



# Sefton Older People's Strategy

2019 - 2024



WHO Global Network  
for Age-friendly Cities  
and Communities

# Forewords

This strategy is the result of consultation with older people and stakeholders from across Sefton. As in our previous strategy, the main aim has been to address the issues of most concern to local older people. It is good to report that Sefton is now a member of the international Age-Friendly network run by the World Health Organisation. We have tried to show how our work fits into the eight Age-Friendly domains whilst making sure that older people are setting the local agenda.

■ **Brian Clark OBE, Chair, Sefton Partnership for Older Citizens**

I am very pleased to support this Older People's Strategy. We are proud of our Age-Friendly status and our track record of partnership working with older people through Sefton Partnership for Older Citizens. This strategy will enable us to focus on the areas that really matter and embed Age-Friendly principles into future developments.

■ **Councillor Paul Cummins, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Older People's Champion, Sefton Council**

We want older people to enjoy Sefton as a place where they have the freedom to do what they value most in good health for as long as possible, with community activities that are welcoming and respectful. We will continue to actively support Age-Friendly initiatives with our partners and with Sefton Partnership for Older Citizens.

■ **Fiona Taylor, Chief Officer, NHS South Sefton CCG and NHS Southport & Formby CCG**

# Acknowledgements

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**Councillor Paul Cummins, Sefton Council**

**Dil Daly, Age Concern Liverpool & Sefton**

**Judith Gent-Jones, Lancashire Care NHS Trust**

**Vicky Keeley, Sefton Carers Centre**

**Tony Killen, Merseytravel**

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**Kevin Thorne, NHS South Sefton CCG & NHS Southport and Formby CCG.**

**Dr Gary Kitchen** carried out the research for this piece of work and wrote the strategy on behalf of Sefton Partnership for Older Citizens.

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# 1. Why we need an Older People's Strategy

## We live in an ageing society.

Living longer is for many people a blessing. More people in their seventies and eighties say they are highly satisfied with their lives than people in their forties and fifties.<sup>1</sup>

BOROUGH	AGE 65+
Sefton	23.1%
Wirral	21.3%
St. Helens	20.4%
Halton	17.9%
Knowsley	17.0%
Liverpool	14.6%

However, there are some real problems. For too many older people later life is blighted by low fixed incomes, loneliness and poor transport. Too often services let older people down when they should be boosting them up.<sup>2</sup>

This strategy builds upon several existing initiatives, such as last year's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, which called for community perspectives on good health.<sup>3</sup>

This strategy also links closely to the themes of the Sefton 2030 Vision:

- Together a stronger community
- A borough for everyone
- A clean green beautiful borough
- Living, working and having fun
- On the move
- Visit, explore and enjoy
- Ready for the future
- Open for business

In line with this vision, we aim to create an environment where older people get involved, develop their own solutions and help one another.<sup>4</sup>



## 2. Sefton is the Future

In Sefton we are already experiencing some of the issues of an ageing population which will in due course affect the rest of the country and to some extent the world.<sup>5</sup>

We already have more than 63,000 people aged 65 or over.<sup>6</sup> Within a decade this is projected to increase by nearly a fifth.<sup>7</sup>

Overall figures for 65+ age groups are given below with figures for neighbouring Liverpool for comparison.

Sefton is divided by Sefton Council into three Localities for administrative purposes.<sup>8</sup> The chart below illustrates numbers of older people in each Locality.

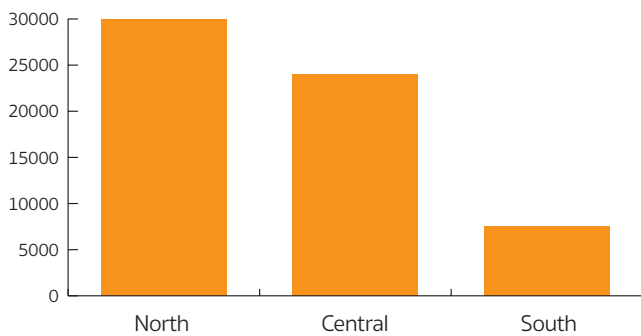
Relatively few older people live in the South Locality (adjacent to Liverpool) with much higher numbers in North and Central.<sup>9</sup>

We want to show how Sefton's diverse communities can respond in a positive way to the opportunities and challenges of an ageing society.

POPULATION	65 - 74	75 - 84	85+	ALL AGES
Sefton	32,500	21,600	9,200	274,600
Liverpool	39,300	23,500	9,100	491,500

Sefton has similar numbers of people aged 85+ to Liverpool, even though the city has a much higher overall population.

Older People 65+ in Sefton Localities



## 3. Some Facts and Figures

- 23.1% of the population are aged 65+ in Sefton, but there is huge variation within the borough.
- In Cambridge Ward in Southport people aged 65+ make up 36% of the population compared with just 14% in Linacre Ward in Bootle.
- There are more than 870 people in Cambridge Ward aged 85+ compared to just over 150 in Linacre Ward.
- Life expectancy is variable across the borough.
- Blundellsands Ward has male life expectancy of 82 years whilst Ainsdale Ward has female life expectancy of 88 years.
- Linacre Ward has life expectancy of 70 years for men and 76 years for women.
- 16% of households in Sefton are occupied by someone aged 65+ living alone.
- Nearly half of people aged 75+ live alone nationally.<sup>10</sup> This equates to more than 15,000 people in our borough.
- Almost 16% of the total older population are carers.<sup>11</sup> This suggests there may be 10,000 carers aged 65+ in Sefton.
- 39% of carers registered with the local Carers Centre are aged 65+.<sup>12</sup>
- The DWP estimates 40% of families who are entitled to Pension Credit do not claim it.<sup>13</sup>



## 4. What is Sefton Partnership for Older Citizens?

The idea behind Sefton Partnership for Older Citizens (or SPOC for short) is simple. We want to improve the lives of older people in our borough.

To do this we bring older people together with agencies responsible for providing services to them to ensure their voices are heard and heeded.

SPOC is not itself a separate organisation but a partnership of relevant agencies, which has now been in existence for over 10 years. We have seen major changes during this time, such as the development of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, as well as demographic changes resulting from migration and an ageing population.

SPOC aims to challenge negative stereotypes of older people. Older people are not dependent and needy but often independent and proactive. People aged 65+ contribute far more to society through employment, informal caring and volunteering than they take out.<sup>14</sup>

Whilst it is true that the chance of long-term conditions or disabilities increases as we age, it is wrong to suppose that severe mental and physical decline is the norm.

For example, most older people do not get dementia. This affects 1 in 14 people aged 65+ and 1 in 6 people aged 80+.<sup>15</sup>

Most older people are not frail. The Royal College of Nursing estimates that 1 in 4 of people aged 85+ experience frailty.<sup>16</sup>

Another key principle of SPOC is that older people deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. This is particularly important in care settings.

The standards of dignified care that older people can rightfully expect have been clearly stated and endorsed by the NHS and local government.<sup>17</sup> Yet older people tell us repeatedly that these basic standards are not always met. One of the roles of SPOC, therefore, is to remind all partners of these fundamental commitments.<sup>18</sup>

### ■ ACTION

SPOC is now recognised as one of the most effective partnership groups in Sefton. In the next five years we aim to meet five times per year to monitor and deliver this strategy to help make Age-Friendly Sefton a reality.



## 5. Older people setting the agenda

In Age-Friendly communities, older people themselves are “agents of change” who are “setting the agenda.”<sup>19</sup>

Underpinning SPOC are the six Older Persons’ Forums which are facilitated by Sefton Advocacy. Each Forum meets monthly in the following areas:

- Ainsdale
- Formby
- Bootle
- Crosby
- Maghull
- Southport

“It was great to attend the Forum in June. The group was very welcoming and really interested in our work transforming community services in Southport & Formby. We are listening to the issues raised regarding access and difficulty getting through by telephone to our reception administrators. We aim to address this with our new call system.”

**Judith Gent-Jones, Lancashire Care NHS Trust**

“Thank you so much for inviting us to speak to the Forums about the new Hartley Hospital. The exchange of information was crucial.”

**Noirin Smith, Merseycare NHS Trust**

Between them these Forums regularly attract more than 150 older people with a mailing list of 400. Each meeting of SPOC has two or three representatives from each of the Forums, one of whom chairs the meeting.

As a result of the work of the Forums Coordinator of Sefton Advocacy, Sefton achieved Age-Friendly status in 2018. SPOC now acts as the steering group for this initiative.<sup>20</sup>

### ■ ACTION

The Older Persons’ Forums are vital to achieving the vision of SPOC and an Age-Friendly Sefton. In the next five years each Forum will meet ten times per year to give older people an opportunity to contribute their views on issues of concern to them.





## 6. Tackling Loneliness

The biggest single issue for local older people who took part in our consultation was loneliness. According to Age UK, this can be as bad for your health as smoking.<sup>21</sup> Often living alone in later life is not a lifestyle choice but the result of bereavement.<sup>22</sup>

Not everyone who is alone is lonely and not everyone who is lonely is alone. Many unpaid family carers, for example, report feelings of loneliness and isolation.<sup>23</sup>

Sefton Advocacy has created a booklet with contact details of schemes in the borough which exist to tackle loneliness and isolation. We aim to update this every year (when funding permits).<sup>24</sup>

Tackling loneliness need not cost money, only time. We need to make time for older people. But time these days is often in short supply. Far too many older people are still isolated in their own homes. We need to change this.

### **CASE STUDY: Loneliness**

Mr W is 78. He lost his wife 4 years ago and became lonely and isolated. He felt his life had little purpose.

Through Age Concern Liverpool & Sefton he arranged a home visit from a Befriending and Re-enablement Officer (BRO) who helped him tackle some of the feelings arising from his isolation.

Mr W was very concerned about safety, so the BRO arranged a check from the Fire Service and a personal security alarm.

Mr W then began volunteering at a local cafe and going to a Lunch Club. He gradually started to form friendships. After 6 weeks of staff support, Mr W was due to be matched with a volunteer befriender. Instead he decided he would become a volunteer befriender for Age Concern himself. He has since felt happier, less lonely and more fulfilled.

We want to build better connections with care home residents and sheltered housing residents and encourage community involvement where possible.

We know that many community lounges are underutilised, which could become a focus for community activity.

We have shown through our 'join-up' events in 2019 that older people are often looking for opportunities for involvement. It's never too late to get involved and meet new people.<sup>25</sup>

The NHS is commissioning a social prescribing service in Sefton with Link Workers who can help tackle issues of loneliness and isolation from a non-clinical perspective.<sup>26</sup> We will be following this development closely.

### **■ ACTION**

All agencies in Sefton must work together to ensure joined-up outreach to include older people at risk of loneliness and to promote social participation.<sup>27</sup> SPOC will continue to monitor this process over the next five years and work with partners to promote practical solutions.

## 7. Improving health and care

Older people told us that improving health services is one of the biggest things we can do to help them. They would like to stay active and maintain their independence. To do this they need access to good-quality health and well-being services.

It is sad to report that at the time of writing both main local hospitals serving older people in Sefton require improvement, according to the CQC.<sup>28, 29</sup>

Sometimes the issue is not about medical care itself but things which should be simple and straightforward, such as accessing appointments with services such as podiatry, hospital clinics or local GPs. Yet older people tell us that getting appointments is often far from simple.

As the older population increases, we can expect that numbers using services will increase, so it is vital that procedures are simple and straightforward. Many older people are also unpaid carers themselves and it is important service providers understand their needs.

### CASE STUDY: Dementia

Mrs A cares for a husband with advanced dementia whose behaviour had become very challenging.

When she spoke to the Carers Centre she was struggling to cope. Mrs A felt that everyone was in favour of her husband remaining at home, but she felt she could no longer carry on looking after him alone. The Centre carried out a carer's assessment and contacted Mrs A's social worker to arrange emergency respite to defuse the situation.

Mrs A used the Centre's Listening Ear project which gave her the chance to talk in confidence to a trained volunteer about her situation.

There is no doubt that growing older has its challenges. For example, nearly two thirds of cancer diagnoses occur in the over 65s.<sup>30</sup>

We know that many older people are not active enough to benefit their health.<sup>31</sup> So we want to encourage older people to take up and maintain physical activities by promoting accessible and affordable opportunities to look after themselves, such as free NHS Health Checks.<sup>32</sup>

### CASE STUDY: Active Ageing

Mr C is 81 years old. Nearly 20 years ago he was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes linked to his weight and for many years was dependent on insulin injections and tablets to keep his blood sugar levels under control.

At the suggestion of his doctor, Mr C started to follow a low-carbohydrate diet. In the last 4 years he has lost nearly 20 kg in weight, losing 6 inches from his waist measurement.

He no longer needs medication for diabetes and attends the gym every week.

### ■ ACTION

We will encourage community health providers, GP Surgeries and hospitals to improve their appointments system for older people. We will maintain and develop our links with Living Well Sefton and Sefton Active Lifestyles Team. We will inform older people about opportunities to take part in relevant health and care research. We will continue to raise awareness around falls prevention and active ageing.

## 8. Transport that meets older people's needs

Getting around is important for all aspects of active ageing. Without access to transport people can easily become isolated and their emotional and physical health can be affected.

Older people (60+) in Sefton already benefit from free travel on buses and trains in the Merseyside area during off-peak hours.<sup>33</sup> This is a significant concession which we need to be careful to protect.

However free transport is no good if the railway platform is inaccessible or the bus doesn't go where you need it to go. For example, Sefton has a beautiful coastline but many parts of it cannot be accessed by public transport.

### CASE STUDY: Lift at Hillside Station

Forum members worked with Merseytravel to provide evidence of the need to make Hillside Railway Station more accessible. One local member said, "I live in this area and have not been able to use the station for many years."

Members from Southport, Ainsdale and Formby completed questionnaires and encouraged local stakeholders to respond. This work was crucial in enabling Merseytravel to make the case for funding a lift. As a result, Hillside Station will be completely accessible once this work is completed.

While we know that some aspects of our local transport system work well, we are also aware that there are some problems with specific bus routes to key destinations such as hospitals and health centres. In certain circumstances older people have a right to free patient transport.<sup>34</sup>

In a recent review of plans to transfer Orthopaedic Surgery from Aintree University Hospital to Broad Green Hospital for residents in the south of the borough, transport was highlighted as the biggest barrier for patients.

SPOC has built links with Merseytravel, which coordinates public transport in Sefton, and we will maintain this engagement through SPOC. We have also worked with bus companies to inform their training for staff when working with older people.

Meanwhile drivers in Sefton aged 60+ can access a free Drive Safely for Longer course subsidised by Merseyside Road Safety Partnership.<sup>35</sup>

### ■ ACTION

We will ensure older people are heard and heeded when changes are being planned to local transport. We will encourage awareness of the criteria and quality standards for NHS Patient Transport. We will raise the issue of Age-Friendly transport with taxi firms via the Sefton Licensing Team and continue to promote schemes such as Merseyrail Travel Safe.



## 9. Improving housing for older people

For the first time we are including housing as a separate objective in our strategy. This reflects the commitment to SPOC shown by One Vision (the main social housing provider), Riverside Housing and Sefton Council's Affordable Warmth Team.

### **CASE STUDY: Community Lounges**

Riverside Housing has 16 sheltered schemes in Sefton with over 400 flats. The aim is to reduce loneliness and isolation whilst allowing people to live independently.

A staff team is on hand to manage the premises and provide support and information to residents. Flats are equipped with movement sensors which raise an alert if there is cause for concern, for example when no movement is detected for long periods.

Each scheme has a community lounge but these are underused. For the past two years Bootle Older Persons' Forum has been meeting in the lounge at St Oswald's Court, with an average attendance of 20 older people per month.

Marion, who chairs the Forum, said, "We've had some really good discussions in this venue. It's great when residents come along too and give us their perspective."

We have always been aware of the need for access to good quality, affordable housing for older people. For example, we have led consultations with older people on the Council's Housing Strategy.

There are very dramatic differences in housing tenure across the borough:

- 3% of households aged 65+ live in social housing in Blundellsands compared to 54% in Litherland.<sup>36</sup>
- In Duke's Ward 14% of households aged 65+ are living in privately rented accommodation compared to just 2% in Ainsdale.

- In Cambridge Ward, according to the last Census, 25% of households were occupied by older people living alone. In neighbouring Norwood this figure was 11%.
- Most older people live in the community. At any one time there are about 100 residential care homes and nursing homes in Sefton for adults 65+ with a total capacity of roughly 3,000 beds.<sup>37</sup>

Older people told us during the consultation that they wished to remain independent in their own homes for as long as possible. This aspiration is reflected in other local research.<sup>38</sup>

We need to help older people to do this. A recent parliamentary report suggests a number of ways this can be achieved, including handyperson schemes to offer practical help (not currently available in Sefton).<sup>39</sup> We raise awareness of local sources of support where they exist, such as Disabled Facilities Grants.<sup>40</sup>

The Age-Friendly recommendations are that a range of appropriate and affordable housing options for older people including frail and disabled older people are available in the local area.

### **■ ACTION**

We will continue to provide information through the Forums to older people about access to repair and adaptation services and affordable warmth schemes to enable them to remain independent in their own homes. SPOC will engage with Sefton Council and local housing providers to include accessibility considerations when planning housing developments. We will encourage the use of community lounges to support active ageing.

## 10. Improving communication and information

Improving information and communication was the second most important topic identified by older people in our consultations.

We have represented the views of older people to the Improving Information Group facilitated by Sefton Council. This looks at common barriers to communication as well as good practice. A Forum Member provided the voiceover for a short film aimed at employees which illustrated the importance of good communication, particularly with older or disabled people.

Many older people are reasonably happy using digital technology such as smartphones or tablets. Many wish to develop their understanding further. Several groups in the borough offer support with this, such as Sefton Libraries and Sefton Opera.

But there is no doubt a significant number feel left behind by technological changes. Approximately 30% of Forum Members surveyed said they did not use digital technology or were uninterested in it.

Digital technology, if used correctly, can be useful. We have many useful online sources of information locally such as Sefton Directory.<sup>41</sup> There is also plentiful online information about topics such as welfare rights.<sup>42</sup>



But for many older people digital technology appears instead to have become a significant barrier, with banks and shops moving online and becoming inaccessible. There are also legitimate concerns about cybersecurity.

In common with similar groups across the City Region, we believe older people should be encouraged to take up new technology but not forced to do so as a result of traditional alternatives being withdrawn.<sup>43</sup>

### **CASE STUDY: Reaching out to older people**

Sefton Home Library Service is aimed at people unable to get to a local library, many of whom are housebound older people. Library volunteers take a selection of reading matter (including audio books) once per month to the person's home. This free service is a partnership between Sefton Libraries and volunteers in the local community.

Lesley Davies of Sefton Library Service, who oversees the scheme, said, "Many older people are very isolated. Sometimes the volunteer is the only person they see from week to week. This is also a great opportunity to make sure people have information about important topics, such as keeping warm in winter."

We need to bear in mind, too, that not all communication is or ought to be digital. Face to face communication and interaction is vital for combating isolation. Printed material - such as leaflets and flyers - is still a mainstay of effective local communication.

#### **CASE STUDY: Benefits**

Mrs D is 84 years old and has significant health problems. Following a Welfare Rights talk by Sefton Council at a forum meeting she was referred by Sefton Advocacy to the DWP Visiting Service. After a home visit, she was awarded the high rate of Attendance Allowance to support her with her care needs. As a result, she has been able to continue to live independently.

#### **■ ACTION**

We will continue to champion communication alternatives to online access. We will continue to represent older people on the Improving Information Group. We will encourage access to training and mentoring sessions for those who wish to build up their digital skills. We will support older people through information and signposting to ensure they are well-informed on key topics, such as rights to benefits, social care and planning for later life.

## 11. Improving safety and security

One of older people's main concerns is safety and security. This is understandable since many older people live alone or have a disability or long-term condition which may make them physically more vulnerable.

It has been argued that older people are less likely to be victims of violent crime than younger people. The main problem for older people is therefore an exaggerated fear of crime rather than crime itself. We do not think this is helpful.

Statistics do not tell the whole story. They may simply reflect the way older people adjust their lifestyles to avoid certain situations, such as town centres on Friday and Saturday nights.<sup>44</sup>

We believe fear of crime amongst older people has a rational basis. It is obvious that criminals and scammers are much more likely to target those they perceive to be vulnerable as this makes their jobs easier.

In 2018 our Forums received a grant from the Police Commissioners Community Fund to investigate these issues. We held information sessions in each of our six Forums and got feedback from members.

Many reported being plagued by cold calls and scam calls on their landlines. Others had been victims of scams online. It is thought that more than half of people aged 65+ have been targeted.<sup>45</sup> One member told us of an attempted burglary whilst she was in the property.

We were able to distribute No Cold Callers stickers, personal alarms and card defenders as well as steps to take to tackle doorstep crime and nuisance calls. We have also held sessions by NatWest Bank on cybercrime.

#### **■ ACTION**

We will continue to ensure older people have access to regular up to date information about scams and crime prevention and regular opportunities to engage with Merseyside Police. Over the next 5 years we will aim to broaden our work under this domain to look at making outdoor spaces and building across the borough more Age-Friendly.

## 12. Conclusion

SPOC continues to be vital to promoting dignity and challenging the stereotypes of older people, as well as overseeing this strategy and acting as the steering group for Age-Friendly Sefton.

With limited resources SPOC relies on members of the partnership taking action to benefit older people. This strategy is only as valuable as the commitment of the agencies involved, so we are very grateful for the level of support we have received.

The Older Persons' Forums have gone from strength to strength over the past five years and will continue to play a key role for the foreseeable future. The Forums provide a direct link for older people to have their say and indeed set the agenda themselves.

**“Working with the Older Persons' Forums has been very rewarding. We now have older people getting involved in all stages of ageing research. This means we are focusing on the research outcomes that matter to older people themselves – which is key to conducting meaningful research.”**

**Dr Asan Akpan, Honorary Clinical Associate  
Professor & Consultant Geriatrician**

### Over the next five years we aim to:

- Hold regular SPOC meetings
- Hold regular meetings of six Older Person's Forums
- Work together to tackle loneliness and boost social participation.
- Improve health and social care
- Ensure local transport meets local older people's needs
- Improve housing
- Improve communication and information
- Improve safety and security

We have shown through quotes and case studies how our approach can make a positive difference to older people.

One of our key messages is that older people should not be seen as a problem to be solved. Like everyone else, they want to live their lives as they see fit, with control over decisions that affect them.

We hope this strategy goes some way towards showing how this can be achieved, with older people's views at the heart of the process.

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