

Elders Council of Newcastle

A Short History

In 2001 the Elders Council was formed and had the following main aims:

- To be an organisation led by older people for older people
- To provide an effective voice for the older people's organisations and older people resident or active in the City of Newcastle upon Tyne on issues concerning the quality of life, health and wellbeing of older people in Newcastle.
- To realise the potential of older people as a creative and active resource for the community.

A committee was elected and the members worked on issues which are important to older people such as housing, transport and health and care.

In 2002, the Elders Council received a grant from the Northern Rock Foundation which secured its future for the next two years.

From the outset, the Elders Council published a regular **Magazine** to keep older people in the city up to date with issues that concern them.

In 2003, the Elders Council published '**The Way Ahead**' – a manifesto which was later to form the basis of a strategy for older people in the city.

In 2004, Newcastle City Council invested in a strategic approach to ageing and the **Quality of Life Partnership** was formed, bringing Newcastle City Council, the Elders Council, Newcastle Healthy City and Age UK Newcastle into a partnership.

The first key project undertaken by the partnership was the creation of **InformationNOW**, an information resource for older people in the city – www.informationnow.org.uk. Older people played a key role in shaping its development.

In 2007, Elders Council was a key contribution to the development of '**Everyone's Tomorrow**' (Newcastle's Strategy for Older People and an Ageing Population) which was adopted by Newcastle City Council and partners as part of its Local Strategic Partnership.

In 2007, Elders Council set up a radio programme. Initially called 'Everyone's Tomorrow – Today!' the group came together to deliver their own radio show, learning all the skills to manage the monthly show themselves. In 2019, the group changed its name to '**Older Voices**' and during 2020 the group increased the number of shows to fortnightly and transferred the show from the studio to on-line.

In 2008, the Elders Council took the step to become a **Company Limited by Guarantee and a Registered Charity**.

Elders Council continued its issue-based work and also placed a strong focus on ensuring that older people are well informed through a series of information days and in gathering older people's views on the city through a series of projects on the **Older Person Friendly City**.

In 2011, Newcastle City Council signed up to the **WHO Age Friendly Cities and Communities** initiative. Key to this commitment is the strong engagement of older people at the heart of the city's work. Elders Council has consistently provided strong engagement of older people in this work. To fulfil this role, Elders Council has invested a significant amount of effort in engaging with older people across the city. Our **Community Conversations**, funded by Awards for All, are an example of this.

In 2016, Elders Council entered into a partnership with the Workers Educational Association and Newcastle University to deliver the **Active Voices** project. Funded by Comic Relief, the project aimed to support older people to develop their skills and confidence to be more active in their communities. The Elders Council has continued to progress its work on this theme through **Age Activism**, a national network of organisations, funded by the Tudor Trust, which is supporting older people to speak up for themselves.

In 2016, Elders Council became one of the founder partners in the **Future Homes Alliance**, a quadruple helix partnership aimed at delivering a new approach to housing our ageing population. Elders Council led on the co-design workshops with older people and families and continues to be actively engaged.

In 2018, recognising that many of its members were now on-line, the Elders Council created an **on-line fortnightly bulletin** which is distributed to older people and front-line staff who work with older people. The bulletin is now a very popular resource and regularly achieves 50% open rate which is high by industry standards. Elders Council also set up a **Facebook** page.

In 2020, Elders Council became one of the founder members of the **Later Life Radio and Audio Co-operative** – a co-operative of older people creating audio content on a variety of radio stations throughout the UK.

In 2021 priority issues for the Elders Council continue to be:

Housing: Future Homes Alliance; Doorbells (a partnership with Care and Repair England, Northumbria University and Skimstone Arts); Flexible Homes (South Seaham Garden Village) Co-Design Group.

Social Care: 'Managing the Home Care Circus' – an investigation of older people's experiences of home care.

All Age Friendly City Centre: a joint project with students from Newcastle University exploring the potential for the city centre to become more age-friendly.

Digital Inclusion: Staying Connected is a project funded by the Postcode Community Trust which aims to support older people to take the first steps to getting on-line. This project is being delivered in partnership with Mental Health Concern and Your Homes Newcastle/Newcastle Libraries. Elders Council also runs a weekly drop-in sessions with students from Northumbria University called **Project ICE**.

Artist Residency: Elders Council is one of three organisations supporting the Intergenerational Words and Worlds residency with Newcastle City Council. This is giving people of different ages the opportunity to explore their experiences of COVID 19 through creative writing.

Communications: Elders Council maintains a strong communications programme with a fortnightly e-bulletin and radio programme; a quarterly Magazine and regular postings on Facebook and Twitter.

Research: Elders Council is often a partner in research projects. It is currently working with Northumbria University on double-handed care reviews and with Newcastle University on Oral Nutrition supplements used to treat frail older people.

Representation: Elders Council regularly represents the voices of older people on a wide range of partnership groups in the city. A current list is attached as an Appendix to this paper.

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Appendix: EC Representation on other bodies