

COMMUNITY ASSETS IN THE CAVERSHAM AREA (NORTH OF THE RIVER) AND POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVE DAY CARE SERVICES FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Purpose and Executive Summary

The Director of Education, Social Services and Housing, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care, has requested that officers explore the case for choosing the Caversham area as a trial location for the co-development of an older people's neighbourhood centre. Such a centre would offer an alternative to traditional day care provision.

Policy Context

National policy on the transformation of Adult Social Care has had an increasing emphasis in the last few years on the importance of social capital. This means making sure that everyone has the opportunity to be part of a community and experience the friendships and care that can come from families and friends. The Department of Health has drawn attention to the importance of taking part in community activities, stating that, "loneliness and social isolation remains a huge problem that society has failed to tackle."¹

There is a wide range of evidence to show that social isolation can have a major detrimental impact on physical and emotional wellbeing. Recognising this, in 2012 the Administration in Reading made it a priority to work with local partners and voluntary organisations to support elderly people who are housebound or suffering from social isolation.

Reading Borough Council aims to enable people to live independent and fulfilling lives for as long as possible, with little or no need for recourse to formal or statutory support services. This is the basis of the Council's Prevention Framework, *Your Life Your Say*, which sets out the Council's rationale for supporting voluntary and community groups to help older people (and other vulnerable adults) stay physically and mentally active, and enjoy socialisation opportunities so promoting their emotional wellbeing.

Current opportunities in Reading

A variety of activities and opportunities to socialise exist in Reading, covering a wide range of interests. Many operate across the town. These opportunities also give carers, many of whom are older people, the chance

¹ Care and Support White Paper, 2012 available at http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/files/2012/07/2900021-CaringForFuture_ACCESSIBLE-10.07.2012.pdf

to take a break. Initiatives in Reading are provided through a wide range of organisations - mainstream services, specialist provision commissioned through Adult Social Care, and a myriad of services provided through the community including:

- Referral only services e.g.: lunch clubs and day centres;
- Open access activity programmes aimed at older people such as Age UK's Active Ageing programme;
- Independent groups such as Firtree Retirement Club and the University of the Third Age;
- Membership only retirement clubs for people who used to work for particular employers or sectors, such as the John Lewis Retirement Club, and the Civil Service Pensioners Alliance;
- Hobby-based groups covering activities such as dancing, singing and crafts;
- Peer support groups, such as those for carers to get together both to socialise and share tips;
- Activities provided within specific sheltered/extra care housing or residential care schemes; and
- Universal leisure opportunities, such as cinemas, museums, libraries adult education, and cafes.

Caversham area (demographic summary)

The broader Caversham area is made up of four wards - Caversham, Mapledurham, Peppard and Thames. There are high numbers and concentrations of older people across this part of the town. From the 2011 Census, population figures are as shown in the table below.

Ward	Number of people aged 60+	% of ward population aged 60+
Caversham	1,412	15
Mapledurham	886	29
Peppard	2,555	27
Thames	2,047	21

Activities currently offered for older people across the Caversham area

The following services are currently available, including those funded by the Council:

- The Activities Service operating across the Council's sheltered housing schemes helps tenants and older people living in the neighbouring communities to enjoy social activities. This includes residents of Briscow Court in RG4.

- The Engage Befriending scheme operates a home visiting/befriending initiative aimed at isolated older people living in Reading Borough. It has a North Reading base, and aims to match volunteers and befrienders living within a 1 mile radius. Caversham was one of four areas specified as a priority location for development of the service as condition of the Council's grant funding to Engage Befriending for 2013-14.
- The University of the Third Age offers an art workshop, a chess group, and a French reading group all from Church House in RG4.
- There is an Emmer Green lunch club and a Solo Sunday club, also run by the University of the Third Age.
- There is a Caversham over 50s Club.
- An Emmer Green Carers Support Group.
- Age UK Active Ageing Club (tai chi).

Churches across Reading are often the centre for activities and support which older people turn to. In research which Reading Borough Council carried out in partnership with Healthwatch Reading, church groups were identified as key social contacts by users of home care services. The Churches Together in Caversham Group offers a range of activities for congregations and the wider community, in addition to activities focused on worship:

- St Andrews in Caversham Heights has a café and a varied calendar of social events.
- St Barnabas in Emmer Green is proud of its community links, and hosts meetings of the Women's Institute, Townswomen's Guild and local Residents' Association amongst others.
- St John the Baptist in Caversham has a Mothers Union, Flower Group, and pastoral care team.
- St Margaret's in Mapledurham has a bell ringers group and a fete committee.
- St Peters Caversham also has a Flower Group and a Fete Committee, as well as a Ramblers Group. Each member of the Church Watch Team keeps the church open for an hour or two during the week, so that passers-by see an open door, a "welcome" sign and someone to talk to if they wish, or a quiet place to sit and make use of the church's wi-fi. There is also an Olive Branch Team keeping in touch with people who are no longer able to get to church.

- The Methodist Church in Caversham Heights has a Network Fellowship which is open to members and non-members of the church. There is a programme of visiting speakers followed by tea and biscuits.
- The Methodist Church on Gosbrook Road has a Traidcraft shop which is open two days a week.
- Caversham Baptist Church prides itself on recognising the needs of the local community, including for practical help or just someone to talk to. Doors are opened to the wider community every Friday for lunch. There is a men's group which meets for breakfast or evening meals, and a ladies group with a programme of speakers.
- Caversham Park Church uses the Milestone centre (run by the Caversham Park Village Association) as a place of contact with the community.
- Grace Church in Caversham runs a Pop-in for mainly senior people to come together for a friendly chat, tea and homemade cakes. Often there is a quiz and occasionally a speaker. There is also a buddy group for the older people in the church, which organises outings such as to local garden centres, the cinema, the theatre, and the seaside.
- Our Lady Saint Anne has a chat and craft group, and a Parish Community Group to build friendships and share individual talents.

The Lower Caversham Community Partnership consists of representatives from St John's, Gosbrook Road Methodist Church, Newbridge Nursery and Caversham Hall. It was set up to help develop joint working between the organisations in order to meet the needs of the people of Lower Caversham. The first project the partnership is working on is the development of Caversham Community Cafe, based in St John's Church. This will provide a meeting place for local people where they can obtain reasonably priced drinks and cakes and so help to build community in the process. The cafe hopes to start trading in the late summer of 2013.

In the Let's Talk Care consultation, many people identified GP surgeries as a local base they would like to see made more use of as an access point for various services. GP surgeries across the Caversham area could therefore be approached to consider partnering in this initiative.