



Agewell Conference 2008

**Your Voice,
Your Choice**

A giant acorn of an idea!

The saying goes that 'giant oak trees from tiny acorns grow,' and that's certainly the case with Agewell. In 1998, the organisation started life as the vision of a small group of older Sandwell residents. Now, the Agewell oak tree is over 10 years old, the roots are well established and its branches reach out to influence many areas affecting older people's quality of life – equality, housing, health, safety, transport and many more.

Agewell Sandwell is now an integral part of the work of Sandwell Primary Care Trust (PCT). It is the strategic voice for older people in the borough and is a well-respected organisation which is making a real and lasting impact on the lives of local older people.

This year's conference at the Bethel Convention Centre in West Bromwich was a sell-out with more than 180 delegates in attendance, representing many of the communities and towns in Sandwell.

Following a welcome from Agewell Chair, John Allen MBE, Councillor Iris Boucher, Deputy Mayor of Sandwell formally declared the conference open and the day of discussion and debate began.



Pictured (l to r) Richard Nugent, Chair of Sandwell PCT; Dot Gospel, Agewell Deputy Chair; Deb Davies, Agewell Manger; John Allen MBE, Agewell Chair; Councillor Iris Boucher, Deputy Mayor of Sandwell; and Edna Barker, Agewell Deputy Chair.

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Together we're making progress

Guest speakers from Sandwell PCT and Sandwell Council reflected on the progress made in the past 12 months with issues which affect local older people. Agewell has a vital role to play in both organisations.

Richard Nugent, Chair of Sandwell PCT, explained that the PCT is responsible for the health care of over 320,000 people. Agewell is helping to find out what local people need so that the best possible health services can be developed for older people in the borough. There are significant issues in Sandwell. For example, life expectancy for women here is 79.7 years and for men is 74.2 years. Both these

Did you know?

On 1st October 2008, Agewell members were invited to Downing Street to celebrate International Day for Older People.



figures are 2-3 years lower than the national average which stands at 81.6 and 77.65 respectively. The PCT is working closely with different organisations to change this. It's really important that the PCT continuously engages with local people, so it can understand what is important to local residents.

It is also striving to become a world class commissioning organisation. This means it is looking to be outstanding in the way it buys in health services with the aim of improving people's overall health and making services available for everyone. The help and support of Agewell will be a key factor in achieving this.

Laura Brodrick, Joint Strategic Manager for Older People, explained how Sandwell Council and Sandwell PCT work together to improve the quality of life for older people. Over the past year, older people themselves have become more involved than ever in planning changes.

In 2006, the council and its partners published a plan called 'Living Well in Later Life in Sandwell'. A Later Life Partnership Board now exists to make sure the improvements set out in the plan are being made. Chaired by Edna Barker from Agewell Sandwell and Robert Bacon, Chief Executive of Sandwell PCT, the board has been meeting quarterly since January 2008 and is driving the big messages about later life throughout the council.

The Partnership is focused on progress and reports to Sandwell Partnership. Agewell has 13 elected members on the Living Well in Later Life Partnership Board.



Richard Nugent.



Laura Brodrick.

Showcasing Agewell...

It's 10 years since Agewell first started out on its mission to give local older people a say in decisions which affect their lives. From small beginnings, Agewell now has a large membership of volunteers and a dedicated staff team offering help and support in lots of different ways.

Agewell Manager, Deb Davies, introduced delegates to the organisation which Agewell is today. Staff members then gave a short presentation on their area of work. Film clips were shown throughout of Agewell members telling us their thoughts.

Older People's Champions

Agewell employs three Older People's Champions. Edna Barker works in the Oldbury & Smethwick areas, Maggie Turner in Wednesbury & West Bromwich and Karen Owen in Rowley Regis & Tipton. Their work is focused on older people who are isolated and vulnerable by visiting them in their own homes to find out how they can help. They also encourage older people to get involved with the Healthy Passport initiative, where you collect points for taking part in healthy activities. These points can then be exchanged for prizes.

“Loneliness is the biggest problem we come across,” explained Edna. “When you live on your own small problems can grow out of all proportion. Having someone to talk to is so important.”

Did you know?

Tony Salter, one of the longest standing members of Agewell, has been awarded the OBE for his work in supporting older people in the West Midlands.



Agewell is now working with The Lighthouse Project, who is recruiting and training Agewell volunteers to befriend older people. This is great news, as it will mean that many more older people will benefit from seeing a friendly face on a more regular basis.

Active Sandwell

The Active Sandwell team is made up of two Outreach Workers – Kamleish Parfect and Kath Bench – with the support of Jasmine Heir, Physical Activity Development Officer for Sandwell Leisure Trust.

They work to improve the quality of life for people aged over 60 in Sandwell by encouraging a more active, healthy lifestyle. Existing activities include mini allotments, indoor and outdoor bowling, gentle exercise to music sessions (EXTEND), falls prevention programmes, green gyms, health walks, swimming, tea dances and other leisure opportunities on offer through Sandwell Leisure Trust.

“Getting active brings you so many benefits,” explains Kamleish. “Your health, mobility, independence, strength, co-ordination and balance will all improve. You’ll also meet new friends, have a laugh and feel good.” New activities are being considered all the time, and the team is keen to hear what sort of activities local people would like to take part in.

Did you know?

Agewell’s Midlife Future Planning Team are award winners! They flew to Chicago in 2008 to pick up an international innovative employer award from the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP).



Midlife Planning

Monica David and Stuart Munger are Agewell's Midlife Planning Co-ordinators. They advise employers and organisations on retaining, retraining and recruiting older workers.

Working with employers and employees aged 50 and over, they also deliver a Midlife Future Planning Course. This can be a half day, one or two day course focusing on the four themes of health, finance, leisure and relationships. The aim is to encourage working people in midlife to take control of their future and consider the changes they can make.

Agewell members are involved in the delivery of the Midlife Future Planning course. Mike Babb and Sandra Tyrrell are both regular contributors and talk about their experiences both pre and post retirement.

“Our Midlife courses are really taking off now,” explained Monica. “They are available to all Sandwell PCT employees. We are also working with small to medium sized companies in the private sector to make sure their employees have access to the same information.”

Agewell's work in this area is being recognised internationally. Last year the Midlife team flew to Chicago, USA to pick up an international innovative employer award from the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP).

Did you know?

There are six Agewell Forums – one for each of the six towns in Sandwell. Each one meets monthly and provides an informal setting for people to have their say and find out what is going on in their town.



Community Development

Agewell employs three Community Development Workers - Geraldine Child, Lisa Jacob and Stuart Munger. In addition to their day to day work supporting Agewell members, they also carry out specific pieces of work. Two recent examples are the 'My Home, My Choice' project with Greets Green Partnership and Sandwell Homes and a Doorstop Crime / Rogue Traders project with community arts organisation, The Cultural Sisters.

The aim of the **'My Home, My Choice' project** was to establish if older people living in large rented properties would be interested in moving to a smaller property if one was available. Both Sandwell Homes and Greets Green Partnership were keen to use Agewell's expertise of working with older people. Agewell interviewed nearly 90 people at home plus a further 30 over the phone.

The findings showed that most people wanted to stay put for as long as possible, but would consider moving for health reasons. Most people's ideal property was a bungalow.

Recommendations for the future included: increasing the priority for housing transfers for residents who want to move to a smaller place; setting up a focus group of interested residents to help develop possible options for housing; and looking into the provision of practical help and support which is so important when making a move.

The aim of the **Doorstop Crime / Rogue Traders project** was to find out what older people know about rogue traders,

Did you know?

Agewell Sandwell is the strategic arm of the organisation, with over 30 older people elected as members from the Agewell Forums.



whether they have had any experience of them and what would help them feel safer when answering their own front door.

Community arts group, The Cultural Sisters, worked with all six Agewell Forums getting them to discuss and write down their views. Some forums, also had the opportunity to work on fabric door panels using words and images to encourage others to think about rogue traders.

Agewell members thought of some great slogans including: 'Before you unlock, check the knock', 'Eva bin ad', 'Friend or foe'. All the information collected is now being fed back to the Doorstep Crime Prevention Partnership to improve the effectiveness of their campaigns.

Agewell Forums

There are six Agewell Forums – one for each of the six towns in Sandwell. Each one meets monthly and provides an informal setting for people to meet, have their say and learn about what is going on in their town.

Each of the six towns is unique, and the forums celebrate what makes each town special. Delegates were invited to find out more by talking to representatives from each town forum who were looking after the exhibition stands in the foyer.

The first forum was set up in November 2006, and they've gone from strength to strength. Some examples of how they are making a difference include the Rowley Regis

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Agewell has 13 elected members on the Living Well in Later Life Partnership Board – the strategic body for people aged over 50 in Sandwell.



Forum successfully petitioning to have a bus service connecting Springfield and Dudley and a bus shelter at Rowley Regis Hospital. Wednesbury Forum has been working closely with a local doctors surgery to improve the appointment system.

Did you know?

Agewell is always pleased to see new faces – you're welcome to come along to an Agewell Forum any time.

How well do you know your town?

1. Which Sandwell town was famous for its windmills and in fact still has one?
2. Dolerite is quarried in Rowley Regis. What do the locals call the stone?
3. Which Smethwick company had a famous connection with lighthouses?
4. Who was William Perry also known as?
5. In which town would you find the Big House?
6. The Oak House in West Bromwich has, for many centuries, been the residence of which local family?

Answers: 1. Wednesbury, 2. Rowley Rag, 3. Chances, 4. The Tipton Slasher, 5. Oldbury, 6. The Turton family.



Workshop Working... having your say

In the afternoon, delegates were able to voice their opinions on a number of topics which affect older people.

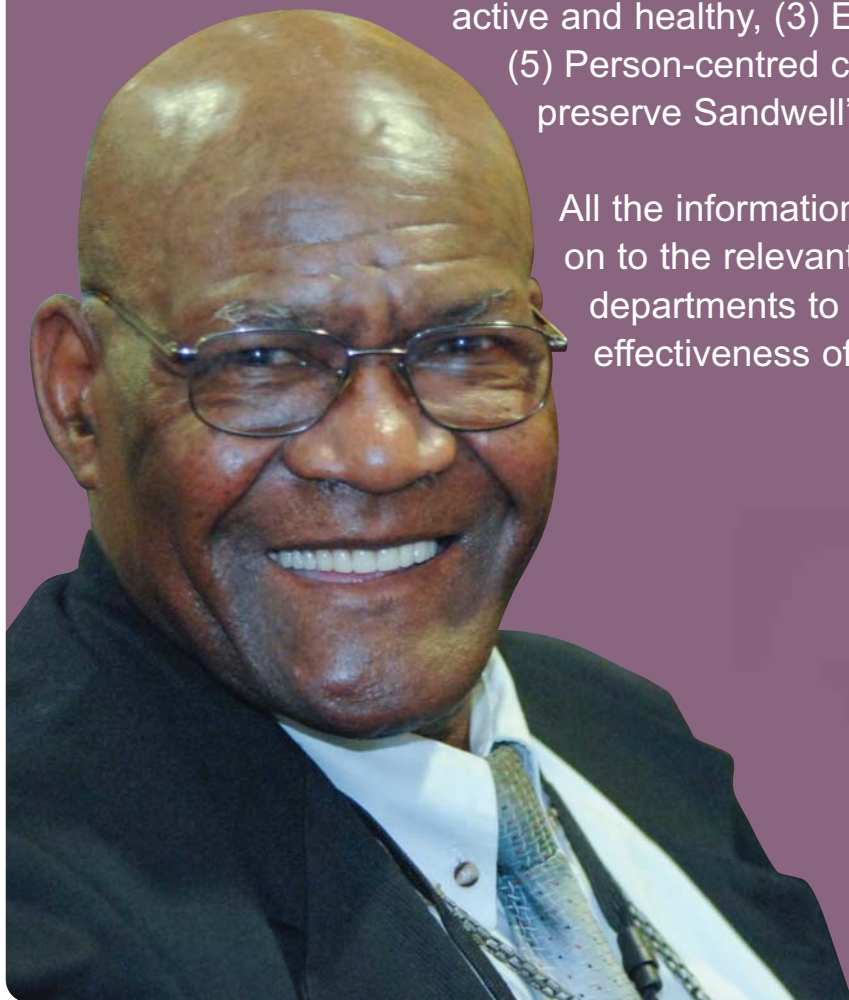
The following pages summarise the main points arising from the six workshops on:

- (1) Staying independent and getting back on your feet,
- (2) Keeping active and healthy,
- (3) Elder Abuse,
- (4) Health and wellbeing,
- (5) Person-centred care and
- (6) How to protect and preserve Sandwell's green spaces.

All the information collected is being passed on to the relevant organisations and departments to help them improve the effectiveness of their work.

Did you know?

Agewell employs 12 members of staff, ranging in age from mid 20s to mid 70s.



Intermediate Care Workshop

Staying independent and getting back on your feet

Chair: **Sandra Tyrrell**

Facilitators: **Jane Davies, Joint Intermediate Care Manager and Sarah Knight, Falls Management Lead, Sandwell PCT**

Scribe: **Sara Leaker**

Jane and Sarah explained about intermediate care, the modern approach to convalescence and rehabilitation.

What does intermediate care mean to you?

- Help outside of hospital
- Being looked after, after you've had hospital treatment
- Care between home and hospital
- Help at home when you can't look after yourself or your loved one
- Being able to stay in your own home
- Getting care from services provided by the NHS, e.g. nurses, social workers
- Getting the help you need when you get older
- Help from a partner
- Leading a healthy lifestyle
- How to stay healthy and independent
- Having help from a stroke nurse to get fit

- Getting back on your feet
- Staying for a while in a nursing home
- Staying in a residential home
- Nothing

An example: 90 year old lady has a fall – what help does she need?

- Direct payments will help her to stay in her own home. Care agencies can start work. For up to to six weeks she can have help with care and help to get back on her feet.
- Help at night is very important, especially when you're feeling very unwell.
- We need to know how to access these services.
- Some people have support from their family, but others don't, so after coming out from hospital you need care.
- Trust is important – you're having someone in your own home.
- Ideally being at home is better, but otherwise you need to find somewhere where you are comfortable.
- We need to know how and where to get help – professionals are the key to information. Hospital staff should know what services you will need.
- People who have been through the system have knowledge and experience to share with others.

- Planning the care and knowing the options available is important. These options need to be personalised to the individual.
- Agewell can help with information.

What else is important?

- Choice is important -- people need individual care.
- Cost implications -- which services are free? Which do you have to pay for, and how much?
- Need for a fast response and ongoing care.
- Falls lead to a loss in confidence – maintaining independence is the key.
- We need to get out information, so people know how to get help.
- Communication and choice are vital.
- Everyone is different, so must have a range of options.
- The hospital avoidance team help people stay independent. They will check the accommodation and arrange for small adaptations to be made at home.
- Telecare is important.
- Having access to the best equipment.
- Don't make assumptions about what sort of housing people want. Not everyone wants just one bedroom.
- Senior citizens village or extra care sheltered housing with shops and GPs surgery on site is good. You have

- your own front door plus access to care on site.
- Befriending services.
- Having services near to where I live or at home.
- Temporary home care until people are well enough to look after themselves.
- Care at home at times that suit me, not the care agency.
- Listen to what people want. Make sure they are aware of any alternatives to hospital.
- Everyone is an individual – don't treat us as blocks.
- Forget “Trust me, I'm a doctor”.

How can we let people know about the services available?

- Use every media possible – radio, TV etc.
- Find out where groups are and get information to them.
- Through the local Agewell forums.
- Use multi media – e-mail, braille, large print, community languages.
- Continue dialogue with service users – getting feedback about people's experiences is important.

Remember: whatever care is available, some people don't want it. “I don't always want care, so don't give it to me regardless.”

Active Sandwell Workshop

Keeping Active and Healthy

Chair: **Mike Babb**

Facilitators: **Bob Tidmarsh, Business Secretary of Sandwell University of the Third Age and Cathy Ferriday, Physical Activity Programme Manager, Sandwell PCT**

Scribe: **Kamleish Parfect**

This workshop was about keeping your mind and your body active, so Bob and Cathy both gave talks on what activities are on offer. They welcomed suggestions for extra activities.

University of the Third Age (U3A)

- At the U3A we learn for the joy of learning.
- We don't study for qualifications, but certificates are given for some achievements.
- Each U3A group is individual, though we are part of a national network.
- We set up interest groups as a result of individual skills available.
- These groups usually meet once a month.
- All those involved are volunteers.
- Sandwell U3A raises its own funds through events and applications to charitable trusts. We charge an

annual membership fee which is currently £6.

- Interest groups: music appreciation, computers for pleasure, local history, outings, walks and strolls, criminology, literature, Scrabble, theatre visits, Italian, Latin.
- The full Sandwell U3A meets on the second Monday of the month at 2 o'clock at West Bromwich Wesley Centre.

Questions and Comments

Where is bowling available?

At Wednesbury and at Haden Hill.

Could activities be advertised in the free newspapers?

They are regularly advertised in the local press and free newspapers. People also find out about activities through word of mouth and our promotional leaflets.

Are there any gardening programmes in West Bromwich?

Yes, Caroline Street allotments and Ideal for All are looking for new partners. A newsletter is available.

Are there any activities in Wednesbury in the afternoons?

Multi activity sessions at Wednesbury Leisure Centre are currently available on Wednesday morning.

We would love to do line dancing.

This could be arranged if we can find a tutor.

Where do activities take place?

Active Sandwell activities take place all over Sandwell borough. A publicity leaflet is available. U3A are mainly in West Bromwich.

Who's interested in art?

When do tea dances happen?

At Tipton Sports Academy, Brook Street Community Centre, St Lukes Centre Great Bridge and at West Bromwich Town Hall

Members of the Yemeni community would like Arabic and computer classes in a non-church setting.

U3A has not yet successfully engaged with BME communities, but this is an opportunity.

How should we let you know what is going on?

- Via Agewell, notices in supermarkets, information sent to individuals.
- In the free newspapers.
- U3A website.



Elder Abuse Workshop

Safety and Communities

Chair: **Doris Strange**

Facilitators: **Sukbinder Gill, Safeguarding Adults**

Co-ordinator, Sandwell Council

Scribe: **Avery Faulkner**

Why does Elderly Abuse occur?

- There are cases of 'unintentional' abuse (occurs when a carer has not got the support or information they need, nor the capacity to look after others).
- People are ashamed to ask for help and there is a lack of knowledge about what help is available
- The younger generation has been brought up with different behaviours, expectations and demands. The way we treat each other has changed. This is a deep seated problem – family life as we knew it has gone.
- Abuse can be linked to property ownership where younger relatives put pressure on older relatives to help them get property.
- Many home care workers are not sufficiently experienced to work with older people. Not doing their job properly. The private sector 'will take anyone on' and this can lead to abuse.

What can be done to help?

- Departments and organisations need to work together to keep people safe – more work needs to be done to improve this partnership working
- Deprivation of Liberty Act – there are clear guidelines about people's rights but a lot of work needs to be done to make people aware of their rights (example quoted: Being put in temporary care against your will and being left there).
- Many people are not mentally or physically able to take action / challenge decisions
- 'Partnership in Action' is a good model of partnership working
- Agewell need to feedback concerns to Safer Sandwell Partnership
- An information leaflet on Elderly Abuse is currently being produced. Will be available from Agewell. Everyone should be encouraged to take one and distribute to others they know. Everyone in Sandwell should be encouraged to be a safeguarding champion.
- Everyone needs to be on the alert for abuse and take action.

Emotional Wellbeing Workshop

Health and Wellbeing

Chair: **Ralph Perkins**

Facilitators: **Sasha Gelpi, Sandwell PCT's Confidence and Wellbeing Team**

Scribe: **Lisa Jacob**

Sasha Gelpi from the Confidence and Wellbeing Team started the workshop with a 2 minute relaxation exercise and then asked everyone to think about what wellbeing and happiness means to them.

What is wellbeing and happiness?

- Contentment
- Physical and mental health
- Happy with where you are
- Having a clear conscience
- Having a calm and peaceful mind
- Family and friends

What makes you happy?

- Eating well
- Helping others
- Walking
- Dancing
- Singing
- Meeting others
- Going out every day
- Interests and hobbies
- Reading the newspaper
- Laughing
- Relaxation
- Solving problems

Learning to live in the moment

Every day:

- Write down three things that went well in your day and what caused them to go well
- Write down three things you are grateful for today and why
- Do the gratitude dance!

Plant your seeds of happiness

Do the following for two months and see if they make a difference to your happiness levels:-

- **Count your blessings**
At the end of the day, reflect on at least five things you're grateful for
- **Talk time**
Have an hour long uninterrupted conversation with your partner or closet friend each week
- **Plant something**
Even if it's a window box or plant pot. Keep it alive!
- **Cut your TV viewing by half**
- **Smile at and/or say hello to a stranger**
At least once a day
- **Phone a friend**
Make contact with at least one friend or relation you have not been in contact with for a while and arrange to meet up
- **Get physical**
Exercise for half an hour five times a week
- **Have a good laugh at least once a day**
- **Every day make sure you give yourself a treat**
Take time to really enjoy this
- **Daily kindness**
Do an extra good turn for someone each day

Being happy depends just 10% on external influences. The other 90% is down to you!

Day Centre Services Review Workshop

Person-centred Care

Chair: **Edna Barker**

Facilitators: **Bev Hellend, Service Improvement Manager, Sandwell Council's Adult & Community Services Older People's Service**

Scribe: **Karen Owen**

This workshop encouraged participants to 'Think Radical' to help develop a strategy for older people's day opportunities in Sandwell.

First, they were asked the question why do we need to change? A range of issues were discussed including the need to modernise services so that they're fit for the future and provided closer to home.

People are living longer and there are now more people aged 85 and over whose needs have to be met.

It was agreed that the strategy should:

- Increase choice for older people
- Improve support for carers
- Empower people to take control of their own care
- Reduce the number and impact of falls

- Reduce and avoid inappropriate hospital admission
- Increase the number of people supported to live at home
- Improve quality of life and wellbeing
- Reduce isolation, loneliness and social exclusion

Things to be considered in the strategy included:

- Transport
- Buildings
- Access and information
- Investment required
- Links to extra care developments

A variety of challenges were then looked at, such as:

- Do we need to provide day services?
- What opportunities are there currently for older people in Sandwell?
- How can we ensure that everyone can access the services?
- How can we engage with people who use the services and their carers?

Workshop participants were able to put forward their ideas for what they want in their day care services in the future. These included:

- Longer opening hours
- Links with social housing
- More facilities and services
- Centres with different services under one roof eg hairdressers, footcare and shops
- No change!

The first step to create a strategy was to complete a comprehensive review by the end of December 2008. This looked at current services, the market, where there are gaps in services, what else is needed and the finance required.

A strategy can then be drawn up and will be implemented in April 2009.



Environment Workshop

How to protect and preserve Sandwell's Green Spaces

Chair: **John Cope**

Facilitators: **Councillor Peter Allen, Chair of Scrutiny Panel and Stuart Bentley, Scrutiny Officer**

Scribe: **Sharon Wilson**

Agewell has identified environmental issues as one of 11 issues they wish to focus resources on during this year. Similarly, Sandwell Council's Neighbourhood and Community Scrutiny Panel have also identified green spaces as an issue they wish to consider further. As such, this workshop was arranged to begin to identify issues and to discuss linkages between the two work streams.

Following a brief introduction from John Cope, Cllr Allen gave an overview of what is already known about green spaces in the Borough and posed the following questions to the workshop:

- What do we want from our green spaces?
- What are the benefits from having green spaces?
- Where do we want/need green space?

- What do we need to do?
- Who else can help?

The following issues/comments were raised by the workshop broken down into themes.

Maintenance:

- Victoria Park in Tipton is excellent and well maintained
- Maintenance of footpaths is poor
- Feeding wildlife is an issue (particularly geese)
- Need for good drainage/soak away
- Parks need to be a lot cleaner
- Poorly maintained houses for park keepers to be improved
- Environmental features to be maintained
- Black Country Trees – need to be maintained
- Litter pickers doing a great job – need to be proud of Sandwell

Facilities:

- Open spaces / greenspaces should be preserved
- Safe accessibility to parks for children provided locally
- Improved toilets, recreation / rest area in parks
- Inequality of services across the Borough (particularly Wednesbury)

- Equipment to be placed in parks to encourage activities
- Need for more allotment sites in Sandwell – get secondary schools involved
- Possibly give areas not maintained by the Council to residents to grow vegetables, fruits, plants etc.
- Places where patients can be given access to green space.
- 200 2700 bus routes quite good
- Hydro-playing area good idea, needs to be rolled-out across the Borough and to be maintained

Partnerships & Funding:

- Need more proactive fund raising/partnerships
- Access to Section 106 money for neighbourhoods
- Would like to see play areas and gardens as integral to new developments rather than a bolt on through Section 106
- Black Country Trees, example of schemes that start but are not continued when the external money runs out
- Encourage local residents to plant trees
- Educate young people through schools about green spaces
- Local residents to be encouraged to ensure visitors maintain resource

- New blood and help for friends groups – younger people
- Council working with friends groups to raise external funding across the Borough
- Links to Youth
- Links to Waterways
- Working with the PCT and other Health Trusts

Pressures & problems:

- Need for more social housing
- Accessibility. While improvements to Sandwell Valley are welcome, it must be made available to all by public transport.
- Buses need to go where we want/need them to
- Road side plantation

In general there was consensus that, despite agreement as to the poor nature of much of the Borough's green space, it is valued as a resource for all members of the community. There was also a clear point made that all improvements must be sustainable.

In your words...

So, what did the delegates have to say about the conference?

A total of 117 people filled in our questionnaire about the conference...

- 80% said they'd enjoyed it
- 82% found it interesting
- 73% thought the presentations were either 'very good' or 'good'
- 77% found the workshops valuable

When asked what they're learnt from the conference, delegates said they'd:

- found out what's happening in Sandwell for older people
- learnt more about Agewell
- discovered how to find more information and get involved
- found out about Active Sandwell

And what did they enjoy most? The top three replies were:

- meeting people
- the food!
- presentations and speakers

Delegates couldn't come up with much which could be improved but suggested better sound and possibly some hot food. A handful thought that the morning session was too long.



Here are just a few of your thoughts on the day....

“It has been fantastic”

“The organisation and helpfulness of staff was very good”

“The content was about right”

“Well done – do it again”

“It was a very enjoyable day”

“It was brilliant”

“Keep up the good work”

Agewell, 15-17 Bull Street, West Bromwich B70 6EU

Telephone: **0121 525 7605**

Email: agewell@agewellinsandwell.org.uk

