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# ***An Evaluation of Ageing Well in England and Wales***

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# Ageing Well Programme

- National network of projects developed by Age Concern to improve the health and well being of people aged over 50 years.
- Volunteers aged over 50 years are trained as “Senior Health Mentors” to provide a range of activities for people of a similar age group e.g.
  - Physical exercise – walks, cycling, chair-based
  - Music and dance
  - IT classes
  - Complementary therapies
  - Diet and healthy eating / cookery
  - One to one support
- 88 projects (17 in Wales, 71 in England).
- Funding: Big Lottery, LHBs, PCTs, local authorities, policy initiatives.

# Policy Context and Background

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- European agenda to promote quality of life and active ageing (Drennan *et al* 2005).
- Lay health promotion model is a cornerstone of public health policy (DH 2006).
- Lay health mentor model adopted by Age Concern to reach older people including those living in disadvantaged communities.

# Ageing Well: Lay Health Promotion Model

- Volunteers aged over 50 years are recruited from local communities to lead and support older people in activities.
- Volunteers work with individuals to support behavioural change to improve physical, social and emotional health and well being.
- Volunteers are trained, supervised and supported in their roles by paid project coordinators.

# Ageing Well Evaluation Study

## Research Objectives

To:

- Assess physical, social and emotional health impact on coordinators, mentors and clients and their families and friends.
- Evaluate the training of “Senior Health Mentors”.
- Evaluate support and supervision for coordinators, mentors, clients.
- Make recommendations for future development of the programme.

# Methods

**Coordinators:** Focus groups & interviews plus questionnaire (n=33)

**Volunteers:** telephone interviews (n=101)

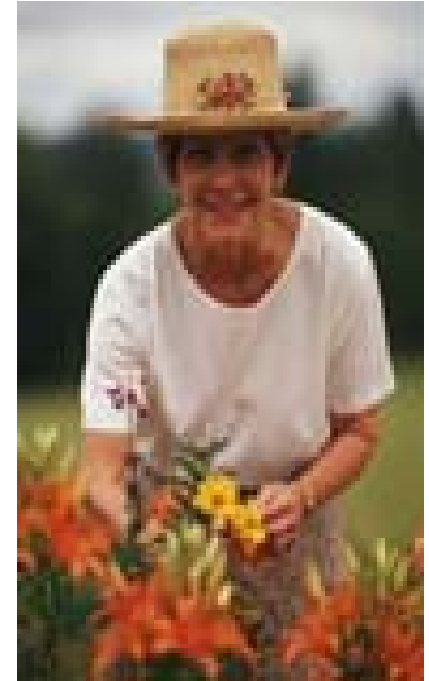
**Clients:** interviews in 6 projects (n=31)

**Ageing Well national managers & support staff:** interviews (n=3)

**Documentary review:** Project evaluations and reports. Research papers.

**Sampling frame:** urban, rural, BME communities, men's health, volunteers engaged in range of different activities, clients in different settings (**46 projects out of 88**).

**Analysis:** survey data entered into SPSS. Interviews and focus groups: thematic content analysis



# Characteristics of Volunteers and Clients

## Volunteers

**Gender:** 79 women, 22 men (n=101)

**Age range:** 25 – 85 years

**Age:** %

< 50 years 8

50 – 59 years 12

60 – 69 years 37

70 – 79 years 36

80 – 85 years 5

**Ethnic origin:** %

White British 85

Asian 10

Black Caribbean 5

## Clients

**Gender:** 25 women, 6 men (n=31)

**Age range:** 56 – 86 years

**Age:** %

< 50 years 0

50 – 59 years 10

60 – 69 years 32

70 – 79 years 35

80 – 86 23

**Ethnic origin:** %

White British 71

Asian 16

Black Caribbean 13

# Impact on Health



Impact on Health and Well Being of Mentors	Improved a lot	Improved a little	Stayed the same	Reduced a little	Reduced a lot
	N	N	N	N	N
My knowledge about the importance of physical exercise has	41	23	37	0	0
My level of physical exercise has	27	33	39	2	0
My knowledge about healthy foods has	31	25	44	1	0
My consumption of healthy foods has	31	20	50	0	0
My social circle has	40	35	24	2	0
My knowledge about home safety has	38	32	30	0	0

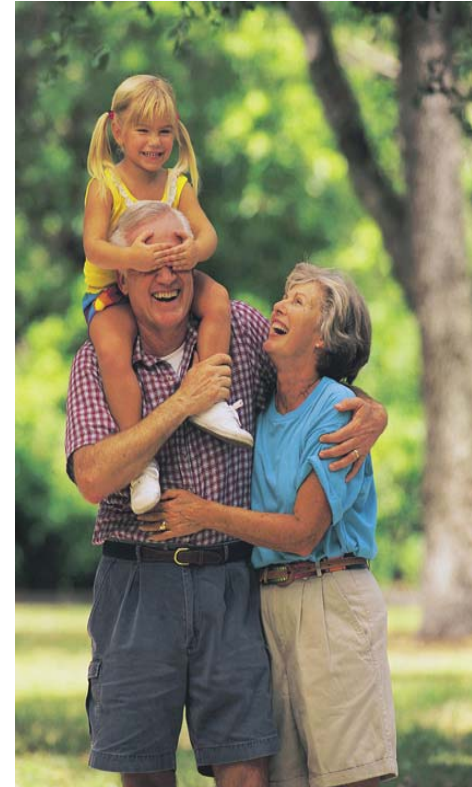
# Physical, Emotional and Social Benefits (Volunteers/Mentors)

*‘We exercise every muscle including the eyeballs and the jaws get the most’ (Mentor 75).*

*‘...social benefits in getting out of the house, I’ve made new friends through Ageing Well’ (Mentor 11).*

*‘It’s improved my well-being, something that’s satisfying and helping people, good for my health I’m sure’ (Mentor 80).*

*‘...the grandchildren ... they are now keen cyclists. These things have little eddies around them, like a stone in water’ (Mentor 21).*



Impact on Health and Well Being of Clients	Improved a lot	Improved a little	Stayed the same	Reduced a little	Reduced a lot
	N	N	N	N	N
My knowledge about the importance of physical exercise has	17	13	1	0	0
My level of physical exercise has	14	14	3	0	0
My knowledge about healthy foods has	11	8	12	0	0
My consumption of healthy foods has	11	8	12	0	0
My social circle has	21	9	1	0	0
My knowledge about home safety has	13	8	10	0	0

# Physical, Emotional and Social Health Benefits (Clients)

*'Aches and pains in the morning ... once I get here and do the exercise, I feel wonderful' (F, 74 yrs).*

*'It's [the exercise] one way to keep fit. It's not just the exercise, different people come, so we meet different people' (M, 82 yrs).*

*'...I don't think I worry as much as I did. When you broaden your circle you can see that people are worse off than you. They have problems and you are better off' (F, 75 yrs).*

*'My wife has stopped using fattening stuff, less butter, oil and cut down on rice to twice a week....no sugar and things like that and plenty of vegetables and brown chapatti' (M, 72 yrs).*

# Benefits of Volunteer Peer-led Initiatives

- **Speaking the client's language**

*'Volunteers speak the client's language, they understand the lifestyle and are very friendly' (F, 56 yrs).*

- **The significance of age – going at your own pace**

*'It's better to have a more mature person to be in our age group, so that exercise is appropriate for your needs' (M, 82 yrs).*

*'Nobody laughs at you if you make a mistake' (F, 74 yrs).*

- **Understanding, style and approach**

*'The Tai Chi instructor is very young, has adapted to our age group, understands the age group' (F, 74 yrs).*

# Strategies for Enhancing the Scope of Ageing Well

- Extending provision
- Develop partnerships with statutory and other voluntary providers
- Reaching a more diverse group of clients (especially from BME groups and men)
- Targeted recruitment of volunteers (especially those in mid life, men and from BME groups)
- Promoting the typology of volunteer roles (volunteer, activity leader and community health volunteer)

# Conclusion

- Supports the delivery of the public health agenda (DH 2004, WAG 2005).
- In line with personalisation and behavioural change models (Coull *et al* 2004)
- Ageing Well programme is adaptable to local context and communities.
- Demonstrates the contribution of older people to sustaining health of peers and to supporting their communities.

Report 'As soon as I get my trainers on I feel like dancing' is available from: [www.opanwales.org.uk](http://www.opanwales.org.uk)

# ‘As soon as I get my trainers on I feel like dancing’

An evaluation of *Ageing Well*  
in England and Wales

