

Strategy

LOPSG

London *Older People's* Strategies Group

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Crime and Older People: Greater Local Accountability

Policing Figures from the British Crime Survey suggest that the likelihood of being a victim of crime decreases as you age. For many older people, however, fear of crime has a marked impact on their quality of life and may lead to some older people not leaving their homes as often as they would like. Fear of crime may depend on where you live. In some cases the fear of victimisation is so great that it prompts some older people to move from their own homes into sheltered or residential accommodation. Many crime prevention strategies are neighbourhood based and initiatives such as Safer Cities Programmes and Burglary Prevention strategies help to combat the fear of crime amongst the old.

Reducing crime is a pressing issue for local communities, and research shows that all members of the community, including

older people, are keen to have a greater say about local policing in their areas. Improving local police accountability and making communities feel safer has also become a top issue for the government.

Under current structures communities are not given realistic opportunities to actively influence local decision-making and set local policing priorities. Communities and local Councils currently have little say over how and what the local police are doing in their areas. Many communities feel alienated increasingly from their local policing, believing the police to be out of touch with local needs and priorities. This has also resulted in an increase in the perception and fear of crime.

Over the summer the Government consulted on proposals for ways in which local police accountability could be increased and is

expected to publish their conclusions from the Green Paper consultation process later in the year. The key accountability proposal addressed in the Green Paper is the introduction of directly elected crime and policing representatives for local authorities outside London while keeping existing structures in London the same.

However, the issue of local accountability in London also needs to be addressed. There are several ways in which the relationship between communities, local authorities and the police can be brought closer in London. Local Councils are the ideal vehicles for bringing about greater local accountability because they are already in place and are already accountable to their communities with locally elected Councillors.

To make local accountability work, there needs to be structures in place that will bring about shared

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responsibility where older people and other members of the community play a more active role in the identification of local policing priorities and needs. The police, and the local Council need to work together to meet these local concerns and priorities.

A Policing and Crime Reduction Bill will be announced in the Queen's speech later this year and is expected to take forward proposals on how local police accountability can be increased. Public confidence in the criminal justice system is vital. The key to reducing fear of crime amongst older people is to increase confidence in the workings of the criminal justice system.

**By Anastasia Lungu-Mulenga
Policy and Projects
Manager, Safer and
Stronger Communities,
London Councils**

Capital Age Festival at the Royal Festival Hall, Friday 11 July 2008

Music, dance, creativity in a single, joint endeavour caught the imagination of London's older performers and a rapt audience. The festival's central feature, the Big Chair Dance, superbly choreographed, contemporary and challenging defied the conventional notions of older people's capabilities. From atmospheric poetic movement to funky, hot, high energy hip-hop, each new dance took the Royal Festival Hall by storm. Working together, during June and July, in their homes, day centres and at the Clore Ballroom both frail and vigorous, older people, aged 50-90+, were transformed by the dance.

Capital Age Festival holds a unique position in the capital. It ensures its programmes feature the brilliant acts of loved and well-known older artists as well as bringing innovative ideas and unknown performers to the fore. In this way, CAF consistently produces surprise and dynamism.

CAF thanks the Deputy Mayor, Richard Barnes, for opening the festival and for his enthusiastic address, our host, the illustrious South Bank Centre, our partners East London Dance and Entelechy Arts for their immense expertise, co-operation and drive, and the brilliant photographer, Hayley Madden. CAF is grateful to everyone who took



the time to fill in questionnaires. The results are providing valuable information needed for future planning. Without the strong support of the Mayor of London, the GLA, the Arts Council, Bridge House Trust, Help the Aged and the Metropolitan Police Service, this event would not have been possible.

**Joan Bennetto,
CAF Director**

Mayor introduces new Dial-a-Ride vehicles

The Mayor of London Boris Johnson announced that 61 new, custom-built Dial-a-Ride minibuses will be introduced across London this year, improving door to door transport services for tens of thousands of older or disabled Londoners who cannot easily use public transport. Transport for London (TfL) has already begun replacing the ageing fleet of Dial-a-Ride vehicles, but these are the first to be purpose-built for the fleet. Dial-a-Ride passengers and drivers have been closely involved in developing the new bus to ensure it meets passengers' diverse needs. The £3.9 million TfL has invested in these vehicles is part of a long-term programme to improve door to door services in the Capital. Mayor Boris Johnson said, "Dial-a-Ride really is a lifeline for thousands of Londoners for whom getting around the city is a challenge, and these custom-built buses will help to change for the better the service that we offer."

It is hoped that the promise of more comfortable trips will encourage new passengers to try Dial-a-

Ride in 2008 and beyond. Older Dial-a-Ride vehicles will be phased out as the new vehicles go into service. With the older models, customers found the seats narrow, the seatbelts difficult to use, and they found there wasn't enough legroom, particularly for those with arthritis or restricted movement. The new vehicle is a purpose-built, small bus with a totally flat low floor and dual access at the side and rear of the vehicle. Tip and fold seats will allow wheelchair users to manoeuvre around the vehicle much more easily; they will also provide greater flexibility for accommodating individual passengers' needs. The new bus also offers a much improved interior, including high levels of interior lighting, tinted windows and air conditioning, plus onboard CCTV for added safety and security.

Free fares were introduced on Dial-a-Ride from 1 January 2008. There are currently around 50,000 users of the service making 1.2m journeys per year.

Anna Roberts



All of us who have worked or had contact with Anna, and there must be few LOPSG members who have not, will be sorry to hear that she is leaving her post at the GLA. At the same time we are all delighted that after five years, during which she has made such a success of the London Older People's Facility, she is moving to a senior administrative post with one of the London boroughs.

Anna joined the GLA in November 2003 as one of the two project officers running the London Older People's Resource Facility. LOPSG quickly realised how fortunate we were to have Anna supporting our work for London's older people. On the resignation of the Facility's Senior Project Officer in June 2005 Anna managed the Facility single-handed for almost a year and was appointed Senior Project Officer in April 2006.

We are grateful to Anna for all the work she has done with great skill, sympathy and understanding, to further the cause of older Londoners. We shall miss her and we wish her every success in her new post.

St. Hilda's East Community Centre, E2

St Hilda's Older People's Project is based at St Hilda's East Community Centre, 18 Club Row, London E2 7EY, in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The project provides a warm and homely atmosphere for older people from a diverse range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

St Hilda's Older People's Project was established in its present form in the 1990s. St. Hilda's itself was founded in 1889 and the community centre has been working with older people ever since then. Some of our current members have been attending for over 20 years!

As well as supporting older people to remain independent and active, St Hilda's is passionate about ensuring older people are valued and able to contribute to society, through campaigning and getting their voices heard. The East End Pensioners Action Group (EPAG) was established in 2006 to campaign around issues that affect older people both locally and nationally.

A recent example of this is an open meeting with the local MP, hosted by EPAG in September, affording older people to voice their views on relevant issues – from housing to pensions.

The Older People's Project overall provides a range of activities to local older people including IT classes, a Caribbean reminiscence project, arts and crafts, dance, walks, exercise classes, bingo, dominoes, computing, a textiles project - all these activities aimed at creating a stimulating atmosphere. We have developed some excellent projects working across generations. This summer we produced a life sized logo with the youth project based at St Hilda's, while we are now planning to organise a Caribbean taste and story morning with young children in St. Hilda's East Community Centre creche as part of Black History month.

In December 2007 Help the Aged presented St Hilda's with a brand new minibus called 'Ethel'. It was purchased through a legacy left by Eastenders Actress

Gretchen Franklin who played Ethel in the popular soap. The minibus has since enabled many local older people to access services at St Hilda's and has significantly reduced isolation for many who otherwise would not be able to get out and about.

"I love the warm and friendly atmosphere at St Hilda's it helps to get me out of the house and to meet people. I am a free spirit and like to get out and about. I have made many new friends at St Hilda's and have been reacquainted with old ones."

A Service Users comment.

The project also works closely with a range of local community organisations, agencies and business. Help the Aged and Age Concern Tower Hamlets are working closely with us to support the needs of older people.

For more information please contact Irene Winter on 0207 739 8066 or e-mail irene@sthildas.org.uk

Editors note.

If you would like to submit a profile report on your own group and its work for future issues of Strategy please contact Graeme Matthews or Nabs Stelter by emailing secretary@lopsg.co.uk or nabilla.stelter@london.gov.uk or by calling 020 7785 3873.

New committee member biographies



Clare Douglas

Clare lives in the Borough of Brent and has been active in social work for over 25 years. She is a member of Community Service Volunteers (CSV) supporting elderly clubs and since June 2006 has been involved with the Energy Programme organised by the Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme (RSVP). This project is concerned with advising elderly and vulnerable people about conserving energy in the home.

This year Clare has been actively involved in the Capital Age Festival - visiting satellite venues and helping to organise volunteers on the day.



Bridgit A Sam-Bailey

Bridgit is a retired school teacher and a member of Lewisham Pensioners' Forum. She is also an active member of the NPC Minority Ethnic Elders committee, and is part of a group that meets with minority ethnic elders nationally to encourage them and make their voices heard. Bridgit is a former Executive Officer of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, as well as Branch Secretary for the Hammersmith and Fulham Branch of the Association. As such, she negotiated with the Council on behalf of teachers, and also mediated when disputes occurred. Bridgit was recently part of a panel that interviewed the three major Mayoral candidates.

Congratulations to Cecile Nobrega

Since 1995, LOPSG member Cecile Nobrega has been campaigning for the creation and erection in London of a "Bronze Woman", A statue which would be a tribute to all women and in particular to the contribution of Caribbean women to British society. We are delighted to report that the ten foot statue of a mother and child has been erected in Stockwell Memorial Gardens and was unveiled on 8 October by Cecile in the presence of many supporters including Baroness Scotland and Doreen Lawrence. For more information see www.olmec-ec.org.uk

Diary Dates

Thursday 4 December
LOPSG Networking Reception, 6-8pm, London's Living Room, City Hall
By registration only

Friday 13 February 2009
Participants Meeting From 1pm
Committee Room 5, City Hall *Please note that this is an adjustment to the previously scheduled date of 12 February.

New Members

The following groups have recently joined LOPSG.

- 008 Group Shirley
- Asian Elders & Carers Group
- Belmont Active Over 60s Club
- Cara Irish Day Centre
- Involving Older People's Project, Age Concern Tower Hamlets
- Opening Doors in Central London Project, Age Concern Camden
- Parachute Regiment Second World War Veterans Association
- DAIVA - Divine Association in Varnasrama
- HOW - How to make the world a better place
- 50+ Restart

Strategy is the newsletter of LOPSG. Views expressed in *Strategy* do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor or of LOPSG. You may contact the editorial committee by emailing secretary@lopsg.org.uk

LOPSG Funding

LOPSG's income is entirely dependent on charitable funds and on donations from members. We were very grateful for the generous response of members to our appeal for funds last year. As a result of our present funding needs, any donation groups or individuals can send us will be very gratefully received and will make a valuable contribution to the continuation of our work. If you are able to donate, please make cheques payable to LOPSG and send to Mark Windisch (Hon Treasurer), 137 Preston Road, Wembley HA9 8NW. Our thanks to those who have sent in contributions recently. An updated list of donors will be published in our next issue.

The following committee members were elected at the LOPSG AGM on 28 August 2008

Chair

Eileen McNally

Vice Chair

Kurban Haji

Secretary

Graeme Matthews

Treasurer

Mark Windisch

Committee Members

Joan Bennetto

Anne Bryant

Stan Davison

Claire Douglas*

Les Evans

David Gardiner OBE

Gulnahr Khan

Mohamed Khan Lodhi

Ellen Lebethe

Bridgit A Sam-Bailey*

* New members

David Gardiner OBE



Congratulations to David on being awarded the OBE "for voluntary service to Social Housing in South London".

David lives in St Martin's Estate, Tulse Hill, and for over 25 years has been active with older volunteers to bring decent housing, regeneration and over £42 million in investment to its 1,300 homes and neighbourhood. He represents London Region on the Better Government for older people UK Advisory Group and in recent years has been a member of several government and independent housing/health/care advisory bodies including HOPDEV (GLA), Housing Corporation, HACT, Joseph Rowntree, Audit Commission and the Independent Living for Disabled People Expert Panel (DWP). David is a trustee of Age Concern Lambeth and a member of the LOPSG Management Committee.

How to join LOPSG or find out more

As the principal forum for older Londoners' consultation with the Mayor, we are always looking to extend our membership, and particularly to encourage the involvement of representatives across the wide spectrum of London's communities and ethnic groups.

Membership is free, and is open to individuals, and representatives of London organisations. All members receive notice of LOPSG meetings, the quarterly newsletter Strategy, and documentation relating to Mayoral policy.

If you, or your organisation, would like to join, or find out more about LOPSG please contact Graeme Matthews (Secretary) on 01895 631905 or Nabs Stelter (Project Officer, London Older People's Resource Facility) on 020 7785 3873. Alternatively you can email Nabs at nabilla.stelter@london.gov.uk.