



Local voices

Chandrika Gordhan

Activity taken place from March-April 2013

Methodology:

- Value of the Community Network
- Applying targeted approach
- Interviewing key people - Community Champions and Interpreters
- Recruiting, Training and Support

The questions we asked

1. What does ageing well mean to you?
2. To what extent do you feel you are included in the life of your community?
3. Planning for old age – individual, state, community or family?
4. Anything else you want us to know about getting old in Birmingham?

How do you know you are old?

- “I did not know that I was ageing until I was old” (C)
- when you’re younger you tend to bounce back quick, you do. When you’re older, this up here thinks, “Well is this it? Is this the start?” (WB)
- “Getting old for a woman is when she stops her menstrual cycle, and starts going grey...” (Y)
- “Do you know men in our culture age differently, as they marry many times and raise children until ... when they cannot manage” (Y)



Aging well

- “Good health means that you could manage on your own. There are many aspects to ageing well. Physically, mentally and spiritually is so important. I think if you keep fit than you will feel happier in yourself and feel and look younger.” (SAM)
- “My faith is really important to me; it helps me to stay on a right path.” (SAM)
- “I like to learn new things. At 67 I too call a taxi to go out. I believe in being independent and I like to learn as much as possible even at this age.” (LMG)

- “I really felt very lonely after my husband’s death, but after a while you recover and you smile back at the world and carry on living until your time comes”(Y)
- “Eat the right things, exercise, and keep your mind focused.....keep busy and that’s what I do, and I am 84” (C)
- Health...If you've got your health you can do anything...if your brain’s gone it’s somebody else’s problem.. (WB)

Barriers to the aging well

- “Money is really important, because without adequate money you cannot eat good food, pay your bills, keep warm, enjoy going out than you do need money to survive instead of just existing” (all but one group agreed)
- “In my case I feel as if I have lost my identity, I suffer with lot of joint pains and unable to sleep at night so always feeling tired, general weakness in terms of physically and emotionally” (Y)
- All my plans about old age has gone kaput, because my health has deteriorated so much” (C)

Being valued/giving value

- “I do not save any money, I just give it away to my children and grandchildren and that makes me feel really good about myself”(LMG)
- “Being generous is really important, and sharing is all part of living”(LMG)
- I think it’s the other way around, I think the grandparents feel obliged to look after the grandchildren.(WB)

Your Community

- “Being part of this community and where we live is also important and rewarding” (LMG)
- “We come here at this centre and we really feel at home, and there is so much community spirit here with this group” (C)
- “Church is my community too” (C)
- “With this group we come together from diverse backgrounds, but together we are so much stronger and we provide mutual support and friendships, it does not matter what faith you are we are all one family and we share in each other good and sad times together”... That to me is what makes a good community.” (SAM)

- I think if you want to be involved there's plenty of things for people to be involved in if they want to. And they don't cost money. (WB)
- You really have to get yourself motivated. (WB)
- "I feel really positive knowing that there is a community spirit to help and support each other, which makes me feel really confident to seek help when needed" (Y)

And finally....

- “So long as I could be with others, and can take care of myself than being old in Birmingham is not a problem”
- Specialist Transport needs improving e.g. Ring & Ride – “Getting around is difficult” (C)
- Transport = breaks isolation – “not confined to sticking in their four walls” (WB)
- “Public transport needs to be improved, my balance is not good, and often worry that I may fall. People now a days will not give up their seat for you” (Y)

Acknowledgements

- Professor Heather Draper
- Sonia Large
- Community Champions
- Interpreters
- Participants

Challenges of ageing in a multicultural city

- “I know when my sister was in hospital the nurses were totally naïve and ignorant about her needs, so the medical and care staff should be trained about other cultural needs”
- if I have to go in the care home then the state should provide a home that meets our Islamic way of living. This really frightens me. We cannot be together with men in the same care home? We need a place where we could pray and the care workers need to be culturally aware of our needs”

Important ideas for the commission

- “They (bus passes) are really important and I find it absolutely fantastic to be able to jump onto a bus, even though I’ve got a car.”(WB)