

Older People: independence and mental wellbeing

A practice case study: Wigan

Introduction

This report has been developed to inform NICE's Public Health Advisory Committee (PHAC) in developing guidance on older people's independence and mental wellbeing. It forms part of the work undertaken by the London School of Economics (LSE) for 'Review 3: Mapping services for mental wellbeing and independence for older people'. This report describes a case study of current practice in Wigan. Practice is described through mapping services which for older people (aged over 55 years), that aim to promote mental wellbeing and independence.

Wigan is a town in north-west England with a population of approximately 317,850. Compared to the national population profile, Wigan has slightly lower proportions of 20–34 year olds and 75–84 year olds, but the higher proportions of 35–49 and 55–79 year olds than for all of England. Currently, 16% (around 51,500 people) of the Wigan population are aged 65 and over and 4% (11,000 people) are 80 years of age or older; twice as many of those 80+ are women compared with men¹.

Methods

This case study forms part of the findings for 'Review 3: Mapping services for mental wellbeing and independence for older people'. Full methodology and background to selection of case study localities is available within that report.

In Wigan, the Director of Public Health was contacted to provide details of the member of their team with the lead for the wellbeing of older people. This lead was then contacted to provide contact details for a range of services in the area that met the inclusion criteria of the case study. These services were contacted by email with a [questionnaire](#) for completion and followed by phone if a response was not received. Some of the services provided information about additional services. These were then contacted in turn to complete the questionnaire. In addition any existing local health and wellbeing strategies were reviewed to identify practice, and an internet search was undertaken to look for any additional relevant services in the Wigan area.

Inclusion criteria

The case study considers services for individuals aged over 55 years and who are predominantly not in paid employment, while recognising that some services may also be provided to younger people aged of 50–54 years. In order to be included, the

¹ Wigan Borough Council, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, 2015.
<http://www.wigan.gov.uk/Council/Strategies-Plans-and-Policies/JSNA.aspx>

service should aim to promote mental wellbeing and/or independence for older people. Services of interest are those targeted at older people without substantive health and social care needs and aimed at the promotion of mental wellbeing and independence (with a focus is on social inclusion, tackling social isolation and loneliness).

Results

Strategies relating to health and wellbeing

Wigan Council's Corporate Strategy for 2014-2017 include a priority for ageing well, by *"improving life opportunities and independence for everyone to start well, live well and age well; particularly for those most dependent on public services"*².

Additionally, Wigan's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) includes a specific chapter on the needs of older people. It also makes a key recommendation that:

*"In order to help reduce the demand for services which will result from the ageing of the population, investment needs to be redirected into prevention (of ill health) for older people. We need to support local community organisations and the voluntary sector to keep people actively engaged as they get older, to prevent deterioration and dependence. We need to ensure that commissioned services for leisure and culture target middle-aged to older people to keep them active and engaged for as long as possible. This may mean the services changing their offer to clients. Historically NHS investment in Physical Activity services has tended to be concentrated in the top two tiers of the 'at risk' pyramid with an emphasis on treatment - rather than prevention across all relevant population groups. Future investment should be balanced across this investment pyramid"*³.

Services identified

In total, 21 main services we identified, providing over 100 different activities. Summaries of all [21 services](#) are available in appendix 2. Many services were coordinated through three key organisations: Age UK Wigan; Wigan Pensioners Link; Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust.

Services by type of activity

Services were generally multi-component, offering several types of activity or different ways for people to be involved (such as attending or volunteering at the session). There was a mix of single location and multi-location activity.

² Wigan Borough Council, Corporate Strategy, 2014-2017. <http://www.wigan.gov.uk/Council/Strategies-Plans-and-Policies/Corporate-strategy.aspx>

³ Wigan Borough Council, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, 2015. <http://www.wigan.gov.uk/Council/Strategies-Plans-and-Policies/JSNA.aspx>

In table 1, services are summarised by the areas of activity set out in the evidence statements for LSE Review 1. Key services are reported only once and many have activities within them which support additional evidence statements.

Table 1: Areas of activity and number of related services identified in Wigan

Area of activity as defined by Review 1	Services (Wigan)
1.1: Multi-component multi-location social support interventions	7
1.2 Participation in single location, multi-component activity programmes	5
1.3: Mentoring for older people and signposting to activities	13
1.4: Educational health promotion interventions delivered by volunteers and peers	8
1.5: Participation in a singing programme	4
1.6: Using a national arts festival celebrating creativity in older people	
1.7: Using arts to promote and protect mental and wellbeing	6
1.8: Support for older caregivers	
2.1 School-based intergenerational activities	
2.3 Intergenerational activities: volunteering	9
3.1: Building friendships	5
4.1: Face to face participation in further and continuing education	1
6.1: Training courses on computing and use of the Internet	2
6.2: Telephone and internet communication	5
6.3: ICT interventions for carers	
6.4: Computer gaming	

Reach of services

Services saw between 5 and over 100 different older people per week. Several services also had between 2 and 20 older people involved as volunteers to provide the services. One service had a particular target to attract at least 20% of participants from the most deprived communities. One service was provided to target men.

Funding of services

Services were mainly funded through Wigan Council, Age UK or grants (primarily Big Lottery funding, often via Age UK).

Evaluation of services

Most services did not have a formal evaluation of their services.

One service was able to share a formal evaluation, however this service was not purely for older people and the evaluation provided no breakdown by age and did not provide specific results relating to the parameters of this case study. One service has

an annual evaluation completed by the University of Salford. These findings have not been published formally. One service did report that an evaluation had been completed, but were unable to source and share the report the time of this case study.

Discussion

Summary of findings

As 'Age Well' is a stated priority for Wigan Council it is clear that investment has been made in services across the borough which support independence and promote mental wellbeing in older people. There are a range of services covering various types of activities, delivered in the main by three key providers. Services in Wigan have borough-wide reach, and many are offered in multiple locations or in service user's homes.

Age UK offers a variety of services, including 'Bright Days' which has a selection of activities on every day of the week. Wigan Pensioners Link also has a series of daily groups and activities. In addition, the Time Limited Contact Scheme offers targeted, low-level support for people facing particular life points or changes (such as experiencing practical difficulties resulting from the loss of a family member or friend; coming out of hospital; coping with a new illness or disability or moving into a new area). Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust offers several schemes to improve levels of physical activity in different ways: walking; football; badminton as examples.

In addition to the three main providers, various sheltered housing schemes are available across the borough offer housing for people over 60 and in some cases younger. These housing schemes are welcome applications from anyone who wishes to access them, there are no requirements for individuals to have particular health and social care needs. Additionally, these services offer services which can also be accessed by non-residents (usually friends, relatives or neighbours of residents).

Summary statement

Based on this survey of practice to promote independence and mental wellbeing in Wigan, in general multiple activities are provided by individual services, including social, multicomponent, support (mentoring, signposting), friendship building and education. Older people were involved as volunteers in many activities. Many were coordinated through three key organisations.

Strengths

A systematic and transparent approach was taken to identify services which met the criteria for inclusion in this review of practice.

This review of practice is linked to and complements findings from the effectiveness review produced by London School of Economics. Additionally, these findings complement in the practice review undertaken by London School of Economics.

Limitations

Included services

It is extremely likely that this case study does not capture all of the services and activities which are available within Wigan providing support for older people in maintaining independence and promoting mental wellbeing. This case study has taken a systematic approach to identifying as many as possible which were available to be contacted within the timescales of the case study.

Evaluation

The level of evaluation of the services reported in this case study was very low. Therefore, other than anecdotal reports and number of services users, it is not possible to report on the effectiveness of these services overall.

Where services offer anecdotal evidence of effects, this tended to be positive but often quantified through counting attendance at activities.

Definition of appropriate services

When discussing the general inclusion and exclusion criteria for services to be covered in this case study with the service providers, it became clear that many services did meet some of the criteria but independence and mental wellbeing may not have been the primary aim of the service. Services were included as long as they did have an aim which contributed to independence and mental wellbeing of older people.

Jennifer Connolly
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Appendix 1 – Questionnaire used for this report, designed by McDaid et al, London School of Economics

1. What is the name of the service?
2. Please provide contact details for the service if known

Address:

City/Town:

Post Code:

E-mail address:

Phone number:

3. Please provide a brief description of the main objectives of the service
4. In what way does the service help support the mental wellbeing and independence of older people (select all that apply)
 - Information, signposting putting in touch with other services
 - Individual support for individuals including home visits and phone contact (including befriending)
 - Group activity (primarily social – including outings, visits to sporting events, interactions between different generations)
 - Group activity (focus on arts, music and cultural activities – e.g. singing, dancing, making music, theatre and museum visits)
 - Wider community engagement and volunteering (includes local area coordination)
 - Training course for use of computers and/or social media
 - Higher and continuing education e.g. education courses targeted at older people
 - Training and support for older people with caregiving responsibilities
 - Other (Please describe)
5. Approximately how many older people use the service or activity each week?
 - Less than 10

- 10 – 20
- 21 – 50
- 51 – 100
- 101 – 500
- More than 500
- Don't know

6. Approximately how many older people are involved in the service or activity as volunteers each week?

- Less than 10
- 10 – 20
- 21 – 50
- More than 50
- Don't know

7. How long has the service been in existence?

- Less than 6 months
- Between 6 months and 1 year
- 1 – 2 years
- 2 – 5 years
- More than 5 years
- Don't know

8. How do/ can people access the service (select all that apply)

- Refer themselves
- Suggested by health service, e.g. GP
- Suggested by local authority
- Other (Please Describe)
- Don't know

9. How is the service or activity funded (select all that apply)

- Funded by local authority
- Funded by local NHS
- Funded by other statutory authority (e.g. police or fire authority)
- Funded by voluntary organisation e.g. Age UK
- Funded through grant (e.g. from Big Lottery Fund, Arts Council etc) (please name granting body if possible)
- Funded through payments by service users

- Other (please describe)
- Don't know

10. How is the service or activity provided (select all that apply)

- Provided by local authority
- Provided by local NHS (including GP)
- Provided by other statutory authority (e.g. police or fire authority)
- Provided by voluntary organisation
- Self-provision by service users
- Don't know

11. Is the future of the service or activity you have described secure

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

12. If you answered No to question 11 is this because of (select all that apply)

- Funding problems
- Contractual problems
- Staffing / volunteering shortfall
- Transport problems
- Charges to service users
- Low uptake of service/activity
- Lack of evidence that service/activity works
- Competition from other services
- Other (Please Describe)

13. Has the service/activity been evaluated?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

14. If the service has been evaluated can you provide weblinks to the evaluation report or indicate where these may be obtained?

Appendix 2 – Overview of services included in this report

Service	Brief description	Evaluation?	Area of activity as defined by Review 1 (London School of Economics)
Age UK: Advocacy	<p>The Advocacy service to help people by listening to them, not give advice but aims to support people by providing as much information as possible to allow them to make more informed choices and decisions. The Advocacy service aims to help by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring views and wishes are accurately expressed • Challenging decisions and outcomes which users do not feel to be fair • Attending meetings where users feel they need support • Signposting to more appropriate service providers where necessary <p>The service is free of charge and available to anyone over 60 residing in the Wigan and Leigh area. It can be accessed through Age UK Wigan Borough Starting Point Service, by self-referral or through a representative such as a family member, friend, care provider, social worker or other organisation.</p>	<p>Some self-initiated evaluation for overall for Age UK services.</p> <p>User satisfaction: 99.2% say that staff treated them with courtesy; 97.1% say that the service was helpful to them;</p>	1.3 6.2
Age UK: Bright Days	<p>Programme of weekly activities across the borough, including: Cooking 4 Fun; Swimming club; Music / Silver Choir; Tea and chat; Coffee mornings; Dancing; Fun and fitness; Craft; Walking; Cycling; IT and tea; Here and There Club. Also arranges day trips and IT training. Sessions range from free of charge to £3.50.</p>	<p>98.4% would use the service again; 98.4% would recommend us to their friends and family.</p>	1.1 1.4 1.5 1.7 6.1
Age UK: Befriending	<p>Befriending service provides support and companionship to people across the Wigan Borough, either by home visits or by telephone. The befriending volunteer is also able to identify concerns and issues so that referrals can be made to the appropriate service or organisation. Home visits take place on weekdays only, between the hours of 9.00am and 5.00pm and last for approximately 1 hour. Telephone befriending are Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, between the hours of 10.00am and 12noon. Telephone befriending group chat once a month. The criteria for the service is that the person should be over the age of 60, live alone, have no family involvement and have no involvement from other services.</p>	<p>75% describe Age UK as 'excellent' and 23.4% as 'very good', with only 0.4% as 'average' and 0.8% as 'poor'.</p>	1.3 3.1 6.2
Age UK:	<p>The handyperson service is a prevention service and the main emphasis is placed on tasks which</p>		1.3

Service	Brief description	Evaluation?	Area of activity as defined by Review 1 (London School of Economics)
Handyperson service	will help maintain a person's independence in the home and improve safety and security in the home, e.g. Levelling flags and pathways; key safes; hand rails and grab rails; home security and safety; small plumbing and electrical work; decorating small areas; putting up shelves, pictures and curtain rails; changing light bulbs. The charge for the service is £15.00 per job plus the cost of any materials that may be required.	Impact reported: 10.2% feel less lonely as a result of using services; 42.2% feel more positive; 83.2% know where to find information they need; 27.5% feel safer at home; and 23% find it easier to manage around the house.	
Age UK: Information and advice	The service is free and offers information and advice on a wide range of issues such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welfare benefits • Housing options • Availability of grants and loans from the local authority, DWP or other agencies • Help with the completion of local authority application forms including Occupational Therapy self-assessments, and the Blue Badge scheme • Finding help at home Also offer a home visiting service to those who would have difficulty getting to the offices. This service is available in both our Wigan and Leigh offices. An appointment is necessary for completion of a benefit claim or other application forms but general telephone advice is available most days of the week.		1.3 6.2
Age UK: Starting Point Plus telephone helpline	Starting Point Plus is a free, non-means tested prevention service. Staff are available advise and support people aged 50 and over, or under 50 with a disability. Aims to help users access a range of services/organisations to enable them to live comfortably within your own home. The aim of the Starting Point Plus service is to enable users to maintain your independence and make own decisions. The Starting Point Plus service is contracted through Wigan Borough Council to provide help/support for people with low to moderate needs.		1.3
Age UK: Volunteering	Volunteers are sought to participate in Age UK services.		2.3
Borough wide Community	This network links up very small, local level projects which includes projects aimed at older people. Examples of projects include: allotment societies; community forums (parish level). The network supports these projects with a newsletter and sharing information.	None available	1.1 1.3 1.7

Service	Brief description	Evaluation?	Area of activity as defined by Review 1 (London School of Economics)
network			
Creative support	<p>Service focused on promoting wellbeing, greater independence and social inclusion. In partnership with service users aim to achieve these goals through outcome focused and personalised support. Deliver housing-related floating support service for older people in Wigan. Service offers flexible support which aims to empowers people to; ensure their economic well-being, stay safe, be healthy, reduce any financial debts, maximise their income by supporting to apply for relevant benefits, developing budgeting skills and ensuring household bills are paid.</p> <p>Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information, signposting putting in touch with other services • Individual support for individuals including home visits and phone contact (including befriending) • Group activity (primarily social – including outings, visits to sporting events, interactions between different generations) • Group activity (focus on arts, music and cultural activities – e.g. singing, dancing, making music, theatre and museum visits) • Wider community engagement and volunteering (includes local area coordination) <p>Has been in existence for 3 years. Sees 70 users a week, variety of referral methods, funded by Wigan Council.</p>	None available	1.1 1.3 1.5 1.7 2.3
Pensioners Link: Groups and activities	Various daily group activities in four different locations. Includes art/craft activities; friendship groups; exercise classes and family history session. Also provides signposting.	None available	1.1 1.3 1.4 1.7 3.1 6.1
Pensioners Link: Community	<p>The pensioners link host 'Mini-Links'(one-stop shops) in local venues throughout the Wigan Borough offering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and advice on issues affecting the over 50s • Social/health/education activities. 	None available	1.3 2.3

Service	Brief description	Evaluation?	Area of activity as defined by Review 1 (London School of Economics)
Link	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy • Volunteering opportunities 		
Pensioners Link: Time Limited Contact Scheme	<p>Wigan & Leigh Pensioners Link offers a “Time Limited Contact Scheme”, which provides low -level support for a maximum of six weeks for people aged 50 and over who are experiencing changing times. They provide home visits, telephone contact, information, advocacy help and support with domestic arrangements, regular shopping, help with arranging transport, help in becoming more involved in social and community activities</p> <p>The scheme is available for people aged 50 and over who are experiencing a time of change which may affect independence, confidence or well-being for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiencing practical difficulties resulting from the loss of a family member or friend • Coming out of hospital • Coping with a new illness or disability • Moving into a new area <p>Service aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing isolation • Encouraging independence • Helping other people remain active • Preventing a situation worsening and turning into a crisis • Reducing the number of hospital re-admissions 	None available	1.1 1.3 3.1 6.2
Pensioners Link: Volunteering	Volunteers are sought to participate in all Pensioners Link services.	None available	2.3
Sheltered Housing	There are 66 sheltered housing schemes for older people across Wigan borough. These have 1,894 units of accommodation in total and are provided by 8 housing providers. Wigan Council,	None available	1.1 1.3

Service	Brief description	Evaluation?	Area of activity as defined by Review 1 (London School of Economics)
Schemes	<p>managed by Wigan and Leigh Homes, is the largest provider of sheltered housing in the borough. Housing aimed at over 60s but will let to younger residents if they need support. A mix of bungalows and flats are available depending on the scheme. Every resident has their own individual home, secure to them and they can come and go as they please. The schemes offer a safe and secure environment for older residents in which to live. Communal facilities – lounge, guest room, gardens etc. A range of events and activities are held, many have lively social calendar and are open to non residents too.</p> <p>Low level support with agreed support plan. Work with other agencies to give additional help when needed. Help support the mental wellbeing and independence of older people through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information, signposting putting in touch with other services • Individual support for individuals including home visits and phone contact • Group activity (primarily social – including outings, visits to sporting events, interactions between different generations) • Group activity (focus on arts, music and cultural activities – e.g. singing, dancing, making music, theatre and museum visits) • Wider community engagement and volunteering (includes local area coordination) <p>(The range of support and activities vary depending on the provider and the needs of the residents in each individual scheme).</p> <p>There are over 1,800 units of accommodation and many will be occupied by couples, so over 2,000 individual residents. Many activities available at the schemes are also accessed by friends and neighbours who are non-resident. Schemes encourage residents to support each other informally as good neighbours and encourage residents to get involved in the running of the schemes. There are resident volunteers helping to run activities and many schemes have an active residents association.</p>		<p>1.4 1.5 1.7 2.3 3.1</p>
Wigan Athletic Community Trust: Fit Fans	<p>The main objectives of the service are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To engage men to take part in sport and physical activity and increase their weekly activity levels • Improve their lifestyle 	Service has been evaluated but evaluation was not	<p>1.2 1.4 2.3</p>

Service	Brief description	Evaluation?	Area of activity as defined by Review 1 (London School of Economics)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deal with any weight management issues. • To provide opportunities to volunteer and gain qualifications <p>Help support the mental wellbeing and independence of older people through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information, signposting putting in touch with other services • Group activity (primarily social – including outings, visits to sporting events, interactions between different generations) • Wider community engagement and volunteering (includes local area coordination) <p>Sees up to 10 older people per week, including volunteers. Has been in existence for over 2 years, variety of referral methods. Funded by a grant from Premier League Charitable Fund.</p>	shared.	
Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust: Active Outdoors	<p>To provide walking, cycling and running opportunities to adults 16+ across Wigan Borough to improve their health and wellbeing. Provide a weekly programme of community sessions which are led and supported by volunteers (walking & cycling) and freelance instructors (running). Provide training opportunities to volunteers to ensure that community sessions are self-sustaining. Also often theme walks e.g. nature/history walks etc.</p> <p>The programme is open to residents of all Wigan Borough areas, however we do have specific targets to engage those from the top 20% most deprived areas. WLCT see over 100 older people per week, including over 20 older people being involved as volunteers. Has been in existence for 3 years, variety of referral methods, funded by Wigan Council.</p>	Yes. The IPAQ, (International Physical Activity Questionnaire) data is analysed by the University of Salford every year. This data is reported but not published.	1.2 1.4 2.3
Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust: Active Later Life	<p>The aim of this programme is to help people keep their independence through keeping active in later life. The focus of the session is to improve fitness, strength, balance, mobility and confidence. Help support the mental wellbeing and independence of older people through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information, signposting putting in touch with other services • Individual support for individuals including home visits and phone contact • Group activity (focus on physical activity) • Wider community engagement and volunteering (includes local area coordination) 		1.2 1.3 1.4 2.3 6.2

Service	Brief description	Evaluation?	Area of activity as defined by Review 1 (London School of Economics)
	WLCT see over 100 older people per week, including over 20 older people being involved as volunteers. Has been in existence for 3 years, variety of referral methods, funded by Wigan Council.		
Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust: Back to Sport	<p>Provide sports and physical activity provision for inactive adults (all adults not just older people). Provide competitive opportunities for adults currently engaged in the Back to Sport (B2S) programme. To engage with workplaces, colleges, clubs and community groups to deliver targeted interventions for adults to engage in physical activity. Help support the mental wellbeing and independence of older people through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information, signposting putting in touch with other services • Group activity (focus on physical activity and organises social events to sporting events) <p>Back to sport sees over 50 older people per week, including up to 10 older people being involved as volunteers. Has been in existence for over 5 years, variety of referral methods, funded by Wigan Council.</p>	None available	1.1 1.3 1.4 2.3
Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust: Over 50s Racket Sports	3 over 50's racket sports sessions, which predominately involve badminton, although short tennis and table tennis are offered. These sessions attract 10-12 participants per week and are attended by players aged 50-70 years. Two of the sessions are linked to a local U3A group who support with promotion and recruitment of new members.	None available	1.2
Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust: Walking Football	3 weekly sessions attracting an average of 15 men per week. One session is delivered in the evening from 8pm-9pm and attracts a younger group ranging from 35-70 years. There is also an even split of working and retired men. Other sessions are delivered during the day (10:30am and 3pm) and attract retired men aged 55+ years.	None available	1.2
University of the Third Age	Interest groups include: Card Making; Creative Writing; Days Out - Places of Interest; Family History; French Conversation; Gardening; German; Golf; History; Origami; Kaluki; Latest News; Photography; Pudding Club; Reading Groups; Scrabble; Singing For Pleasure; Stitchcraft; Taichi;		1.1 1.4 1.5 1.7

Service	Brief description	Evaluation?	Area of activity as defined by Review 1 (London School of Economics)
	<p>Theatre; Walking Group; Where and When Days Out; Zumba.</p> <p>Groups meet on average once a month. Also have a general meeting once a month and coffee afternoon once a month.</p> <p>100 full members and about 100 associate members.</p>		<p>3.1</p> <p>4.1</p>

Areas of activity, key:

- 1.1: Multi-component multi-location social support interventions
- 1.2: Participation in single location, multi-component activity programmes
- 1.3: Mentoring for older people and signposting to activities
- 1.4: Educational health promotion interventions delivered by volunteers and peers
- 1.5: Participation in a singing programme
- 1.6 Using a national arts festival celebrating creativity in older people
- 1.7: Using arts to promote and protect mental and wellbeing
- 1.8: Support for older caregivers
- 2.1: School-based intergenerational activities
- 2.3: Intergenerational activities: volunteering
- 3.1: Building friendships
- 4.1: Face to face participation in further and continuing education
- 6.1: Training courses on computing and use of the Internet
- 6.2: Telephone and internet communication
- 6.3: ICT interventions for carers
- 6.4: Computer gaming