

**‘Seeing it our way’: taking an older people’s
approach to the strategic development of
information, advice and advocacy in Newcastle
upon Tyne**

**An evaluation of a Joseph Rowntree Foundation
funded project led by the Quality of Life Partnership**

Report by

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upon Tyne**

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Executive summary

Access to information, and the support to make the most effective use of it, is a very important issue for older people. Being able to get hold of good, accurate information at the right time helps them stay independent and in control of their lives. Yet all too often the evidence shows that this is a very difficult task.

This was recognised in the Newcastle strategy for older people and an ageing population: 'Everyone's Tomorrow'. This strategy has five key aims. One of them is that older people should be '*accessing information, advice and advocacy*'.

To help support achieving this aim the Joseph Rowntree Foundation made a grant of £30,000 to the Newcastle Quality of Life Partnership to support the development of a more strategic approach to the development of information, advice and advocacy in Newcastle. This is a report of how that money was used.

What it shows is that the support from the Foundation enabled the Quality of Life Partnership to 'step up a gear' and make a significant difference in the City. The money meant that the Partnership was able to:

- Set up a group that brought all the key agencies, such as the City Council and the Primary Care Trust, together with older people to take an overview of what was needed in the City. This group was able to agree on the services that needed to be developed and improved if older people were to be able to get the information and support that they needed
- Develop plans for new services and begin to put these plans into place. These include 'First Contact' – using a simple checklist to enable people to receive services to stay safe and independent in their own homes and 'Joining the Dots' – an initiative to bring together services and support for older people in the community.
- Develop a network of front-line staff to improve their ability to give information to older people

- Lay down the basis for a clear model of information, advice and advocacy services that can be commissioned by the [Council and Primary Care Trust.

Throughout the process older people, through the Elder's Council, have been involved as 'co-producers', taking an active role in developing ideas and taking forward their implementation. This has been crucial to the success of the work. Also very important has been building on the work done by the Quality of Life Partnership over a number of years to bring organisations and older people together to take a shared responsibility to improving the quality of life of older people. Without these two elements this work would not have been so successful.

Government policy increasingly recognises the importance of information for older people. Local authorities are now expected to set up information, advice and advocacy service for all older people and their carers who need services and their carers - not just the people that they support. This JRF funded project has set out an approach that can deliver this objective.

'Seeing it our way': taking an older people's approach to the strategic development of information, advice and advocacy in Newcastle upon Tyne

1. Introduction

This is a brief evaluation of a piece of work, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), to develop a strategic approach to the provision of information, advice and advocacy for older people in Newcastle upon Tyne. The funding was provided over a twelve month period from early 2008 but the work is part of a longer process of addressing the needs of older people in the City. This evaluation is very much a snapshot of a continuing process of development and the finding of new ways to meet the needs of older people.

Peter Fletcher Associates were commissioned by the Quality of Life Partnership (QoLP) to undertake an evaluation of this work as part of our ongoing evaluation of the overall partnership arrangements for older people in the City. Our approach to this specific piece of work reflects our overall approach to that evaluation which is to adopt an action research style. This involves working alongside and supporting the development of the Partnership, as well as evaluating its outcomes. This contrasts with a more traditional type of evaluation where the researchers may use a mixture of quantitative and qualitative measures to produce an evaluation at the end of a defined period, but without contributing their findings and learning during the process.

This report also reflects the distinctive nature of this piece of work. The funding contribution from JRF was designed to enable the QoLP to 'shift up a gear' in its approach to the provision of information to older people and develop a more strategic approach as a part of its overall work to improve the quality of life of older people in the City. As such it is less a specific 'project' which can be clearly delineated, described and evaluated in isolation, than an ongoing part of a developmental process which existed before and will continue after this funding ends. Our evaluation, therefore, is as much of this underlying process as it is of the specific RF funded piece of work. However recognising the need to

demonstrate exactly what was delivered with the additional funding from JRF we have structured our evaluation around the objectives and outcomes that were set out in the proposal that led to the award.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the people who have given us their help and co-operation during the course of this evaluation. In particular we would like to thank Claire Horton and Barbara Douglas for giving up their time to talk to us. The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of any of the local organisations and people involved in the project.

2. Background and context

The importance of information to older people

Information and just as importantly, the ability to act on it, is vitally important for all people in maintaining their independence and quality of life, but especially to people as they get older and have a greater need for support.

'Information, advice and advocacy are crucially important in promoting the independence, involvement and interests of older people. Information, advice and advocacy can help to support an older person in making choices, taking decisions, securing rights, acting in his or her own interests as well as contributing to the life of the community and being fully engaged in society'.¹

There is evidence that older people place a higher value on information than other groups in the population.² Certainly older people themselves will often highlight difficulties in getting information as one of the major problems that they face (along with transport) in their lives.

Research has looked at the barriers experienced by older people to accessing information and services.³ They include:

- Not knowing that support is potentially available
- Not knowing where to go for help
- Misconceptions about who can be helped both in terms of availability and quality
- Complexity. People are put off by the perceived complexity of the current system for supporting people at home
- Experiencing a poor response from agencies with people often complaining that when they do approach agencies they

1 Dunning A. :Information, Advice and Advocacy for Older People, Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2005)

2 Gilroy, R. (2005) Meeting the information needs of older people: a challenge for local governance, Local Government Studies, Vol 31, Issue 1 February, pp 39-51 cited in Sykes, Hedges, Groom and Coleman: Opportunity Age information indicators feasibility study, DWP Working Paper no 47 (2008) .

3. Swain et al: Accessing Information about Health and Social Care Services Picker Institute for Europe (2007)

often receive a poor response. This is defined in terms such as lack of accurate information, lack of clarity about what services can be provided, failure of agencies to join up their response or to refer on to other sources of support when they cannot themselves offer any help.

A number of studies have specifically looked at what older people want from an information service⁴. They include:

- A service that relates information to their particular situation
- Information that is topic, rather than agency, based
- Information that is generic and covers all services
- Information that is available at a timely point in their lives especially at points of change or crisis
- Not having to retell their story to new people
- A follow up service that checked that a solution/outcome had been achieved
- A comprehensive range of information – leisure and transport is as being as important as care and support
- No single option in terms of how to access information.

Peoples' preferred choices in terms of a solution include:

- An independently managed information bank providing comprehensive and up to date information which is accessible to both older people and service providers
- An integrated approach across organisations and sectors
- A range of ways to access information – although a central information centre or – 'one-stop shop' is often cited as an attractive solution.
- A service that offers information, advice and advocacy that can be accessed at the same time - seen as interlocking circles rather than a linear continuum of support.

The importance of information in enabling people to remain independent and make choices has been increasingly recognised

⁴ See, for example, Swain et al *ibid* and Sykes, Hedges, Groom and Coleman *op cit*

in Government policy in recent years. Most importantly in '*Putting People First A shared vision and commitment to the transformation of Adult Social Care*', local authorities, working together with partners, are expected to establish:

*'A universal information, advice and advocacy service for people needing services and their carers irrespective of their eligibility for public funding. A 'first shop stop', which could be accessed by phone, letter, e-mail, internet or at accessible community locations. Key strategic partners to be the Pensions Agency and relevant voluntary organisations. ...Personal advocates to be available in the absence of a carer or in circumstances where people require support to articulate their needs.'*⁵

A recent circular from the Department of Health has emphasised that by 2011 all councils in England will be expected to have made significant progress towards putting in place '*universal, joined-up information and advice available for all individuals and carers, including those who self-assess and fund, which enables people to access information from all strategic partners*' as a core component of services to support people maintain their independence and play a fuller part in society.⁶

There is an extensive literature about the way in which older people use information and the best ways of providing that information to them. Recent programmes, such as Link Age Plus, have piloted different approaches to the provision of information to older people.⁷ In Newcastle there is a range of information services including ones aimed specifically at older people including new web-based sources. However there has been less emphasis on how to develop the type of strategic approach to the provision of information that 'Putting People First' requires and which is necessary if the aspirations of older people in this area are to be met. It was this approach that was the focus of this piece of work.

⁵ H.M. Government and others, December 2007, p3

⁶ *Transforming Adult Social Care*, Local Authority Circular LAC (DH) (2009) 1, p5

⁷ See Ritters & Davis: Access to information and services for older people – the joined up approach, DWP Working Paper no 53 (2008)

3. The local context

The development of a strategic approach to older people in the City

In common with other places Newcastle is experiencing a significant increase in the numbers of older people in the City. Newcastle. Already 82,900 people living in the City are aged 50+ - making up 32% of the population. By 2029 this number will increase to 94,200, a growth of 13.6%.

Over the same period, the number of people aged 65–74 is expected to rise from 21,700 to 25,500 (an increase of 17.5%) and there is projected to be an even bigger increase in the very oldest people, those aged over 85. By 2029 this will increase by over two thirds from 4,900 to 8,200. The older population is also becoming more diverse with a growing number of black and minority ethnic older people. According to the 2001 Census, the number of BME people aged 50+ is 1,900. By 2016 it is expected that this will increase to 4,300.

Meeting the needs of older people has always a priority for the major public sector agencies in the City. Traditionally the City Council has provided a high level of social care services and there is a track record of good joint working between the Council and the NHS. There is a strong voluntary sector and organisations such as Age Concern provide a range of services. An organisation of older people – the Elder's Council – has existed for several years and has grown into a strong voice. In the 1990s these organisations came together with the King's Fund to run a number of 'whole system events' looking at how to improve the quality of life of older people. Out of this came 'A Better Life in Later Life', based at the Newcastle Healthy City which aimed to take a broad based approach to addressing the issues that older people themselves saw as important.

In 2004 the Quality of Life Partnership (QoLP) was set-up with funding from Newcastle City Council and the PCT. This brought together older people themselves, through the Elders Council, with staff from a 'Better Life in Later Life' and Age Concern in a

partnership with statutory agencies with a mandate to drive forward system improvements, and meet gaps in needs to develop. This, in turn, led in 2008 to the City's first strategy for older people and an ageing population – '*Everyone's Tomorrow*'⁸ – and the setting up of a new Older People's Strategic Board (OPSB) as an integral part of the Newcastle Partnership (the City's Local Strategic Partnership). The QoLP continues as the support body for the Strategic Board.

Information and advice provision in the City

Issues of access to information and advice have been a priority for the QoLP since its inception and there have been a number of developments over recent years:

- 'Information Now' - a comprehensive (web and paper based) information resource written by older people for older people.
- A BME advice and information pilot with Newcastle Welfare Rights and Age Concern Newcastle is underway.
- A trades register service for older people has been established

Improving access to information, advice and advocacy was identified as one of the 5 aims of '*Everyone's Tomorrow*' reflecting the importance attached to this issue by older people.

Newcastle is relatively well served in some ways for advice and information services. There are a number of established services specifically for older people in the voluntary and community sector e.g. Age Concern Newcastle, Search Project. There are also generic services which older people can access such as the City Council's welfare rights service and customer service centres, Your Homes Newcastle's Housing Advice service and the Citizens Advice Bureau.

However older people continue to report that they faced barriers to accessing the advice, information and support that they need. Not

8 Newcastle City Council, 2008. Available at <http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/core.nsf/a/oldandyoung>

least in the area of specialist one to one support which is often the only way to support more vulnerable and excluded older people. The move toward independent living is throwing up a greater demand for advice services linked to community care/housing issues which is a key area where older people are telling us that advice and support is lacking.

It was in this context that a proposal was developed and put to the JRF.

4. The proposal to JRF

Building on the QoLP's success in developing an increasingly strategic approach together with building the 'bottom-up' engagement of older people through the Elder's Council and other mechanisms an approach was made to JRF for funding to support the development of a system wide change approach to information advice and advocacy services. The overall aim was:

'To bring older people together at a strategic level to transform and re-shape the way Newcastle's advice, information and advocacy services are delivered.'

The following objectives for the work were identified:

1. To establish a citywide commissioning framework for older people's information, advice and advocacy services with key partners
2. To commission two new pieces of work that address supporting older people to live independently using a cross agency pooled investment which becomes mainstreamed.
3. To identify and address systems and services, gaps and blockages and work with services to improve access to services and reduce the complexity facing older people
4. To build capacity in the system through greater knowledge and shared learning.
5. To give priority to the needs of older people whose advice and information needs are greater e.g. housebound older people, and people from BME communities.
6. To build the network of older people who can act as local champions and change agents with their peers.
7. To set up a strategic network of older people and agencies to support and drive the above.

Through the programme it was anticipated that the following outcomes would be achieved.

- The establishment of an older people's led systems change network for the city
- The commissioning of two new pieces of advice and information work that are owned jointly by older people and a cross agency team and will include the Primary Care Trust as a new partner in this venture.
- The development of a sustainable advice and information commissioning model for Newcastle.
- Laying the foundations for the commissioning of a piece of work which collects evidence over the longer term on the impact of system improvements.
- A demonstration model of a whole systems intervention to design and deliver the sustainable advice and information services that older people want.

The mechanism for achieving this would be through the appointment of a part time development worker to shape a process that would itself act as a catalyst for advice, information and advocacy change within the City. The appointee would be a secondee with specialist knowledge of local older people's advice and information needs and will work with older people and their agencies to develop a systems change process. Funding was requested for one-year within which time it was expected that the approach developed could be sustained through being incorporated into mainstream programmes.

Funding of £30,000 was agreed by JRF to cover a 12 month period from April 2008.

5. Methodology

Peter Fletcher Associates (PFA) was already engaged to evaluate the development of the QoLP and OPSB over a three-year period covering April 2006 to March 2009. It was agreed that as part of this work we would conduct an evaluation of this specific piece of work as part of this wider evaluation. We adopted a straightforward methodology which included:

- A review of the project documentation including the worker's regular quarterly reports
- Interviews with key people involved in the project.

In addition we have used material gathered as part of our wider evaluation of the QoLP and OPSB to inform the results.

The evaluation will be structured by looking at the extent to which the objectives set for the project have been delivered and the outcomes achieved.

6. How the project was delivered

In addition to the JRF contribution funding was also made available from the Working Neighbourhood Fund as part of overall work to develop capacity building (£10,000) and from the City Council's Directorate of Adult Care (£20,000). Whilst this was not 'matched' funding it certainly seems to be the case that the support of JRF was a catalyst for these additional resources being awarded.

There were a number of different strands to the project's work.

The first was the appointment of the project worker. She had previously worked as part of the QoLP team developing the 'Information Now' website, so fulfilling the criteria of someone with specialist knowledge of local older people's advice and information needs. This also meant that she was able to 'hit the ground running' which can be an important factor in projects of a short-term duration. The funding was also used to free up other people's time to enable them to contribute to the work of the project including staff from Age Concern's Information and Advice Service and the Newcastle Advocacy Centre.

The second strand was the setting up of a 'Strategic Group on Information, Advice and Advocacy for Older People' as a sub-group of the OPSB, chaired by the Chief Executive of Age Concern Newcastle (who is a member of the Board with lead responsibility for the delivery of Aim 2 of 'Everyone's Tomorrow' which is 'Older people accessing information, advice and advocacy'). This was being discussed anyway but the setting up of this project gave it added impetus.

The group brought together many of the key players in terms of information provision including the City Council – both the Directorate of Adult Care, the City Library Service and the Council's Customer Service Centres, the PCT, the Elder's Council, Nexus (the local Passenger Transport Executive), Your Homes Newcastle (the Council's Arms Length Management Organisation for council housing) and voluntary sector providers. The role of the

group is to progress the work under aim 2 of 'Everyone's Tomorrow and its detailed remit is to:

- Develop the vision of information, advice and advocacy services for older people and oversee the implementation of that vision in Newcastle
- Secure the engagement of partners, including older people, in the process
- Make sure that this is seen as the mainstream business of agencies
- Ensure that implementation is taken forward through a process that would include the joint commissioning of services and appropriate use of shared resources
- Review progress and take remedial action where necessary
- Have a shared responsibility to look at gathering evidence that can be used for business cases and would benefit all partners, utilising the expertise of the universities
- Link with other relevant developments and initiatives, such as the Putting People First agenda and the Lifetime Homes: Lifetime Neighbourhoods strategy.

A further element consisted in the setting up of a network of front-line workers and older people to use as a reference group for the project but also to build and develop people's skills and capacity in the field of information and advice giving. The network has met twice over the past year.

There were further strands around specific issues including the development of advocacy services, agreeing protocols on the key issues of information provision and complex needs and support in a crisis.

The project worker also took on a role of linking with other developments in the City such as:

- Developing a housing information and advice service
- The production of a Carers Information Pack

- work on digital inclusion, social isolation, and health and well-being issues for older people.

A major development that co-occurred with the project was a programme of change within adult social services in the City to deliver the transformation charted in *'Putting People First'*. This included a strand of work to develop information and advice services. This project is effectively delivering this strand and the project worker is a member of the Directorate of Adult Services transformation project team with the lead in this area. The project has also been involved in developing 'Joining the Dots' – an ambitious plan to improve access to services for older people by 'joining the dots' between existing services, sustaining and building on existing services and identifying and filling gaps in provision.

7. Our findings on the work of the project

In this section we look at what the project has achieved in delivering against each of the objectives and outcomes that were set out in the original application.

To establish a citywide commissioning framework for older people's information, advice and advocacy services with key partners

The proposal did not spell out what was meant by a 'commissioning framework for older people's information, advice and advocacy services' but such a framework might be expected to include:

- A clear view of what services need commissioning based on an analysis of the needs of older people in the City
- An overview of current services and the extent to which those needs are being met and the gaps in services
- A view on the resources currently available, how effectively these are being used and what additional resources, if any, are required in the future
- Arrangements to engage older people and other key partners in the commissioning process
- A plan for the procurement of the services that are required
- Arrangements to review the effectiveness of services.

It is true to say that such a framework has not been set up in this form. What has been put in place, however, are some of the key elements of such a framework.

A key is the setting up of the Strategic Group which is charged with taking this forward. This engages many of the key partners needed (an exception would probably be the Department of Work and Pensions which is not represented on this group although it does participate in the Network). The group has the authority from the OPSB to take forward work in this area. Through its membership it

has links into the commissioning processes of the two main statutory agencies, the City Council and the PCT and is in a position to influence their decisions. It has developed an overview of the needs of older people and the effectiveness of current provision. The group has identified key priorities namely:

- Meeting the requirements of 'Putting People First'
- The development of advocacy services for older people (and other groups)
- The provision of advice on housing and related services
- The development of more effective information, advice and support for complex cases and people in a crisis.

It has been able to develop programmes of work to address these issues and there is evidence of a more strategic approach across agencies to the development of information and advice services. For example whilst progress on establishing new advocacy services has been slower than hoped both the City Council and PCT have accepted the need to develop a strategic approach to the provision of such services in the future which represents a significant step-forward from the ad-hoc approach that has prevailed previously and places the current service on a completely different footing for the future.

However whilst the Group has been able to bring organisations together and enable them to act as a single system in a way that did not happen previously it is unclear to what extent there is a clear, shared model for the future development of services and a joint commissioning plan to put this into effect. There is certainly no shortage of ideas about what needs to be done to improve services and many of these have been set out in reports to the OPSB.⁹ However this is not the same as a clearly set out model which would form the basis of a comprehensive joint commissioning framework for information, advice and advocacy services in the City. We will return to this point later.

⁹ See, for example, 'Review of Aim 2 – Older people accessing information, advice and advocacy, report to Older People's Strategic Board, Feb 2008

The project has been instrumental in bringing new partners on board and taking forward new initiatives. An example would be the piloting of a “First Contact” signposting service¹⁰ in the City. This is bringing together a range of agencies that have not previously worked closely together including the City Libraries Service which has agreed to pilot the scheme through their housebound readers’ service (for more details see below).

The location of the project has also been important. We have previously described the QoLP as being ‘semi-detached’. By this we mean that it is located within the voluntary sector but it also has a foot in the statutory sector through its role in supporting the OPSB as part of the Newcastle Partnership. Because of its acknowledged expertise, its strong links with older people through the Elders Council and its unique, ‘whole system’ perspective the Partnership, and therefore this project, is well-placed to develop new initiatives and act as a broker between different sectors and organisations. This can be seen in the development of the ‘Joining the Dots’ service which brings together a range of partners and services across statutory and voluntary sector agencies to deliver a comprehensive range of support to older people (see below).

Overall we conclude that the project has helped to put in place many of the building blocks required to establish a citywide commissioning framework for older people’s information, advice and advocacy services. Whilst there is more work to be done to achieve this objective a promising start has been made and the basis for future progress is in place.

To commission two new pieces of work that address supporting older people to live independently using a cross agency pooled investment which becomes mainstreamed.

In fact a number of new pieces of work have been commissioned that are supporting older people to live independently. These include:

¹⁰ “First Contact” is an approach developed in Nottingham as part of the Link Age Plus pilot. The use of a simple checklist by staff from a wide variety of agencies enables people aged over 60 to receive services to stay safe and independent in their own homes without going to the trouble of contacting all of the various different organisations themselves.

- 'First Contact'
- 'Joining the Dots'
- A network for front-line staff and older people
- A bid to the Department of Communities and Local Government to develop a housing advice service through enhancing capacity in the existing Anchor Staying Put service (still outstanding but with strong indications that it will be funded)
- A project to improve the support available to people with complex needs (receiving services from several different agencies) and people in crisis.

The QoLP has over the years shown itself to be adept at developing innovative approaches to meeting the needs of older people and being able to bring together different agencies to work on projects – for the reasons set out above. It has been able to continue to work in this way in this project, making effective use of the additional resources available to kick start these new developments.

What has sometimes been an issue in the past, however, has been the ability to sustain and 'mainstream' these types of developments. There are some grounds for thinking that it may be less of an issue with this work. This is for two reasons:

Firstly the project co-incides with a significant shift in the thinking of both the City Council and (to a lesser extent) the PCT towards recognising the importance of information, advice and advocacy services as a key component of an approach which promotes older people's independence.¹¹ So the work has been incorporated into the City Council's social care transformation programme. Secondly it is implementing one of the five aims of 'Everyone's Tomorrows' which has been adopted by the City Council, PCT and Newcastle Partnership as a mainstream strategy with a significant contribution to make towards delivering the Local Area Agreement between the City and Central Government.

¹¹ What the Department of Health refers to as 'Making a strategic shift towards prevention'. See <http://www.dhcarenetworks.org.uk/prevention/>

To identify and address systems and services, gaps and blockages and work with services to improve access to services and reduce the complexity facing older people

As was outlined above one of the major problems that faces older people when trying to get information is the complexity of the current care and support system. Often the response to this is to suggest the need for a single point of access to information – usually in the form of a 'one-stop' shop. Experience suggests, however, that whilst such an approach can be helpful for some people it is of limited value because it relies on older people finding their way to the 'one-stop'. A more productive approach is the 'no wrong door' one which aims to ensure that wherever older people make contact with the system they receive the information and advice that they need or, at least, are directed to sources of such support.

This is the approach adopted by this project. Two initiatives in particular are evidence of this: 'First Contact' and 'Joining the Dots'.

'First Contact'

As outlined earlier, is a service that provides a simple route into a range of services for older people. The use of a simple checklist enables people aged to receive services to stay safe and independent in their own homes. An older person can receive a whole host of services without going to the trouble of contacting all of the various different organisations themselves. The scheme works through a staff member from any of the partner agencies, such as a fire-fighter, police officer or volunteer, completing a checklist when they visit a person for whatever reason. The checklist will indicate if the older person has any other particular needs for e.g.:

- A fire safety check
- A home security check
- home repairs or mobility adaptations
- energy saving improvements to keep warm and reduce energy bills

- confidential advice on money entitlements
- signposting to local voluntary and community groups and clubs
- advice on types of housing accommodation that may be available.

Responses to the checklist are fed back to one central point of contact where staff then co-ordinate the responses of partner organisations. A representative from the relevant organisation will then contact the older person to discuss what might be available.

Potential partners in 'First Contact' include:

- **Anchor Staying Put** (Home Improvement Agency) – providing information, advice, signposting and practical services to enable older people to carry out repairs to their homes
- **HealthWORKS Newcastle** (Health Trainers) – providing information, advice, signposting and practical support for older people to join in with community activities to improve their physical health and mental wellbeing
- **Newcastle Energy Centre** – providing information, advice, signposting and support to enable older people to be able to afford to keep their homes warm
- **Newcastle Welfare Rights Service** – providing independent welfare rights and debt advice
- **Northumbria Police** – providing crime reduction and home safety information and advice
- **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)** – providing information, advice, signposting and support to help older people with their queries or concerns about NHS services
- **Your Homes Newcastle Community Care Alarm Service** – providing information, advice and practical support around community care alarms, and a pathway to both:
- **Newcastle Primary Care Trust Falls and Syncope Service**, providing advice and support on how to avoid falls

- **Tyne & Wear Fire and Rescue Service** -carrying out Home Risk Assessments and installing smoke alarms and other devices to ensure fire safety
- **City Library Housebound Reader's Service** – providing books and other materials to people who are housebound.

'First Contact' is more than just anew service development however. It has brought in new partners – the Library Service – and has built on existing partnerships with, e.g. the Fire and Rescue Service and the Falls Service and transformed the way that they work. Whilst it will require some new resources it is equally, if not more, about using existing resources differently and recognising the added value that partnership working can bring to older people and agencies.

'Joining the Dots'

The aim of 'Joining the Dots' is to ensure that older people with long term conditions and those at risk of social isolation and depression have access to information and advice, appropriate early interventions and can exercise choice and control over the services and support they need in a timely manner to prevent, delay or minimise the need for health and social care services. The model also addresses the needs expressed by older people for a range of support services which enable them to stay independent or inter-dependent in their own homes for as long as possible, e.g. handyperson services; 'knit and natter groups'; exercise classes; community cafes. Development of the model will almost certainly highlight the need for change in the provision of some 'traditional' services (e.g. home and day care) and the need for new services (e.g. Hop to the Shops; Mobile Hairdressers Register). 'Joining the Dots' is key to the delivery '*Everyone's Tomorrow*', in particular Aim 3 – Physical, Mental and Emotional Wellbeing and Health and is integral to the Adult Services Transformation Programme. (The components of the model are set out in appendix one). Information and advice is a key part of the model but one that is not separated out, as has traditionally often been the case, but is viewed as integral to the promotion of

older people's independence and quality of life alongside more traditional care and support services but also other services such as leisure and learning and transport. This project has been instrumental in enabling the model to be developed and to ensuring that information and advice is seen as a key component. It has provided the capacity to develop this component and ensure that it is linked in with other developments. For example Information NOW acts as bedrock upon which the service can be developed. It would be difficult to envisage how the proposal could be put into effect without this resource.

An important element of the objective is its system wide focus. Both of these projects involve a range of partners and adopt a comprehensive approach. Because the project is linked, through the Strategic Group, into mainstream commissioning processes this broad perspective held by the QoLP can be fed into and influence mainstream programmes. This can be seen by the links within 'Joining the Dots' to the City Council's Adult Care access systems and the engagement of existing services, such as the City Libraries, in developing and piloting 'First Contact'. The continued existence of the Strategic Group will be important in ensuring these links are maintained once the project comes to an end.

To build capacity in the system through greater knowledge and shared learning.

This is being approached primarily through the development of the Network referred to earlier. This brings together a wide cross-section of staff from voluntary organisations and statutory partners including the City Council's Adult Services Directorate, the City Council Customer Service Centres, Nexus (the Passenger Transport Executive), The Pension Service, Welfare Rights and Your Homes Newcastle together with older people. Two workshops have been held each attended by over 60 people. Older people working as volunteers in agencies such as CAB have been targeted as well as front-line staff

The Network provides an opportunity for people to exchange and share information and address issues of common concern. It has also been able to help shape and progress the work of the project for example through developing shared values and protocols for

working with older people in Newcastle and supporting the development and piloting of the 'First Contact' scheme. The workshop has proved popular with people attending as is shown by the following quotes:

'I should like to take this opportunity to say how much I enjoyed the workshop this morning. I found the discussions stimulating and very useful. I thought the organisation of the event was superb.' Money Adviser, Help the Aged Your Money Matters Project

'I enjoyed the session, especially networking with other colleagues. I would be interested in helping to take the project forward if I can be of any assistance.'

Co-ordinator, Single Point of Access – Intermediate Care, Newcastle Primary Care Trust

'Good meeting – well organised!' Welfare Rights Officer, Newcastle Welfare Rights Service.

The project has also developed an e-bulletin which contains up to date information about services for older people and acts as a resource primarily for front-line staff. This is currently circulated to 430 people in agencies throughout the City – an increase of nearly 50% over the course of the project.

The 'Information Now' website also acts as a resource for people and there is evidence that it is used regularly by staff in a wide range of agencies. There were 19,626 visitors to the website in the year 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008. This increased to 40,281 between 1 April 2008 and 31 March 2009. Whilst this is not strictly attributable to this project it does demonstrate the usefulness of the site. Information NOW, though, operates as much more than just a website – it has provided a focus for partnership working and exemplifies the whole approach of the QoLP - creating a service from the perspective of older people; acting as a focal point for partnership working; using data from the use of the website to inform service development and priorities and, as identified above,

it is a fundamental building block for 'Joining the Dots' and 'First Contact'.¹²

The JRF funding has provided additional capacity and enabled the further development of these initiatives. This is contributing to building greater knowledge and sharing learning. Whilst this sort of activity does need to be front loaded and so should not require ongoing support at the same level, there is a concern about how these moves forward will be sustained once the funding comes to an end.

To give priority to the needs of older people whose advice and information needs are greater e.g. housebound older people, and people from BME communities.

Four elements of the work have prioritised specific groups of older people with particular needs:

The '**First Contact**' service is initially focussing on housebound older people through the City Libraries Housebound Readers service. The manager of that service certainly thinks that this is a group who are generally not in touch with many other services and are likely to have significantly greater than average needs.¹³

Outreach work in Lunch Clubs was undertaken by Age Concern Newcastle's Advice and Information Service using some of the funding from JRF. This enabled an advice worker to visit all of Age Concern's supported lunch clubs for more frail older people and offer them personalised advice. As a result of these visits additional benefit income of £18,000 has been secured. Age Concern is now looking at how it might extend this approach to all of the lunch clubs that it runs.

'**Joining the Dots**' is focussed on older people with long term conditions and at risk of social isolation and depression. A separate evaluation of 'Communities for Health,' the prototype for this project suggests, however, that people using that service are

¹² The site has attracted interest from several local authorities

¹³ Interview with City Library Manager

not accessing information and advice provision in the numbers that might have been expected.

Chinese community. The project worker has done some specific work with Chinese elders. Whilst the issues they raised were very much the same as those identified by white older people: the need for home help; practical services; and safe, older-person friendly neighbourhoods, in addition, many problems were reported in accessing interpreting services. This is despite considerable work by Newcastle Interpreting Service and other agencies over a number of years.

These pieces of work indicate that whilst some attention is being paid to the needs of specific groups there is considerably more to do in this area. In particular we would highlight:

- The need to ensure interpreting services are readily available when required and
- More investigation into why there appears to be little use of the information and advice component of Communities for Health to ensure that as this project is rolled out these services are used effectively.

To build the network of older people who can act as local champions and change agents with their peers.

A fundamental principle embedded in the work of the QoLP and OPSB can be summarised as '*nothing about us, without us*'. In other words any work to improve services for older people and address their needs and aspirations needs to engage them as active partners. This is more than just about consulting with older people - it is about 'co-production'. This refers to active input by older people who use services, as well as – or instead of – those who have traditionally provided them. It emphasises that older people have assets which can help to improve services, rather than simply needs which must be met. These assets are not usually financial, but rather are the skills, expertise and mutual

support that service users can contribute to effective public services.¹⁴

In this project this has been reflected in a number of ways:

- Older people form part of the Strategic Group on Information and Advice
- Older people are involved in the Network. For this older people working as volunteers in organisations such as CAB and Age Concern have been targeted as people with a unique perspective as both providers and potential users of information services.
- A number of events were held between October and December 2008 with local older people and carers to find out what would help them to have a good quality of life, and what kinds of care and support they would like to receive as they get older. These were organised both to contribute to the national debate of paying for care and to inform and influence Newcastle's plans to transform its adult social care services. Whilst information was not the sole focus of these events it was certainly a key theme.¹⁵

This work has helped to inform the project and also a programme of work carried out by the Elders' Council running information days for older people. It has also led to some thinking about how other activities run by the Elders Council – especially sessions that they run to promote the Council and its work – could be used to deliver key pieces of information. However it is too early to conclude that the project has been able to build a network of older people who can act as local champions and change agents with their peers specifically around issues of information, advice and advocacy. This is a key element in the 'Joining the Dots' model where older volunteers are seen as a as key support for the Community Linkworkers. Developing this role successfully will require a strong infrastructure which requires investment.

¹⁴ See, for example, SCIE Research briefing 31: Co-production: an emerging evidence base for adult social care transformation by Dr Catherine Needham, Queen Mary University of London and Sarah Carr, Social Care Institute for Excellence at <http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/briefings/briefing31/index.asp>

¹⁵ A report of the events '*Mind the Gaps*', was produced by Claire Horton

To set up a strategic network of older people and agencies to support and drive the above.

This is essentially about building and developing the Strategic Group to lead work in this area. The evidence would indicate this has been a considerable success. It has been meeting regularly and is well attended. Key partners who have been seen as more difficult to engage in the past e.g. the City Library Service and the PCT, have been consistent and active participants. Older people, through the representatives of the Elders Council, are important players in the group. The group has a recognised role and reports directly to the OPSB. The group has a work plan and key milestones that it aims to deliver. Also partners are pro-actively offering work that they are doing to help to deliver the work plan – highlighting a significant change in the approach of agencies who are increasingly taking responsibility not simply for their part of the programme but for delivering the whole of it too. It has links into the commissioning processes of the City Council and the PCT.

8. Delivering the outcomes

If the project has been largely successful in achieving its objectives does this mean it has also delivered the outcomes anticipated? In other words has it led to the changes anticipated? We now look at the evidence for this.

The establishment of an older people's led systems change network for the city

The elements of this are seen to be in place with the setting up of the Strategic Group and the Information Network. The Strategic Group has responsibility for taking forward aim 2 of 'Everyone's Tomorrow' to ensure older people have access to information, advice and advocacy. It brings together many, but not all, of the key players. Older people are represented on the Group – in Newcastle this is now accepted as routine. But their role is not a tokenistic one of having older people sitting at the table –as seems so often to be the case – but are involved as 'co-producers' of services.

This is supplemented and supported by the Network which involves front-line staff from a wide range of organisations in touch with older people and some older people themselves.

Taken together these two forums appear to constitute a network that covers the City that is system-wide and tasked with leading service change in this area. We have seen how the group is effectively linked in to the key decision making processes and is able, therefore, to influence change. There is evidence, for example through the support gained for 'Joining the Dots' and "First Contact" that it is having an effective influence. But can it be said to be 'older people's led'?

We take this to mean three things:

1. Firstly that older people are involved as key partners in the network
2. Secondly that the changes that are planned and delivered stem directly from older people's needs and aspirations as they have articulated them
3. Thirdly that older people are actively engaged in delivering the changes in some way.

The work in Newcastle seems to us to meet the first two of these criteria. Older people are actively engaged in both the Strategic Group and the Network. Through their engagement and the work of the QoLP they have been able to significantly shape key developments in this area. A good example of this is 'Joining the Dots' which proposal developed from the messages the project was getting from older people and their carers through a whole range of mechanisms.¹⁶

What is less clear is that older people are actively engaged in delivering change. As we highlighted above project has not yet been able to build a network of older people who can act as local champions and change agents with their peers specifically around issues of information, advice and advocacy, which could form a crucial element of delivering this outcome. There are examples, however, older people are pushing very hard for change in the delivery of advice, information and advocacy and this is having an impact. Examples include a proposed housing advice service to be hosted by Anchor Staying Put (currently funding for this is being sought from the Department of Communities and Local Government) and the 'Staying Safe in Your Community' booklet produced by the Denton Mature Action Group with support from the QoLP.

The benefits of developing such a network could include:

- Ensuring that services continue to understand the needs of older people and, are therefore, better placed to meet those needs

¹⁶ See 'Joining the Dots Briefing note, QoLP (undated)

- Being able to use the skills and expertise of older people in this area and further develop these skills
- Helping to ensure the effectiveness of information and advice services given that older people will cite friends and neighbours as a favoured source of information¹⁷

More work is needed to flesh out what role older people could play in the delivery of information and advice services and how this could be secured. The development of 'Joining the Dots' provides an opportunity to take this forward as does work being done to support the Elders' Council to take on more of an information giving role in their outreach work.

The commissioning of two new pieces of advice and information work that are owned jointly by older people and a cross agency team and will include the Primary Care Trust as a new partner in this venture.

This outcome has been substantially achieved with the development of a number of new services as outlined above.

The specific reference in this outcome to the PCT reflects both the central role seen for the NHS and health professionals in the development and delivery of information and advice services – emphasising the link between these areas and the prevention of ill health – and perceived difficulties in engaging the PCT in this area of work over the past few years. The PCT has been engaged as a key partner in this work through its involvement in the Strategic Group which has been consistent and proactive and it has contributed funding to the development of 'Joining the Dots'. Some health professionals have attended the network meetings though, it has to be said, in small numbers (although some were prevented from attending because the event was fully booked).

The development of a sustainable advice and information commissioning model for Newcastle.

¹⁷ ref

Elements of a model are in place and it exists in several different places and plans but has not been brought together into one place and clearly articulated or set out so that everyone can be clear about what it is. This is something that needs to be done as part of the commissioning framework that we identified was needed earlier.

A potential model developed through our work in other places is shown in appendix two and we explore this in more detail later in this report.

Laying the foundations for the commissioning of a piece of work which collects evidence over the longer term on the impact of system improvements.

There is already substantial evidence of the importance of information, advice and advocacy services to older people. The emphasis placed on the development of these services as core components of a transformed social care system shows that the Government is convinced that improving these services will lead to demonstrable improvements in the quality of life of older people. The evidence, for example, from the Link Age Plus programme supports this view.¹⁸

The developments outlined in this evaluation – especially of new, system-wide responses to addressing this issue such as 'Joining the Dots' and 'First Contact' - provide an opportunity to collect evidence of systematic improvement over the coming period.

A demonstration model of a whole systems intervention to design and deliver the sustainable advice and information services that older people want.

This evaluation has highlighted the considerable success of this project in delivering change in Newcastle and of developing a model of information, advice and advocacy services that will improve the quality of life of older people in the City. To what

¹⁸ See 'Access to information and services for older people – a joined up approach', Ritters and Davis, Department of Work and Pensions Working Paper No 53 (2008)

extent can this be judged, though, to be a 'demonstration' model and, therefore, one that is replicable elsewhere?

In our view that there are two dimensions to this issue.

- Is there a clear model that could be implemented elsewhere, and
- If so, what are the conditions that allowed that model to be developed in Newcastle and which need to be in place for it to be implemented on other places?

The issue of replicability is often assumed to be a technical one i.e. if there is a working model that shows good practice then it can simply be adopted elsewhere. In practice the second set of conditions are as critical as the first in enabling that adoption to take place.

Earlier in our report we identified that we believed there was a model in place but that it had not been clearly articulated and set down. In appendix two we set out such a model which has the following components:

- A range of different access points. Rather than an approach of having just a single door one that 'no door is the wrong door' so that older people can access information in a range of places and through a variety of methods
- A comprehensive range of information sources available to both older people and staff
- Access for older people to talk to about their needs and to provide advice and advocacy, providing personalised information and one-to-one support
- A range of services that can then meet the needs that older people identify
- Overarching this strategic approach to the commissioning of these services.

In Newcastle the project has been able to pull together many of these elements:

- A range of organisations and individuals are involved either represented on the Strategic Group, through the Information

Network or through individual elements of work. This is building capacity within the system to ensure that older people can access information in multiple ways and also that a comprehensive approach is taken to meeting their information needs (e.g. 'First Contact')

- The QoLP has developed a comprehensive range of information sources including Information NOW, the Trades Register and plans for a Housing Options and Advice Service
- The building blocks of developing a more comprehensive range of advice and advocacy services are in place with a recognition amongst commissioners that more needs to be done
- A range of services already exist and there are plans to develop and extend these e.g. 'Joining the Dots'
- The Strategic Group is in place to lead the process although an explicit commissioning framework is still to be developed.

Our evaluation suggests that in addition to this model the following factors have been important in enabling its development and adoption locally.

A whole systems approach

The phrase 'whole systems' has become something of a cliché in recent years. Often it means little more than recognising that a range of people and organisations need to contribute to delivering services for a specific group, for example:

*'The Whole System is not simply a collection of organisations which need to work together, but a mix of different people, professions, services and buildings which have patients and users as their unifying concern, and deliver a range of services in a variety of settings to provide the right care, in the right place at the right time.'*¹⁹

The concept as we understand it, and as used by the QoLP in its day to day work, is more complex and nuanced than this. It is an

¹⁹ Department of Health (2003), Changing Places: Report on the Work of the Health and Social Care Change Agent Team 2002/3. London.

approach that recognises that the way in which systems adapt and evolve is determined as much by the way interconnected parts relate to each other as the way the individual parts behave. Whole system working shifts the focus of attention from these parts to 'the whole'. It also recognises that social systems are complex and akin to living systems. In such a system each element has its own identity which contributes to the identity of the whole. No one part of the system can function in isolation but neither does any part have a complete picture of the whole system (we use the analogy of a jigsaw. In a complex system there is no 'picture on the box' everyone has to contribute their unique perspective or piece, to build it up). The notion of co-production referred to earlier is essential because it recognises the need to actively engage a wide range of partners, including older people themselves, to develop solutions which everyone contributes to delivering – what can be thought of as people taking a whole responsibility for their part of the system but also a part responsibility for the whole of the system. Whole systems generate their own solutions without an expectation that an external agent will come in and deliver one.²⁰

This approach has been developed in Newcastle in relation to older people since the late 1990s and is now embedded into the work of the QoLP to the extent that it can sometimes be difficult to appreciate its fundamental importance. Without such an approach it is unlikely that this project would have been so successful.

However if this is a necessary condition for success it is not a sufficient one. Other things needed to be in place as well.

A strong voice of older people

It follows that older people are a key part of this approach as active participants – not just people to be consulted - and in Newcastle this is most obviously expressed through the Elders' Council. Again this has been developed over a number of years to become an active and involved body which is able to speak authoritatively about older people's experiences because of its wide network of connections throughout the City. Its modus operandi though is not to act as a pressure group or a consultative forum but as an active

²⁰ See '*Working Whole Systems*', J. Pratt, P Gordon, D Plamping 2nd ed (2005)

participant in the process taking its share of responsibility for delivering solutions as well as identifying issues and concerns. The close working relationship between the QoLP core team and the Elder's Council also means that the team are able to speak with authority about the views of older people and can help other partners understand better the needs of older people and respond effectively to them. An example of this would be the engagement of the Library Service in 'First Contact' so that that service is now able to provide an improved quality of response to its housebound readers.

The capacity to develop and deliver

A further significant element is an infrastructure that is able to develop the work and has the capacity deliver solutions. That existed in Newcastle in the QoLP but, crucially, the funding from JRF gave the Partnership the extra capacity that meant it was able to mobilise the other elements required for success. The QoLP was able to react flexibly and quickly to opportunities as they arose. Three examples illustrate this. The project was able to take the 'First Contact' concept and apply this to the specific situation in Newcastle engaging a wide range of partners and gaining support for the development of a Newcastle based approach.

The second example is the way that the project responded to the opportunity presented by the transformation programme in adult social care. It was able to use the position of the QoLP to engage with this programme and offer an approach which both met the needs and wishes of older people and the requirements of the City Council's Adult Services Directorate. In the words of the head of Transformation within the Directorate the project has been able to offer Adult Services:

- A shared understanding of what needs to be put in place to meet the requirements of 'Putting People First'
- Better value for money through the utilisation of shared resources
- A creative approach to developing new services
- The creation of a shared culture of trust, partnership working and learning

This has meant that the Council has been happy to allow the project to operate as an integral part of its transformation project with the project worker being a member of the project management team taking the lead in implementing this key element of their programme on behalf of both the Council and the QoLP. This approach between a statutory and a voluntary sector body in a programme of this type is certainly rare, if not unique.

The potential benefits of this way of working can be seen in the development of the 'Joining the Dots' proposal which offers the potential to make more effective use of existing services and address gaps in services to ensure that vulnerable older people, who are the most significant users of NHS and care services, receive less expensive preventive services in a timely manner to prevent or delay dependent old age. The model also addresses the needs expressed by older people to receive timely information, advice and support services (see the *Older People's Inquiry into 'That Bit of Help'* held by JRF in 2004 ²¹) which enable them to maintain their independence for as long as possible. It is probably the case that the existence of this project and the capacity that it brought has been crucial to allowing the development of this proposal. It simultaneously meets the needs of older people and of key agencies such as the Council and the NHS.

²¹ <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/report-older-peoples-inquiry-bit-help>

9. Conclusions and lessons learnt

Our overall conclusion is that this project has to a significant extent delivered the objectives and achieved the outcomes that were set out in the original proposal to JRF. The funding that JRF provided was essential in enabling it to do this, building on the overall approach developed by the QoLP over recent years. The additional capacity that the funding provided meant that the QoLP was able to 'step up a gear' in its approach to developing information advice and advocacy services for older people in Newcastle. Moreover by putting in place a strategic approach that is a key element in the overall governance arrangements of the Older People's Strategic Board is has been able to link in very effectively with the mainstream commissioning processes of the City Council and the PCT, for example in the transformation of adult social care, which has gone a long way to ensuring the sustainability of the approach that it is developing. Although it is fair to say that there is still a way to go in this respect particularly in securing the additional resources that are required to extend the range of services available but the signs that these resources will be forthcoming are encouraging.

The project has developed a model for the development and delivery of a strategic approach to the provision of information and advice and advocacy that has the potential to be applied elsewhere. The key lessons we conclude have been learnt about how that process needs to be implemented include:

- The need to build in additional capacity to enable change
- However a relatively small amount of such additional resources can make a significant difference in enabling and facilitating change
- The involvement of older people as co-producers is essential in order to ensure that any new services meet older people's needs and aspirations
- Time spent in design and development is time well spent to ensure the effective and sustained engagement of partners
- The position, role and credibility of the QoLP has been crucial in being able to engage both statutory and voluntary

sector agencies and develop solutions that they are able to support

- It is necessary to have a forum (in this case the Strategic Group reporting to the OPSB) which brings together the key partners, including older people, which is effectively linked in to the commissioning processes of funding agencies
- Whilst it is important to be able to be flexible and move quickly to take advantage of opportunities, such as 'Putting People First' it is equally important that these opportunities are developed within an overall framework that all partners have signed up
- Delivering change is not just about developing new services it is equally, if not more, important to change current services where they are failing to meet people's needs. 'First Contact' and 'Joining the Dots' are two significant changes which combine both approaches.

Appendix one: 'Joining the Dots': the component parts

Strategic Context	Infrastructure	Service Development/Re-design	Commissioning Process	Links to	Local Delivery Communities for Health model
Everyone's Tomorrow Newcastle's Strategy for Older People and an Ageing Population	Project Management	Information and Advice	Joint commissioning process and pot made up of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authority • PCT • Vol Sector grant funding • Nexus • Your Homes Newcastle • Others 	Joining the Dots – the Dementia Dimension	2009/10 Inner and Outer West
	Evaluation Monitoring and feedback	'First Contact'		Technology Board Bid Strategy	2010/11 East End
	Economic Modelling	Information and Advice			2011/12 North
	GP interface	Crisis Management & Complex Cases			NCC's Services e.g. Neighbourhood Management and Leisure Services
	Intermediate Care	Advocacy			

	interface	Community Linkworker			
	Adult Services Transformation interface	Volunteer and Development Support		Joint Strategic Needs Assessment	
	Older people and carer engagement	Transport		Local Strategic Partnership / Sustainable Communities Strategy	
	Voluntary Sector Engagement	Provision of practical services			
Adult Services Transformation – Theme 1 – Health, Wellbeing and Access	Knowledge Transfer Partnership – 'Circle Newcastle' (TBC)	Provision of activities			

Appendix two: a model of an information, advice and advocacy system for older people

