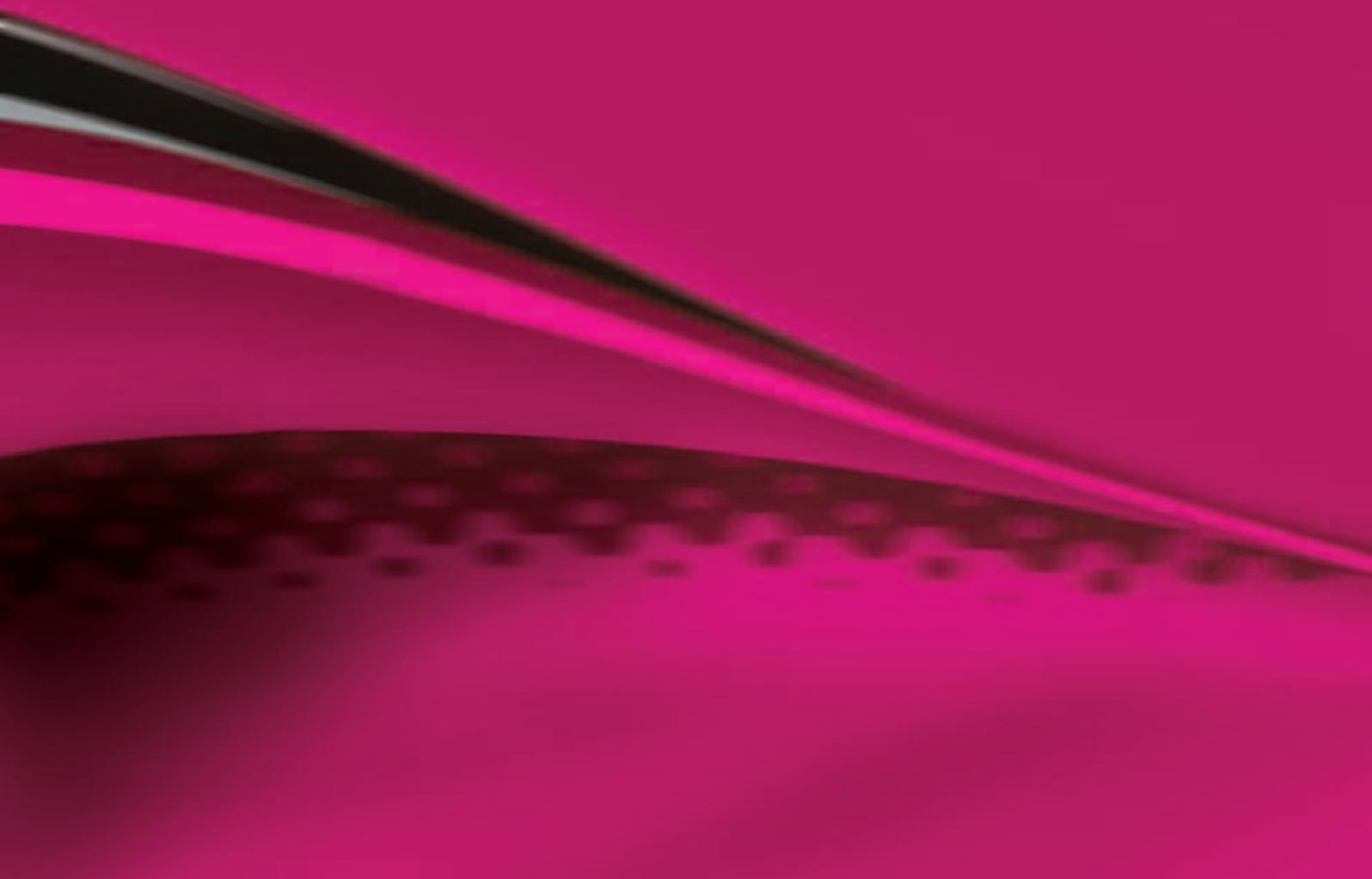


Section 4

Nothing about us without us –
the voice of older people



Section 4 Nothing about us without us – the voice of older people

- Introduction
- Chart

Introduction

In many ways, this section can be seen as the most important one in the handbook. Before developing our strategy, we established the principle that placing older people at the centre of all our activity was crucial to the vibrant and healthy approach needed to bring the strategy to life.

Organisations such as Better Government for Older People (BGOP) have worked to create structures with older people at the centre. For BGOP, these are regional and national older people’s advisory groups.

Help the Aged developed a series of forums titled ‘Speaking up for Our Age’, adopting the principle established by older people themselves – ‘Nothing about us without us’.

To encourage older people to get involved, Lancashire County Council commissioned Age Concern in Lancashire to set up forums run by older people in each district. Where forums already existed, Age Concern helped them to develop further. The aim was to secure an arena which offered a wide range of older people the opportunity to get involved in influencing social care services and contributing to service improvements. These forums are represented on the older people’s partnership boards, which bring together all voluntary and statutory organisations providing services in each district, along with representatives from other older people’s groups. Their purpose is:

- to influence the wide range of services so that they meet the expectations of older people; and
- to make sure older people have a meaningful say in service design and delivery.

The partnership boards are also responsible for shaping and monitoring the Local Area Agreement to assess how it makes a difference to the lives of older people. They are linked to their local strategic partnerships. At the moment there are boards in:

- Lancaster;
- Fylde and Wyre;
- West Lancashire; and
- South Ribble.

Other partnership boards are being developed in Preston, Chorley and East Lancashire.

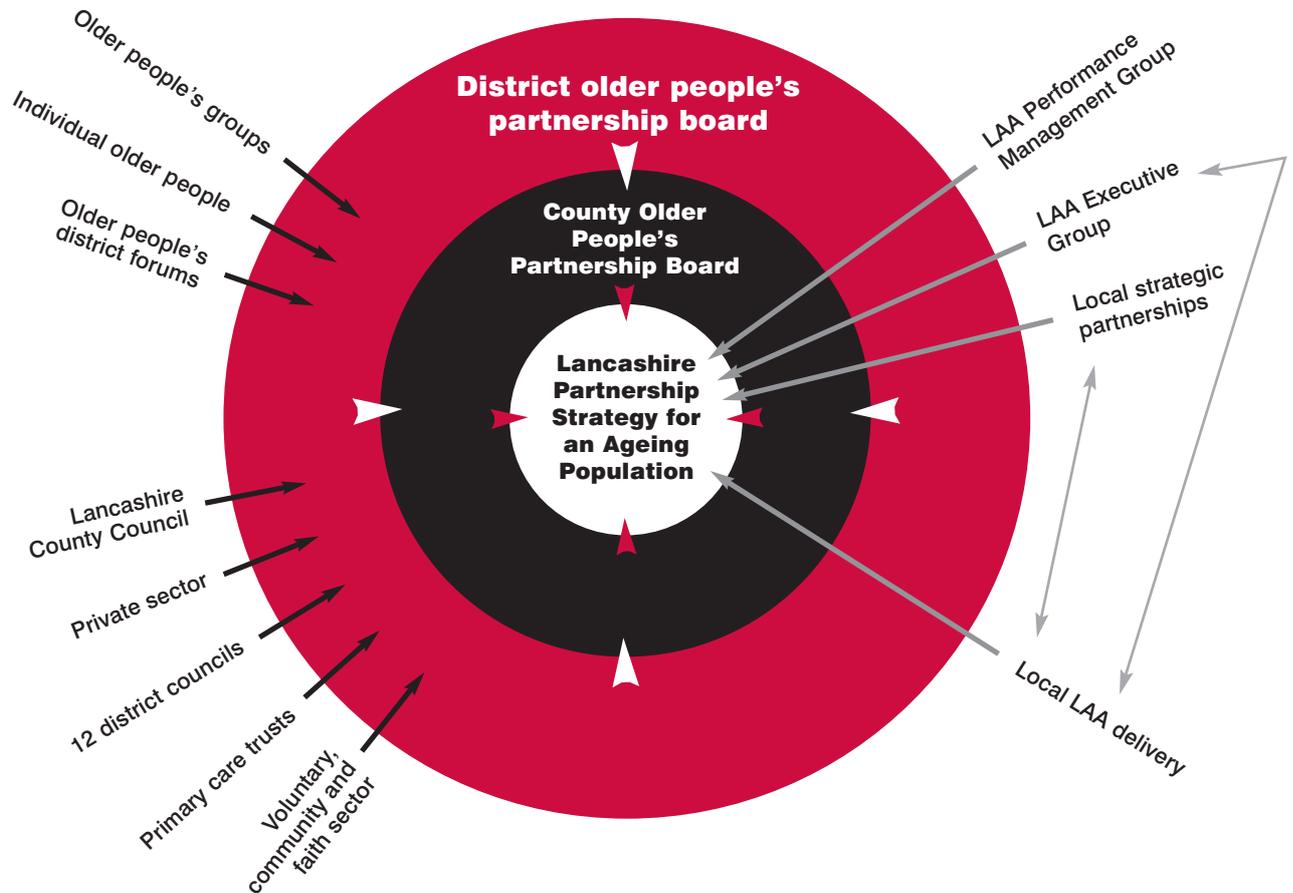
Older people's groups

Older people are no different from the rest of the population in that they have a wide range of interests and attend a wide range of activities and groups. However, across Lancashire there are a huge number of well-established organisations focused on issues specifically relevant to older people. These groups are generally focused on specific areas of interest, such as theatre, music, keep fit, advocacy, jazz and information technology. This type of information is often available from county information centres, district and city council information centres, the Council for Voluntary Service, Age Concern and the Lancashire County Council Library Service.

Older people's forums are often made up of some of these groups. They tend to be run by older people for older people and most of them have a long history of voluntary work. They generate their own work agenda and, as a result, have a much broader brief than delivering services.

Click on the web links in this section to find out more about forums and partnership boards and how to get involved.

Within this broad landscape of activity, our strategy recognises the importance of involving older people in putting into practice a range of policies, but specifically in developing and delivering the Strategy for an Ageing Population. The chart shown below, which is taken from the strategy, shows one way of achieving this involvement and being able to hear the voice of older people.



Getting involved

As the role of the partnership boards, older people's forums and Lancashire Partnership grows, it is a real opportunity for you to become involved.

Go to the Lancashire Partnership website over the next few months to find out how you can become involved at county level.

www.lancashirepartnership.co.uk

For local partnership boards and forums to get involved now, visit the contacts page

By April 2008, local authorities must set up local involvement networks (LINKs) to involve everyone in health and social care developments. These will provide a channel for people's views. Information about how to get involved will be publicised nearer the time.

Lancashire County Council – supporting the voice of older people

To support the voice of older people, Lancashire County Council has created an Older People Officer Working Group. This group's role is:

- to place the outcomes from the strategy at the heart of the way the council delivers its services; and
- to make sure this is carried out in a co-ordinated and effective way.

The group is chaired by the Director of Older People's Services from the Adult and Community Services Directorate. It includes representatives from all the councils' directorates and can also call on officers from any service the council provides to support its work.

In addition to delivering the strategy, the group's priorities are:

- overseeing the county council's contribution to the Local Area Agreement;
- promoting the principles of the national 'Dignity in care' initiative across the county council;
- making sure all the council's strategic objectives take older people into account; and
- working with the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to increase understanding of how the county positively influences older people's wellbeing.

Wellbeing and prevention

This is a new approach to providing support and improving lives.

‘The challenge is for each of us as individuals to take responsibility for our own lifestyles and aim for a healthy and fulfilling old age. We know that there are people who will find this more difficult than others, including those suffering from limiting long-term illness, disadvantaged groups such as homeless people and those living in areas of multiple deprivations. We will ensure that people who are disadvantaged are supported to meet this challenge and live healthy and fulfilling lives.’

‘Our health, our care, our say: a new direction for community services’, Department of Health, January 2006

www.dh.gov.uk/policyandguidance/organisationpolicy/modernisation/ourhealthourcareoursay/index.htm

As a key part of supporting older people, the county council has appointed a programme director for wellbeing and prevention. This person is responsible for:

- co-ordinating the Adult and Community Services Directorate's approach to supporting wellbeing; and
- developing services which meet low-level needs.

The aim is to promote, support and influence the re-shaping of health and social care services towards prevention, based on a better understanding of the whole community's needs. It will be achieved through a joint strategic needs assessment with health partners. This will increasingly mean developing stronger relationships with the voluntary, community and faith sectors, as well as working more closely with other commissioning partners such as primary care trusts and district councils.