

Later Years Partnership meeting 3<sup>rd</sup> June  
Age Concern - The Good Life Project

1. As previously reported to the Partnership, the Good Life project was developed as an idea two years ago and submitted unsuccessfully to the Big Lottery. **The project has now secured one year funding from the PCT.**

### **NEEDS**

2. Poor diet is an issue for older people that needs to be addressed. While there is a strong mainstream focus on obesity, the issues and causes of poor diet for older people are varied and demand a range of solutions. For most people, in most cultures, cooking, eating, and mealtimes are social and communal activities. This is not the case for many senior citizens. The causes include income, access to fresh food, buying cheaply at the margins of safety, cooking for one, mealtimes being related to happier memories, and sometimes a lack of cooking skills amongst men.
3. The SE Public Health Observatory, and others are now highlighting poor diet, malnutrition and obesity as serious problems amongst older people. There is evidence that a high proportion of seniors entering hospital are suffering from levels of malnutrition and dehydration, and that this can be a contributory factor to the presenting condition, for example falls. The city wide multi-agency Falls plan highlights the need to improve nutrition and hydration amongst seniors.
4. "A sure start to later life" (Social Exclusion Unit) highlights the importance of social networking and the impact of loneliness and social isolation on the health and mental wellbeing of senior citizens. There is now evidence that the process of ageing is directly related to levels of social interaction, and isolation. We are trying to address this by developing interest and capacity around a basic human need, rather than creating artificial networks, dependencies and relationships.

### **THE PROJECT**

5. The Good Life Project will develop opportunities for senior citizens to improve not only their diet, but also their general well-being. It will create opportunities for social interaction and generate activities within neighbourhoods for senior citizens to participate in and develop themselves, and promote healthy eating.
6. The Good Life will seek to deliver:-
  - Pub clubs - working with local publicans to develop a regular meal for seniors creating a social network;
  - Cooking for one 'classes' - drawing upon the expertise of older people to share culinary skills;
  - Meal clubs - where arising from a variety of networks, and with simple support to get off the ground, senior citizens cook and eat together;
  - Collections of recipes, tips on cooking economically through meal planning;
  - Healthy eating messages;
  - Opportunities to explore cuisine across different cultures;

- The possibility of developing group shopping, food co-operatives, good food supplier networks, and even allotment clubs;
  - An opportunity to also input advice, information, and support;
  - The opportunity for networks to develop into whatever the participants want in order to live fulfilling and happy lives.
  - There are a range of possibilities which might include developing a collective of active seniors to provide catering for senior citizen events, or running stalls and demonstrations.
7. The funding will provide a Development Worker who will work alongside the Life to the Full Co-ordinator, the Seniors Council, and others. The Information, and Home Safety Projects and Seniors Groups audit will provide the network to support the projects work.
  8. While some aspects of the project, such as promotion and publicity, will have city-wide benefits, the focus of its effort will be in the city's priority neighbourhoods where social deprivation and health inequality is greatest. It will work with Black and Ethnic Minority groups and agencies in the city to ensure that appropriate cultural provision is made, and that elders from BME communities are specifically able to benefit from the project.
  9. As well as improving diet and creating social networks and interaction, the project will create opportunities for the dissemination of information and advice, and develops capacity within the community that supports individuals, builds confidence and tackles isolation, in a self sustaining way.

#### **MEASURING THE PROJECT'S IMPACT**

10. The project's social impact will be measured in the short term by the number of people engaged in activities directly developed by the project who were not otherwise socially engaged. Benefit of the project will be measured through qualitative surveys of those taking part and involve, and measures of well-being developed through the city's health and well-being strategy.
11. The impact on health of improved diets will be measured in the longer term through health indices such as reduced levels of gastric illness, fewer falls and other hospital admissions, lower levels of strokes and other diet related conditions, combined with easier rehabilitation and recovery from illnesses and reduced causes of hyperthermia. The project's focus on priority neighbourhoods should be reflected in narrowing inequality indicators of the gap between those of other neighbourhoods.
12. One year funding (£29k) is a start, but we shall be measuring the benefits to try to secure longer term funding. This is the sort of project that help seniors stay independent and healthy.