



## Visioning Framework for Ageing positively in Torbay

### Executive Summary

The Health & Wellbeing Board recognised there was not an active strategy responding to the needs and opportunities of the ageing population in Torbay, and subsequently the Ageing Well Torbay Programme Board offered to lead the development of an Ageing Strategy for Torbay, using an engagement-led approach with people over 50.

### Data Collection and Sample size

Focus groups were arranged as café style events and we tried to reach the most isolated people including guests at a memory café, a mental health peer support group and a sheltered housing complex. To ensure people could also send in their views, a freepost 'burning issue' postcard was designed and delivered to various GP surgeries and libraries across Torbay.

**Twenty events were held, and 339 people participated, 63 gave their views through postcards and 17 completed our online Survey.**

### Summary of Findings

The people in later life, we met could see what the challenges were, and as well as identifying solutions or improvements to existing services, they were identifying what they could do to help themselves and offering to volunteer, share skills, and help others. They felt they were part of the solution, rather than being part of a problem, and that they had untapped skills and experience.

The main barriers and facilitators to ageing well that people over 50 identified were:

**More accessible advice and information** people are not seeking advice because they often do not where to go, or cannot get to advice sessions, or have little knowledge of welfare benefits and financial issues, and have assumed they would not be entitled.

**Greater access to public spaces, buildings and the natural environment** including coastal paths, woods, the sea front and public parks, with better maintained paths, access to public toilets, and planting in public parks.

**Reducing perceived inequalities in health care** particularly difficulties in accessing GP appointments.

**More help and support to enable people to stay in their own homes** such as adaptations/assistive technology, stair-lifts, shower/wet rooms rather than baths, low-cost, trusted DIY/gardeners/tree cutters, handymen.

### **Support to remain as independent for as long as possible**

The lack of floating support workers or home aids were noted but there was also recognition that this could also be met through more supportive neighbourliness.

### **More affordable care providers and care homes.**

**Affordable, accessible and reliable public transport** enables people to stay independent and socially connected, and for some small, local bus routes, the bus is a community hub. People suggested that they would be willing to pay nominal fares to keep minor non-financially viable bus services going, rather than losing them.

**More befriending or buddying** was highlighted, someone an older person could call on or rely on to go to places with, would not only reduce feelings of isolation but also increase feelings of security and safety. This is currently also being met through the AWT Wellbeing Coordination Project.

**More opportunities for socialising, a greater variety of activities, clubs and groups** The AWT Neighbourhood and Wellbeing Co-ordination Projects both hold small budgets for enabling the setting up of locally run interest groups, and have launched craft groups, community cafes and are currently developing two new Men in Sheds groups. This will also be one of the commissioning outcomes of the AWT Innovation Fund to be launched after Easter 2017.

**More opportunities for people over 50 to be part of the solution to ageing well** - barriers to offering support to others includes the belief they will be viewed as intrusive or nosey, and often what stops people asking for help or support is a lack of knowledge of what is available, pride, and not wanting to be seen as a burden. Currently the Ageing Well Torbay Neighbourhoods project is stimulating the grass roots re-growth of communities, enabling opportunities for natural connections, reciprocity and inter-dependence through the creation of 13 time-banks. This informal volunteering enables individuals to give and receive practical help, overcoming many of the barriers mentioned above.

**Improved communication and better distribution of information** people felt better distributed hard copies of information, Freephone numbers or more physical places to go to find out more information would help. AWT has been supporting the creation of Community magazines (nine so far) and also the development of the Orb, but throughout the discussions, it became apparent that 'word of mouth' is also a powerful way for older people to share information and find out about different groups, and that organised events provided the good opportunities to facilitate this.

**Improved access to information technology** is also a significant inhibitor for people over 50. It is likely that one of the commissioning outcomes for AWT in years 3 and 4 will also be digital inclusion.

**Improved planning for ageing well** - The idea of people in later life co-curating a "How to" guide on ageing, was frequently mentioned, including suggestions on how to 'age proof aspects of

their lives' and recognising their responsibility to stay healthy and looking after themselves. This is an action which will be taken forward through Ageing Well Torbay.

## **Conclusions**

Almost 400 people in later life have identified the gaps, challenges and improvements needed with existing services, and also what they could do to help themselves and how they could help others.

We believe the next step in the development of the 5 year Ageing Well Strategy, now needs buy in from a wider range of strategic partners.

The Health and Wellbeing Board agrees the creation of a 'task and finish' group, and that membership of this group will also include a selection of people in later life, so that the strategy is truly co-developed and co-produced.

Through the participation sessions, Ageing Well Torbay has already identified a core of older people who have untapped skills and experience, and want to be part of the designing services and solutions. We believe the AWT led development of the Older Persons' Assembly could facilitate this, and also that this engagement between local stakeholders and people in later life provides a natural fit with the Transform Ageing programme which will be launched in May 2017.

## Introduction

The Health & Wellbeing Board recognised there was not an active strategy responding to the needs and opportunities of the ageing population in Torbay, and subsequently the Ageing Well Torbay Programme Board offered to lead the development of an Ageing Strategy for Torbay, using an engagement-led approach with people over 50.

This proposal was agreed by the Health & Wellbeing Board in June '16, with the understanding that the initial findings and visioning for the five-year Ageing Strategy for Torbay would be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board in March 2017 for consideration.

## Aims of the study

The aim of the study was to explore the feelings and views of people over 50, about their experiences of ageing in Torbay, their ideas for improving cultures, structures, and services, what inhibits or facilitates positive ageing, what contributes to social isolation and how far Torbay has come since the last Positive Ageing strategy.

## Data Collection and Analysis

Focus groups were arranged as café style events with food to share so that people would feel welcome, valued and relaxed enough to talk freely. These were called 'Food for Thought sessions.' We tried to reach the most isolated people including guests at a memory café, a mental health peer support group and a sheltered housing complex.

To ensure people could also send in their views, a freepost 'burning issue' postcard was designed and delivered to various GP surgeries and libraries across Torbay as well as to our delivery partners. They were also handed out at events, for attendees to give to their neighbours and people they know in their communities.

Open questions were used, that related back to the original aspirations identified by older people in the first street survey carried out by Torbay Community Development Trust.

These included:

**How can we change attitudes to and perceptions of ageing?**

**What helps with ageing positively?**

**What would help you fulfil your personal aspirations?**

**What helps you feel connected to your friends and family?**

**What would support you to feel your life has purpose and value?**

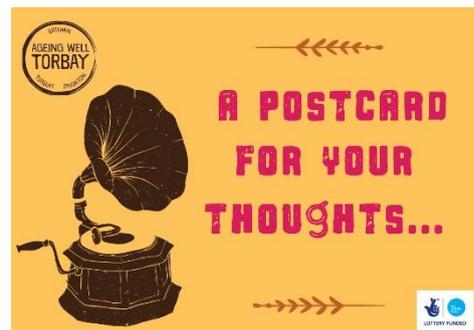
**What would help you feel more connected to your neighbourhood?**

**What would help you stay connected to your natural surroundings?**

**What would age-friendly housing be like for you?**

**What would age-friendly transport be like for you?**

**What support services would you like to see available?**



At the focus groups, the questions were on large sheets, and people wrote their own post it notes and added them to the sheets but there was a facilitator on each table who could scribe if needed. All comments were recorded, even if they were slightly off topic as they were then put into a more relevant category later. People genuinely enjoyed the opportunity to get together and meet others, hear each other and discuss what they thought.

All the comments, were then analysed and themed into categories or issues; sometimes categories overlapped and affected each other, or could be paired as both facilitator and inhibitor.

### Sample size

Twenty events were held, and 339 people participated, 63 gave their views through postcards and 17 completed our online Survey.

## Torbay Council

People recognised that access to the natural environment particularly open public spaces such coastal paths, woods, the sea front and public parks, were beneficial to their physical and mental wellbeing, however they felt that these spaces were not always maintained as well as they could be, or accessible. Some mentioned uneven or poorly maintained paths, the lack of public toilets, or reduced planting in public parks. Greater access to public buildings and facilities was also called for.

**“The council shouldn’t be able to take our pieces of land given to the people”**

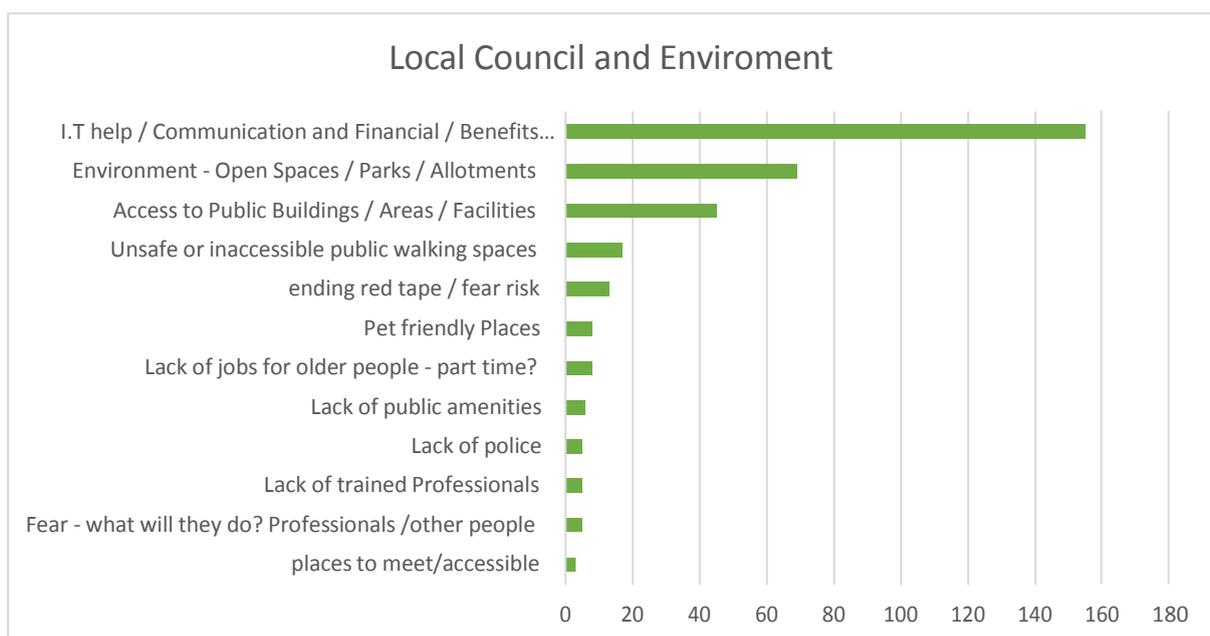
**“A reduced "local" fee for our many attractions, organised trips”**

**“Why close public toilets? Older people need to use them more frequently and it makes going out for longer times harder”**

**“Car parking is very expensive and often the car parks are full”**

**“Cycle paths for mobility scooters”**

However, many participants also offered their time and skills to help keep public places maintained, especially gardens weeded, planted and litter picked up.



The majority of people we spoke to wanted more accessible advice and information. There was recognition that people were not seeking advice because they often did not where to go, or could not get to advice sessions, or had so little knowledge of welfare benefits and financial issues, they had assumed they would not be entitled. The need for better communication and assistance – especially after bereavement or changes in life courses were noted (retirement, redundancy, disability, caring, and ill-health).

The other significant barrier identified was the increasing digitalisation of services – local GP surgeries and access to welfare benefits. Also recognised was that those not digitally included often lose out on cheaper deals for household utilities, car and house insurance.

Help with using and accessing IT was also identified as a way of keeping in greater contact with family and friends (see Ageing Well Torbay outcomes).

**“Help with form filling...why are they so complicated...why are we not informed about what we are entitled to”**

**“Financial advice ...what are we entitled to”**

**“Central resource or space for all queries e.g. benefits, transport, housing etc. filling in forms, in an accessible location.”**

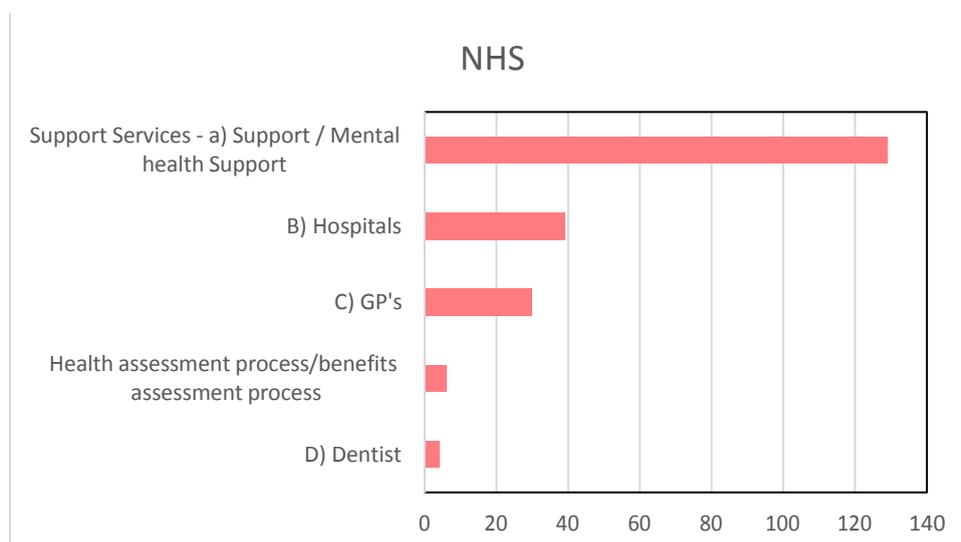
**“Specialist claim form writer to assist with disability claims and support forms.”**

**“I can’t afford to retire because of bedroom tax”**

**“Old people can’t afford to put heating on”**

## Health and Support Service

The highest number of comments (129) we received about health was regarding the lack of support services in general, and particularly mental health support. People also mentioned difficulties in accessing appointments with their GP, via phone or being able to get to the surgery, also gatekeeping. There were also some feelings that the health service discriminated against older people, either seeing them as using scant resources or not being worth investing in treatment due to age.



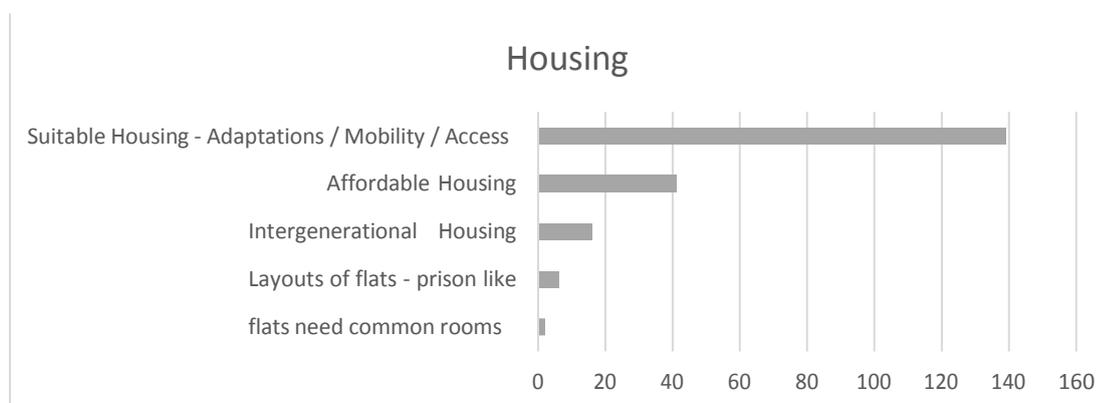
- “Mental Health Support....we need support/drop in groups/places to go for help...”**
- “Can’t get a GP appointment, have to queue at 8am in morning outside surgery - Barbaric”**
- “Better access to GP’s (mine always has a long wait or busy)”**
- “Help with getting to hospital – was told to get an ambulance– felt like was wasting ambulance’s time, or depriving someone else”**
- “Remove perceived discrimination in health service against older people”**
- “Healthy eating advice and cooking lessons to stay healthy.”**
- “More NHS Dentists”**
- “Much more social care to prevent hospital admissions”**
- “Local version of the Samaritans for the over 60's”**
- “GP surgeries to be available 7 days a week”**

## **Housing**

There were different views about age-friendly housing, ranging from people in later life not wanting to be housed with others their age:

- “Don’t isolate old people with older people – housing them in one site and limited means to get out and about.”**
- “Mixed age housing – students with over 50’s or even people in their 50’s with the older generation 70’s/ 80’s.**

To people saying inter-generational housing doesn’t always work, especially if play areas or areas where younger people congregate are noisy and near residential areas.



The financial and emotional cost of moving was recognised as a huge impact on their wellbeing and many thought there should be more help and support to enable people to stay in their own homes such as adaptations/assistive technology, stair-lifts, shower/wet rooms rather than baths, low-cost, trusted DIY/gardeners/tree cutters, handymen.

Others wanted more affordable care providers and care homes – (with fees and costs causing worry and concern about the future). Feeling secure and safe at home was also mentioned, with ideas about lower cost lifeline pendants, and also ‘wardens or a designated person they could go to or would check on them.’

Increasing the amount of pet-friendly housing was frequently mentioned as a desired improvement – recognising the benefits of company, exercise and also facilitating contact with others.

A significant number of residents in blocks of flats, and sheltered housing identified the need for common rooms and more organised activities, to increase socialisation and feelings of belonging. Also accessible shared gardens to facilitate coming together. Many residents in flats said that despite living close to others they felt isolated by the layout of their buildings.

There was little knowledge about extra housing schemes, but there was recognition that the housing chosen or used by people in early later life, often becomes inaccessible or isolating in late, later life (secluded, detached housing off public transport routes, on hills, with stairs). This was identified as a ‘self-help’ issue where

**“Wide doors for wheelchairs”**

**“Pet friendly”**

**“Adapt to give/keep independence”**

**“Activities and entertainment in the evenings”**

**“Warden Assistance, live in if possible”**

**“Live in, warden controlled gives peace of mind – cost of alarm/assistance devices too expensive”**

**“Wet rooms or showers, not baths!”**

**“Maintenance free gardens or access to garden services at affordable prices”**

**“Social housing/supported housing, more options and support!”**

**“More support and advice to access housing...”**

## **Transport**

Transport came up both as a facilitator and inhibitor of ageing well, with 190 people commenting on the importance of affordable and reliable public transport in enabling them to stay independent and socially connected.



People recognised that some minor routes mainly used by older people with bus passes might not be financially viable, and suggested that they would be willing to pay nominal fares to keep services going rather than losing them.

For some on the small, local bus routes, buses were not just transport but a community hub, providing scarce but valuable opportunity to meet and socialise with neighbours. Drivers were praised for becoming familiar enough with riders, so that they felt there was meaningful contact, they were noticed if they missed a journey. Others mentioned that they had used travelling on buses across the bay, as an affordable way to reduce feelings isolation, and fill their day with meaningful activity, the journey itself as the destination.

Over 75 people commented on the need for more accessible or adapted transport, particularly for wheelchair users, but also for greater understanding that people may need more time to get on the bus and sit safely, or to get up and leave the bus at their stop. Minibuses were frequently mentioned as solutions to needs for low cost, localised transport, and there were significant requests for more affordable volunteer driver schemes across the bay.

**“Easy access – single decker’s difficult for wheelchair to manoeuvre into”**

**“More transport, accessible transport”**

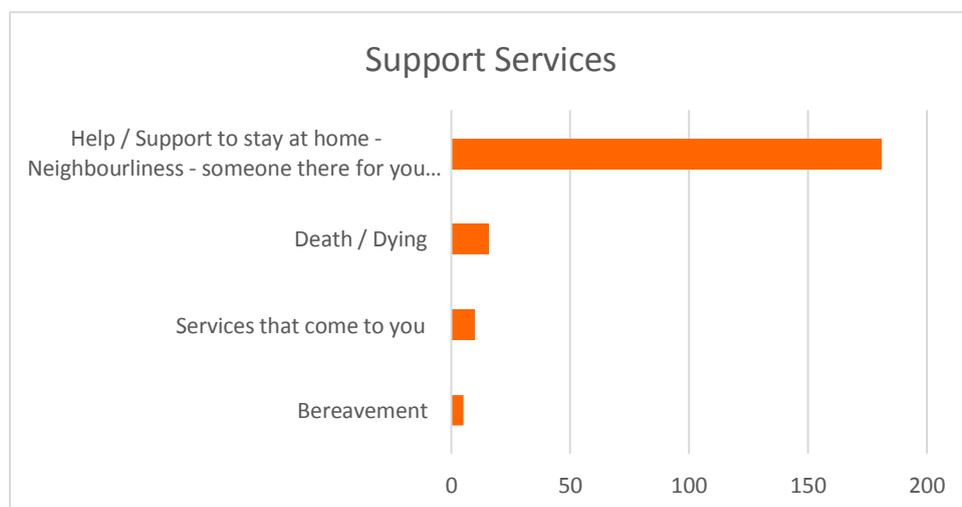
**“Our local drivers know us and know the routes, they are very helpful and kind.”**

**“Better rail discounts for over 50’s”**

**“Torbay bus service very good.... We know people who use the buses as a way of having company”**

## **Support**

Many of the older people we spoke to wanted to stay at home or remain as independent for as long as possible but recognised they needed support. There were 181 comments, related to the need for additional help, but also recognition that this might not be a paid -for service, it could come through supportive neighbourliness, i.e. able older people identifying that they could help their less able neighbours. Tasks such as changing light bulbs, hanging curtains, turning mattresses, putting out dustbins, moving furniture, clearing lofts and attics were mentioned.



Person centred care was important, in their own homes (including chiropody, shopping, cleaning, personal care) and not feeling rushed. The lack of floating support workers or home aids were noted, and also the need for low cost accessible centres where people could go to socialise and meet others – like lunch clubs but also available at weekends.

Befriending was also highlighted, someone either they could call on or rely on, to go to places with, would not only reduce feelings of isolation but also increase feelings of security and safety. Some older people without nearby family members or close social circles worry about dying alone and no one knowing. Others are concerned about support so they can have choices at the end of life, to be able to die at home if they wished and to die with dignity. Older people often felt unaware of the potential options and services available to support them, most felt that there needs to be more communication and discussion with older people and services about life changes, planning for the future, including the potential need for social care support services, residential care, the options available and how to access them.

**“Help with the garden”**

**“Bring back support workers”**

**“Continuity with care package providers”**

**“Personal shoppers to help you stay independent”**

**“Advice on how to grow old i.e. pensions, funerals, social care, transport and legal advice”**

**“Bereavement Support”**

**“Peer support for getting older and dying”**

**“More help and advice – accessing and battling services such as social services.”**

**“Befriending..... Willing to help if something organised”**

**“Somewhere to go. Maybe all day as most places are either am or afternoon, we need something all day.”**

**Befriending others.... Listening!!**

## **Social Activities**

The majority (246) of comments from people were that they enjoyed and wanted more opportunities for socialising, particularly a greater variety of activities, clubs and groups. However they also recognised that there might be available activities they were not aware of due to poor communication or publicity. Other significant barriers identified were affordability (more than £5 for an activity was felt to be too expensive), limited public transport or parking and also care/toileting issues which all were highlighted as affecting accessibility.

The other significant barrier to taking part in activities was ‘having someone to go with or share the experience with’. Many (125) comments related to more opportunities and places to meet in local communities i.e. community cafes. People wanted local, welcoming spaces, particularly for the

younger people in later life, and different to existing luncheon clubs which were felt to be for the older age range.

A further 132 comments indicated the need and enjoyment of exercise, keeping fit and maintaining good health. The lack of male interest activities was noted, as was the feeling that it is often harder for men to socialise.



**“Welcoming Community Centre”**

**“Keep older people active and interested in local events this would show everyone we have purpose and age is just a number”**

**“Keeping fit and active in mind and body mixing with all age groups we can all learn new things”**

**“Guided tours, mobility help, going in groups.”**

**“Life courses and updates on anything to help with brain function and performance”**

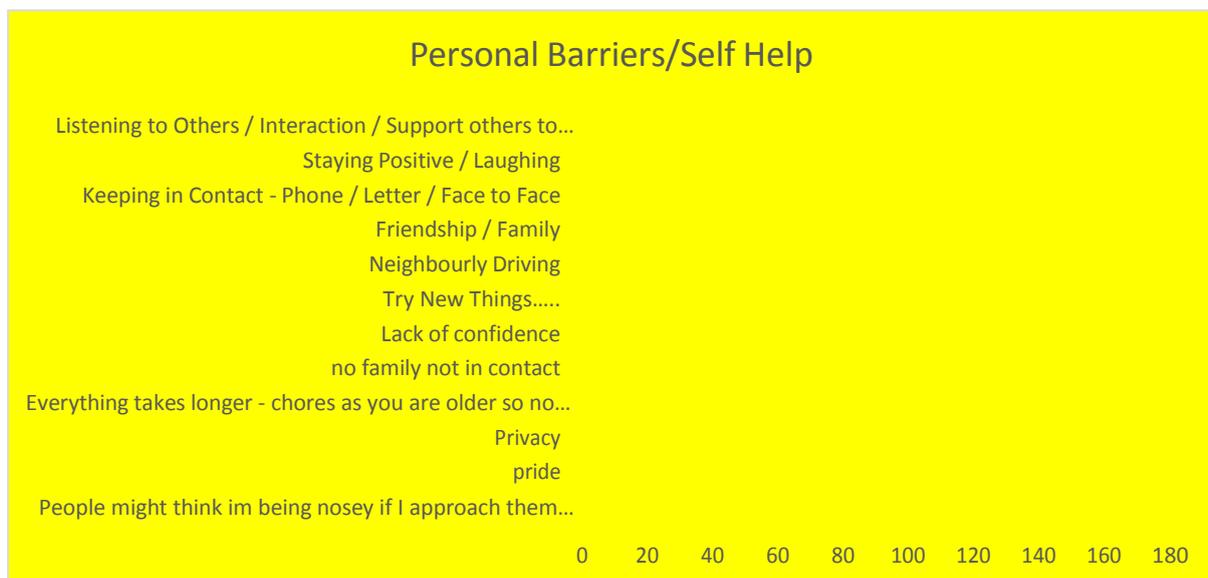
**“Run local quizzes (with transport organised) events i.e. Fish and chip night with a quiz or ploughman’s lunch”**

**“An understanding of what activities are needed in the area via feedback sessions.”**

## Self help

There was substantial recognition that people over 50 are a crucial part of the solution to ageing positively; providing informal befriending and buddying, the most physically able and fit doing neighbourly driving or helping and supporting others with maintenance or gardening to stay in their homes. Over 167 comments related to listening to others, interaction and supporting others to join in. There was understanding that lack of confidence and trying new things or doing things alone can be too daunting for people to begin with. Identified barriers to support others, included worries about 'red tape' ('would I need to be checked?'), and misunderstanding of motives, ('would people think I was just being nosey?').

A significant amount of comments also related to the importance of being positive, and that often by helping others it helped them too.



**“Helping all our neighbours, give them a smile, a chat etc.”**

**“Once you join one group you find out about other things and it grows.”**

**“Help others, but also to help yourself.”**

**“Getting out of the house would be great....just talking to people....going for coffee...”**

**“Always look ahead, plan for the future, share experiences. Be prepared”**

**“Eat well and look after ourselves. Create a How to Age Well Guide”**

**“Stop thinking of ourselves as old, stop thinking of the youth as a threat – we are all people with talents. Let us share experiences.”**

**“Look for volunteer work...NHS wants drivers, supporting people a couple of days a week...”**

**“Doing voluntary work and helping others – e.g. meal time companions helping people get to appointments”**

**“Exercise diet and social interaction”**

**“Being taken seriously and encouraged to fully participate. My knowledge and expertise being valued”**

## Summary of Findings

The people in later life, we met could see what the challenges were, and as well as identifying solutions or improvements to existing services, they were identifying what they could do to help themselves and offering to volunteer, share skills, and help others. They felt they were part of the solution, rather than being part of a problem, and that they had untapped skills and experience.

The main barriers and facilitators to ageing well that people over 50 identified were:

**More accessible advice and information** people are not seeking advice because they often do not know where to go, or cannot get to advice sessions, or have little knowledge of welfare benefits and financial issues, and have assumed they would not be entitled.

**Greater access to public spaces, buildings and the natural environment** including coastal paths, woods, the sea front and public parks, with better maintained paths, access to public toilets, and planting in public parks.

**Reducing perceived inequalities in health care** particularly difficulties in accessing GP appointments.

**More help and support to enable people to stay in their own homes** such as adaptations/assistive technology, stair-lifts, shower/wet rooms rather than baths, low-cost, trusted DIY/gardeners/tree cutters, handymen.

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available, pride, and not wanting to be seen as a burden. Currently the Ageing Well Torbay Neighbourhoods project is stimulating the grass roots re-growth of communities, enabling opportunities for natural connections, reciprocity and inter-dependence through the creation of 13 time-banks. This informal volunteering enables individuals to give and receive practical help, overcoming many of the barriers mentioned above.

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**Improved planning for ageing well** - The idea of people in later life co-curating a "How to" guide on ageing, was frequently mentioned, including suggestions on how to 'age proof aspects of their lives' and recognising their responsibility to stay healthy and looking after themselves. This is an action which will be taken forward through Ageing Well Torbay.

## **Conclusions**

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We believe the next step in the development of the 5 year Ageing Well Strategy, now needs buy in from a wider range of strategic partners.

We propose that the Health & Wellbeing Board agrees the creation of a 'task and finish' group, and that membership of this group will also include a selection of people in later life, so that the strategy is truly co-developed and co-produced.

Through the participation sessions, Ageing Well Torbay has already identified a core of older people who have untapped skills and experience, and want to be part of the solution. We believe the AWT led development of the Older Persons' Assembly could facilitate this. This engagement between local stakeholders and people in later life also provides a natural fit with the Transform Ageing Programme which will be launched in May 2017.