions, and could use headphones to hear them at a louder volume or simultaneously interpreted in Gujarati and Punjabi. They then used their personal keypads to vote for their chosen answer.

And the results showed that...

75%



of delegates think Sandwell Council services have improved over the past year.

60%



of delegates think that health services for older people in Sandwell have improved over the past year

85%



of delegates do not believe their views are valued by Sandwell Council services

57%



of delegates do not believe their views are valued by the Health Service in Sandwell

Getting Interactive

Working with local amateur dramatic group, All Saints Players and Menzies City Learning Centre, Sandra and Bob came up with a novel way of explaining the intricacies of the Age Discrimination Act in an interactive way which made it easier for delegates to remember them.



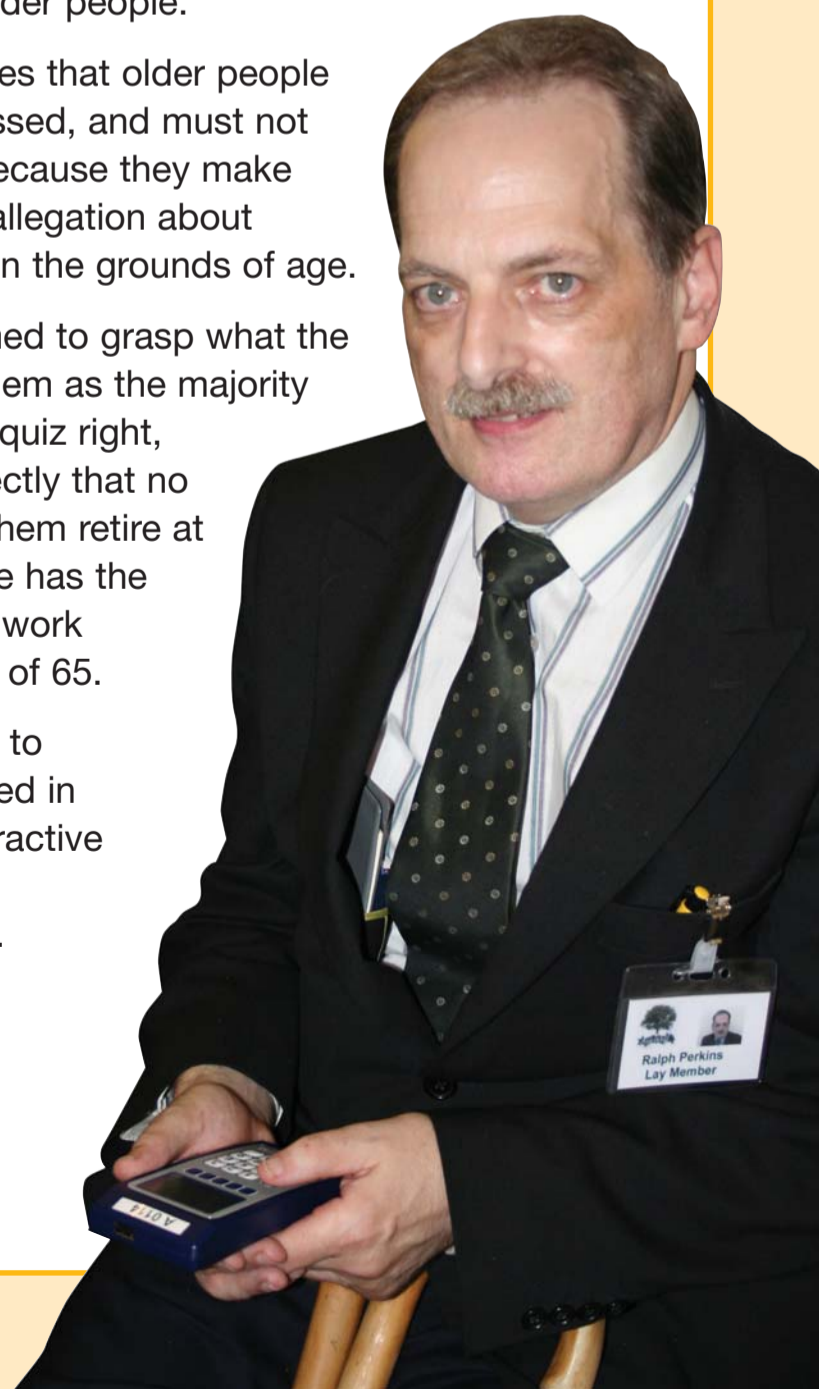
A DVD presentation was created about combating age discrimination, which centred on a fictional character, Jim, who feels he is being forced to retire at 60. Throughout the DVD, delegates took part in a keypad quiz to remind them of the key points of the Act.

On 1st October 2006 the Age Discrimination Act came into effect to ban discrimination in the workplace. The new regulations on age discrimination apply to all employers and training providers and make it unlawful to treat people less favourably than others because of their age. Policies cannot be introduced which disadvantage older people.

The Act also rules that older people cannot be harassed, and must not be victimised because they make a complaint or allegation about discrimination on the grounds of age.

Delegates seemed to grasp what the Act means to them as the majority got the keypad quiz right, answering correctly that no one can make them retire at 60 and everyone has the right to request work beyond the age of 65.

A big thank you to everyone involved in making the interactive presentation such a success.



Workshop Working

Delegates voiced their opinions on some sensitive topics which affect older people by taking part in a range of workshops.

Vulnerable Adult Abuse Workshop

A video was shown about two brothers who need support and delegates discussed the issues raised. They agreed that a multi-agency meeting was needed which could look at the opportunities available to the brothers, as well as showing them that they are valued and that someone cares. The situation would need to be continually monitored and reviewed.

Health and the Mental Capacity Act 2005 Workshop

The aim of this workshop was to find out what older people think about issues relating to the health aspects of the Mental Capacity Act 2005. Delegates believe that everyone should be treated as an individual.

Care is rushed at present and patients aren't always treated with dignity. There should be more support and encouragement for patients to speak out their views and make decisions, and treatment should be explained better.

If you would like to find out more about these subjects, or would be interested in someone coming and talking to your group, contact Tina Smith, Sandwell Council Adult Protection Co-ordinator, on 0121 569 5523.

Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005 Workshop

The Act came into force on 5th December when all public authorities had to publish a Disability Equality Scheme (DES) to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination and harassment of disabled people, promote positive attitudes and encourage

participation. The workshop discussed how people must be actively involved, not just consulted, at all stages of decision making.

If you would like to find out more about this subject, or would be interested in someone coming and talking to your group, contact Narinder Moor, Head of Equality and Diversity at Sandwell PCT, on 0121 612 1685.

Employment / Work and Combating Discrimination Workshop

This workshop discussed the issues which surround older people working for longer and looked at how discrimination can be stamped out.

It was agreed that legislation isn't enough in its own right - a cultural shift is required so that the role of older people is valued. They bring wisdom and experience to the workplace and it is important that they have the choice whether to continue working.

Intergenerational Workshop

This workshop reported on the joint seminar which was staged by the Youth Cabinet and Agewell last May to try and bring young people and older people together.

It found that many of the issues young people have are shared with older people, such as anti-social behaviour, transport, health and community safety.

It was agreed that there is a real need to break down barriers further in the future so that both groups can provide a united front.

If you would like to find out more about these subjects, or would be interested in someone coming and talking to your group, contact Agewell on 0121 525 7605.



2005



TWELVE MONTHS ON

How much has changed in the last 12 months? Our guest speakers reflected on the past year and outlined plans for the future.



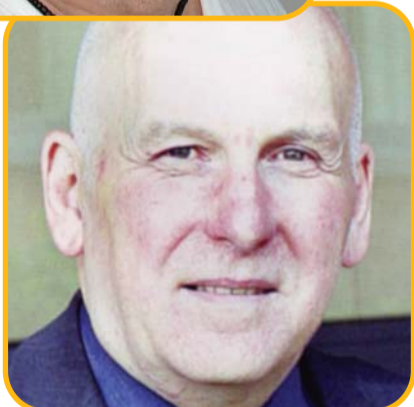
Pauline Werhun CBE, Director of Nursing and Midwifery, Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals Trust, looked at the care of older people in our hospitals as more than 70% of hospital patients are now aged 50 or over. She outlined the problems of malnutrition and how initiatives including food tasting panels and the red tray system are being introduced to combat this. Did you know that Sandwell has the best cabbage in the country?!



Cllr Iris Boucher, Cabinet Member, Sandwell Council, explained how older people have been put on the agenda. There are now Older People's Champions, a new Joint Older People's Housing Team, a new telephone support service and more than 1,000 trained adult protection staff and volunteers. By next year, the Council plans to offer more help and support at home, more housing choices and improvements, and to put older people more in control.



John Blyth, Non-Executive Director of Sandwell Mental Health and Social Care Trust, said that working in partnership is key to developing mental health services. The past year has seen a decrease in the number of patients with mental health needs who require continuing health care in hospital. Instead, day hospital services have been reviewed and Hillcrest Day Hospital was shortlisted for the Excellent Care Award. A Carers Day in June was so successful that it will be repeated in 2007.



Richard Nugent, Chair of Sandwell PCT, focused on how the PCT has been responding to what delegates said at the last conference. They asked for local, convenient services, with better information and more support. Since then, a new PCT has been developed which has signed up to the Living Well in Later Life initiative. It is improving access to services and working towards providing support care closer to home, with a much more comprehensive delivery of care.

2006



Your thoughts on the day...

"It's been a good experience. It's nice to know we're playing our part."
Mark Harrison and Simon Smith,
6th formers



"I've been learning new things and it's very informative. It's my first time at the conference – my physiotherapist made me aware of it." – Ivy Rollason



"The keypads were interesting."
Dalton George Burt



"I really enjoyed the day with you all. It was a wonderful atmosphere and the keyboard voting gave an interactive feel to the day. Congratulations to all." – Pauline Werhun



"Each one gets better and better. The presentation by Lay members and the keypads were brilliant. We're the voice of older people who are getting it right for future generations." – Tony Mallam, Agewell Lay member



"We want to work with the elderly and help with care." – Laura Fullard and Tanya Timmins, 6th formers (pictured with William Richards)



The New Mental Capacity Act

One of the main aims of the Conference was to outline how the Mental Capacity Act 2005, which will come into force on 1st April 2007, will affect older people.

Andrea Pope Smith, Director of Adult Services and Health at Sandwell Council, gave a very informative talk, explaining that the Act will help people to plan ahead for both everyday and major decisions about financial management, medical treatment and social care.

At present, if your loved one is in hospital and unable to consent to treatment, you have no legal right to give

consent on their behalf or be consulted about their treatment. Plus, you can't ensure that your wishes for your own future health treatment and care will be taken into account.

The Mental Capacity Act means you can legally arrange for a named person to make financial and welfare decisions for you. It also means you can make advance decisions about your own wishes and views.

Basically, it will make sure that the person concerned is involved in decisions as their best interests are paramount.

Information on Hand



Lots of valuable information was shared at the Conference. A wide range of local organisations had display stands with representatives on hand to chat about the services they provide. They included:



- Older People's Champions
- Pre-retirement Project
- Active Sandwell
- Age Concern Sandwell
- Shopmobility
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- CARES
- Ideal for All Ltd
- Sandwell Mind
- The Pension Service
- Art in Mind
- Adult Services and Health
- Sandwell Third Age Arts



If you didn't have chance to pick up information from any of these organisations at the Conference, call Agewell on 0121 525 7605 for contact details.



Get more involved in *Agewell*

The Conference is just one part of the vast range of work undertaken by Agewell.

The organisation has a small staff team and 40 voluntary Lay Group members who are all actively involved in making a difference for older people in Sandwell.

Agewell has been instrumental in setting up Older People's Champions, an initiative which won the Chrysalis Award. Now it's establishing monthly groups in each of the six towns in Sandwell to tackle issues that are important to older people. Everyone is welcome to attend these forums. Other current initiatives include developing age discrimination courses with lecturers from Wolverhampton University.

Agewell is always looking for more people to get involved. If you're interested, give them a call on 0121 525 7605.

All together now

The gentle exercise session to music was a real hit with everyone after lunch and got the muscles working as well as the brain cells! Thanks to Pauline Marshall, EXTEND tutor.

Well Done



Staging a major conference involves lots of time and effort by many people. Thank you and well done to all those who helped to create such a fantastic event:

Volunteers from the Agewell Lay Group

The Agewell staff team

Paul Bailey and the All Saints Players

Menzies Community Learning Centre

Sandra Tyrrell

Bob Tidmarsh

SCVO Making Voices Heard Fund

Peter Munger

Raj Patel and Harjit Singh

Tina Smith

All our guest speakers

All our workshop leaders: John Allen, Tom Dwyer, Donna Patel, Chris Guest, Belinda Wadsworth, Saba Rai, Narinder Moor, Debbie Dandy, Robin Sasaru and Joyce Fletcher

All our workshop note takers: Jo Aldridge, Brian Darby, Sally Sandel, Mumtaz Shah and Caroline Southern

Manor High School 6th formers



Your Views

It's important to gain the views of delegates to find out whether the Conference covered the issues you wanted to discuss and to see how we could have improved it further. All delegates were invited to fill in a questionnaire at the end of the Conference and 86 people took up the opportunity.

This is what you thought...

81% thought the Conference was either very good or good

You all said you'd learnt a lot including details of the Age Discrimination Act and the Mental Capacity Act, where to go for help, information about the PCT and more about Agewell

Most of you couldn't come up with anything we could have improved on. Others suggested having more events in the community, staging more workshops, including more interactive bits and introducing a question time with the speakers

The three top things you enjoyed most were the presentations by the speakers, the Extend gentle exercise and the food! Delegates also enjoyed meeting people and using the keypads to give instant feedback.

79% thought the presentations were good

We also asked the professionals who are providing services for older people for their views on the Conference. They said they had learnt about the increasing power of older people and that the authorities are listening to older people and to Agewell.



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