

# SDS: Older Adults Focus Groups

**Report by:**

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# Older Adults focus groups

7 x online focus groups held between 20/1/21 to 2/2/21

1 x each LCR district (six) recruited through Age Friendly LCR Network:

- Age Concern Liverpool & Sefton
- Age UK Mid Mersey
- Age UK Wirral
- Happy Older Peoples Group
- Knowsley Older Peoples Voice
- Metro Mayor Network 55+
- Sefton Advocacy
- Wirral Older Peoples Voice

1 x dementia groups recruited through Liverpool Dementia Action Alliance

## Older Adults focus groups

43 people attended

40 were paid £20 Love2Shop vouchers (3 declined payment)

16 male (37%) 27 female (63%)

Halton	8	18%
Knowsley	5	12%
Liverpool	10	23%
Sefton	10	23%
St Helens	5	12%
Wirral	5	12%

55-59	6	14%
60-64	5	12%
65-69	9	21%
70-74	7	16%
75-79	6	14%
80+	3	7%
work *	7	16%

\* People who work with older people attending in a professional capacity

# Background & Methodology



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# Methodology

Groups were asked to consider the following two strategic objectives:

Strategic Objective 2: Addressing health inequalities and creating a healthier city region

- Improving the conditions in which people and future generations are born, live, work and age
- Ensuring that development contributes to reducing inequalities in health and wellbeing
- Shaping the environment to enable healthy and active lifestyles
- Protecting and supporting the delivery of facilities that promote health, wellbeing and social cohesion
- Tackling poor air quality by raising standards and improving air quality

Strategic Objective 4: Creating high quality buildings and places that allow our communities to flourish

- Facilitating the provision of the right homes to accommodate our needs .....
- Ensuring high design standards to deliver beautiful buildings and places that are future ready ....
- Positively shaping development so that it responds to and respects the regions unique characteristics ...
- Protecting and utilising our built heritage and cultural assets .....

Finally, any other considerations they thought were important for Age Friendly communities

# Strategic Objective 2: Health & Wellbeing



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# Improving the conditions in which people and future generations are born, live, work and age

## Main issues raised

1. Poor educational standards
2. Lack of good jobs/rise in gig economy
3. Loss of community services
4. Deprivation
5. Lack of awareness of health issues
6. Isolation

## Possible solutions suggested

1. 6<sup>th</sup> form college in Knowsley
2. Better jobs and employers paying living wage
3. Better information/awareness of facilities
4. More community facilities like Netherton Feelgood Factory
5. Better education to prevent poor lifestyle choices
6. Improved public transport, particularly bus services

- There is no integrated planning in place for support services for new large scale housing developments e.g. GP's, schools/public transport etc
- Better education is key, with improved facilities and support to break decades of poor lifestyle choices
- Job instability. There is a high gig economy. People have no option but to go out to work to earn which is why we have had high Covid rates.
- There are existing organisations that can help but there needs to be greater awareness/information/support

Quote: 'Need to break the cycle of generational expectations being low' Elaine (Knowsley)

# Ensuring that development contributes to reducing inequalities in health and wellbeing

## Main issues raised

1. Food poverty/proliferation of takeaways and delivery services
2. Poor lifestyle choices through lack of awareness
3. Varying standards of health care provision
4. Lack of awareness of healthcare provision
5. Poor public transport to health services

## Possible solutions suggested

1. Limit licences for takeaways
2. Healthier food in schools
3. Food co-ops providing cheaper healthy options
4. Better information about healthcare
5. Review of bus services to hospitals etc

- There are many people who can't afford healthy food and are too proud to ask for help so buy whatever is cheapest to survive
- Not enough is done to promote health messages. There needs to be better education
- Standard of health care provision varies considerably across the district
- People from deprived areas have less take up health services e.g mammograms
- Public transport availability to health services is poor.

## Quotes:

'Food that is cheapest & easiest to prepare is often the type that is worst for us' Debbie (St Helens )

'There is a disconnect between people from lower income groups and accessing the support available Elaine (Wirral)



## Shaping the environment to enable healthy and active lifestyles

### Main issues raised

1. Active travel measures are fine but consultation was very poor
2. Safety is main concern for cycling
3. Car reduction should be encouraged
4. Poorly maintained walking routes
5. Loss of walking routes

- Cycle routes need to be in safer places not mixed in with traffic.
- There needed to be better consultation on cycle lanes but anything that reduces traffic should be encouraged
- Need more encouragement and information about the benefits of active travel
- There should be more adult cycle training to encourage people to return to cycling
- We need to encourage lifelong walking and we need to maintain our green space better
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### Possible solutions suggested

1. Greater community involvement in active travel measures
2. Better awareness of the issues/benefits of active travel/links to health conditions
3. More investment in walking routes
4. Better promotion of available groups

### Quotes:

'If we can reduce the amount of cars we will reduce the amount of serious accidents' Justine (Sefton)

'The periphery of Birkenhead Park being car free has been a tremendous asset' Jane (Wirral)

## Protecting and supporting the delivery of facilities that promote health, wellbeing & social cohesion

### Main issues raised

1. Benefits of green space
2. Maintenance of parks/green space
3. Loss of green space
4. Cost of sport facilities
5. Loss of sport facilities
6. Accessibility of sport facilities

### Possible solutions suggested

1. Enhance/protect/create green space
2. More support staff/ranger services
3. Free outdoor sport facilities in parks
4. Investment in sport facilities

- Urban green space is a valuable asset that is well used and should be enhanced
- Cuts in ranger services has had a negative impact. More ASB. Loss of ranger led walks (may be Covid related)
- Need more parks/open space properly maintained with support staff
- Cost of sport facilities is an issue for many. Sport centres/bikes aren't cheap/pitch fees have gone up.
- More leisure facilities for over 55s offering a variety of activities - helps social cohesion, health, loneliness, reduce dementia

### Quotes:

'The park is a community centre without a roof' Helen (St Helens)

'The travel pass was the best thing that ever happened to me. I felt so much freedom' Conal (Liverpool)

## Tackling poor air quality by raising standards and improving air quality

### Main issues raised

1. Pollution in Bootle (STRONGEST ISSUE)
2. Pollution in Knowsley
3. Expansion of docks in South Sefton
4. Too many cars to/from Liverpool to Sefton
5. Poor public transport in parts of city region

### Possible solutions suggested

1. Improvements to docks traffic (rail/cleaner vehicles)
2. Better and cleaner public transport
3. More trees esp North Liverpool
4. Tidal power. Expensive but long term/reliable solution

- South Sefton has a double whammy of pollution from docks traffic and commuter traffic to/from Liverpool
- There needs to be more transparency about air quality in polluted areas like Bootle
- The docks are expanding at a rapid rate and all the traffic serving the docks and the shipping itself are massive pollutants
- More needs to be done to monitor emissions from industries in Knowsley
- In Knowsley people are more reliant on public transport so services need to be cleaner/greener
- Compared to leafy south Liverpool suburbs there is a lack of trees in North Liverpool/South Sefton

### Quotes:

‘The sooner we clean up the air the sooner more people will be living longer and better lives’ David (Sefton)

‘The problem is being visited upon these areas. The solution is not in the hands of the people who live there’ Justine (Sefton)

‘A real combined approach around greening up transport needs to be embedded in planning approaches’ Paul (Sefton)

# Strategic Objective 4: Placemaking & Communities



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## Facilitating the provision of the right homes to accommodate our needs .....

### Main issues raised

1. Lack of options for older people/singles
2. Lack of social housing
3. People want to stay within their communities
4. Number of empty properties
5. Poor standard of new housing
6. Number of HMO's

- Lack of attractive housing for older single people and many retirement vilages are too expensive because of ancilliary costs
- Should repurpose older buildings. We demolish attractive properties and build cheap indentikit housing in its place
- Should be more incentives for brownfield development
- There should be small scale development within existing communities that are suitable for older people
- Should repurpose older buildings. We demolish attractive properties and build cheap indentikit housing in its place

### Quotes:

- 'Housing is a determinant of health' Helen (St Helens)
- 'I don't want to live in a ghetto. I want to live as part of a community' Maurice (Sefton)

### Possible solutions suggested

1. Small scale development options aimed for older people
2. Real 'affordable' options for younger people
3. Retrofitting properties e.g. solar panels
4. Repurpose older buildings
5. Greater regulation of landlords/limits of HMO's

## Ensuring high design standards to deliver beautiful buildings and places that are future ready ....

### Main issues raised

1. Developers hold all the cards
2. 'Beautiful' is subjective
3. Proliferation of poor/cheapest design especially in deprived areas
4. Little 'design' aspiration

### Possible solutions suggested

1. New housing should be adaptable for all needs
2. Only energy efficient new build be permitted
3. Unique housing projects e.g. OWCH

- New housing and retail developments are all very samey, there is no design aspiration
- Ensure minimum design standards to allow us to live in homes longer and allow for us becoming less able bodied
- Better design of housing could solve some future care issues for vulnerable older people
- Needs to be greater opportunity for unique housing projects where people with shared needs/interests can develop housing that meets their needs e.g. OWCH project for older women

### Quotes:

- 'Build the buildings we want to live in from beginning to end' Mary (Knowsley)
- 'If housing was better designed we wouldn't be talking about specialist housing for older people' Justine (Sefton)
- 'We rush to the bottom just to make something happen, particularly in deprived areas' Paul (Sefton)

## Positively shaping development so that it responds to and respects the regions unique characteristics ...

### Main issues raised

1. Changing use/decline of town centres
2. Decline/loss of civic centres and iconic buildings
3. Reliance on tourism/loss of tourism
- 4.

### Possible solutions suggested

1. More accommodation in town centres creates more demand for services, leisure facilities and reduces car dependency
2. Repurpose empty civic buildings
3. Increase tourism outside of Liverpool
4. Transfer assets for community use
5. Increased 'localism'

- We should convert empty retail units into accommodation, reduce need for travel but create demand for other facilities
- Home shopping/Covid is killing off town centres. Empty properties/offices should be repurposed for housing which in turn creates demand for facilities that will re-energise town centres and reduce demand for transport/cars
- Southport Town Hall is a great example of a repurposed building that has retained its character
- Need to do more locally, utilise our parks or communal spaces better for events. Not everyone wants to go into city centres
- There are good examples of how assets transferred for community use at Birkdale station/Ainsdale library/Plaza cinema

### Quotes:

'We are at the start of this transformation of town centres. The imagination has been limited so far' Paul (Sefton)

## Protecting and utilising our built heritage and cultural assets .....

### Main issues raised

1. We could exploit our heritage much better
2. We have lost too much heritage
3. Public art is important
4. Heritage is the key to unlocking more tourism in the districts

### Possible solutions suggested

1. More 'World of Glass' type experiences
2. Tell the social history of our industrial heritage
3. Tourism related to industrial heritage e.g. Welsh Mining Experience in Rhondda

- In Bootle there are barriers to the canals. Its really important historical infrastructure that should be celebrated and used
- Shakespeare for the North could be used as a catalyst to improve and promote the whole area
- Tell the story of St Helens industrial/manufacturing history e.g. mining/Beechams.
- Public art on the scale of 'Another Place' and 'The Dream' give a sense of pride
- Smithdown Road Music Festival cited as a good example of local collaboration that improves an area

### Quotes:

'We have a great story to tell' David (St Helens)



# Other considerations for 'Age Friendly Neighbourhoods'



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## Other considerations for 'Age Friendly Neighbourhoods'

Main issues raised

1. Digital Inclusion
2. Ageism
3. Ongoing education
4. Volunteering
5. Community cohesion

- There is great community spirit in our area. As long as people have the information/access they can help themselves and each other. We are not helpless.
- More education courses should be available for older people, not just digital skills but everything
- Older people should be encouraged to help out in schools as away of keeping active and engaged in the community
- Ageism at the beginning of lockdown was shocking. The narrative was all about frailty. We need to erase this concept from our minds completely.

Quotes:

'Digital poverty is wrong and its getting wronger' Janet (Knowsley)

'Stop using the word elderly! We are just older people' Margaret (Sefton)

'The next generation of older people will have much higher expectations of service provision Paul (Sefton)

# Conclusions



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## Main issues

### Main issues raised

1. Pollution/air quality was the strongest issue in all areas, particularly in Sefton (Docks/Bootle) and Knowsley
2. Importance of green space/parks.
3. Need for better and cleaner public transport options
4. Poor awareness of health services/healthy food options and lifestyles
5. Food poverty is a problem in every area
6. Poorly paid jobs/gig economy/working multiple jobs
7. Better quality housing mix required with higher environmental and design standards
8. Large housing developments need to include service services GP's/public transport etc
9. Better consultation for active travel is required
8. Wider tourism offer outside of Liverpool/ exploit industrial heritage more

Report by:  
NAME, JOB TITLE



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