Looking back, Looking forward....

In 2007 a team of researchers from Keele University in Staffordshire was successful in obtaining funding from the New Dynamics of Ageing (NDA) research programme. The CALL-ME Project was designed to develop and evaluate opportunities for social activities with older people in four neighbourhoods in Manchester City. This newsletter celebrates the many achievements of participants in the four districts.

The project adopted an action research approach. This meant that the development of the activities was based on several key principles:

- **Participation:** A central feature of all the projects is that they were conducted WITH the residents. Thus it was important from the outset to stress that the residents shaped and took control of the projects.

- **Action:** Another common feature of the projects was that they combined action with research. Each of the projects involved older residents of particular neighbourhoods in taking local action to improve the quality of their lives.

- **Collaboration:** Although our main partner in the project has been the Valuing Older People unit at Manchester City Council. Staff from this unit have been consulted at all stages of the project and are keen to continue supporting the project after the research funding ends. We have also collaborated with many other agencies in the local neighbourhoods.

- **Policy:** Finally, it is important to stress that all of the projects are designed to contribute to develop policy to support local initiatives. However, policy needs pressure to become practice. While central funding for the project may have come to an end it is important to keep the pressure on the many agencies to continue to support and sustain the many successes reported in this newsletter.

The research team would like to congratulate the local residents and all who have worked with them over the past three years for their commitment to improving opportunities for social engagement for older people in Manchester. We look forward to even greater achievements in the months and years ahead.

Welcome to the sixth issue of Call-Me Now! the Newsletter for CALL-ME, an NDA funded research project. CALL-ME is a research project which aims to promote social engagement and independence among older people in disadvantaged communities in Manchester.
Showcasing Manchester’s Talents

On October 14th 2010 members of all the CALL-ME groups from across Manchester came together to celebrate their activities and achievements with an audience of representatives from local community and council organisations including Valuing Older People.

The event was held at the historic Gorton Monastery. An introduction to the CALL-ME research project was made by Professor Michael Murray. This was followed by presentations from the three gardening groups, the Somali women’s support group, and the art and exercise classes. All the groups had done extremely well in gaining funding to support their activities from a variety of sources. Many of the groups are now run independently by their members. In a subsequent discussion representatives from local organisations pledged further support for the groups once the researchers leave Manchester early next year.

The findings from the project will be accessible via a website developed by David Andrassy who gave an overview of the planned website. The website will also provide guidance and support for individuals planning to set up a community group in their neighbourhood. It will be launched early in the New Year.

Jim Harding from the New Dynamics of Ageing ‘Older People Reference Group’ gave his impression of the research project and the event:

“It is incredible to reflect that the CALL-ME project has now been going for a little over three years. For sure it has come on leaps and bounds and is constantly moving forward as shown by the tremendous support, enthusiasm and positive attitude of the 60 or 70 people who attended the Showcase Event in Gorton Monastery. The many participants from Ardwick, Cheetham, Moss Side and Newton Heath supported by their diligent researchers continue to forge ahead with their projects and it was a pleasure to meet with them and listen to their individual presentations, especially the ladies from Newton Heath who gave us a delightful lesson on Tai Chi for everyone attending to join in and enjoy.”

The showcase event was followed in the afternoon by a meeting of the advisory board of the CALL-ME project. In this meeting representatives from the various groups and their facilitators/ researchers gave an account of the enormous progress that had been made with the groups and the research during the previous 12 months.

We would like to thank all participants who with their enthusiasm made this an unforgettable event!!
The Young at Heart Group

In this issue we celebrate the development and successes of the Young at Heart Group. From tentative beginnings the Young at Heart group has gone from strength to strength. Now with a registered membership of 17, the older residents of West Gorton have successfully pulled together to form a fully constituted group in spring 2009 and have overcome initial challenges to gain funding and support needed to explore opportunities which had not previously been open to them.

Community Arts - Working with professional artists Trae England (Library Theatre Company), and Ian & Andrew McKay (Gorton Visual Arts) members of the group have honed their creative talents, skills and artistic flair through the development of a range of community arts project. Experimenting with a diversity of art forms and focusing their efforts on the progressive theme of ‘Local Life & Community’ the group have created an array of stunning public art works including – the West Gorton ‘Community Story Board’, West Gorton’s 1st edition Community Calendar and the ‘10x10 Community Challenge Project’ which are now on display for the public to view in the community venue where the group meet each week, and are also available to view on-line at http://www.westgorton10x10.wordpress.com. From June to August this year the group have worked with community artists Ian and Andrew McKay on a series of Wood Block and Silk Screen prints. This project was funded by the Community Development Foundation.

The prints were exhibited at a community event hosted by the Young at Heart group and featured in an online magazine (www.thisiseast.com), and the Manchester Evening News newspaper.

However, Community art is not the only activity which is keeping the Young at Heart group busy. As the group developed and gained confidence, members have sought out other activities. Since the beginning of the project in early 2008 the group have:

- Organised community outings & cultural visits,
- Hosted community events & art exhibitions,
- Participated in developmental workshops
- Represented their group through presentations at various venues across the city of Manchester.
As group secretary, Audrey Hurley commented at the groups 1st Annual General Meeting in March this year - “It’s hard to believe we could have fitted so much in really… but it just goes to show you what can be achieved when ordinary people get together”.

**Research Activity**—The research team aimed to support the older residents in the development of sustainable group activity. Throughout the project individual members of the group were encouraged to take the lead in planning and developing the activities and to represent their group in the wider community. The group were also asked to participate in regular group discussions to monitor the progress of the project. This was encouraged through one to one conversations with the research team, regular group meetings and group evaluation sessions.

Comment sheets, conversations, art work and photography was incorporated into the sessions to aide discussion and gain an understanding of what the activities signified to the older people who participated - collectively the research team and group identified a number of recurring ‘themes’ which demonstrate positive outcomes for the older residents –

- Enjoyment and pleasure
- Increased social interaction and Friendships
- Relaxation
- Sense of belonging
- Activities anticipated-Something to look forward to
- Sense of individual & community achievement
- Building community spirit

We were also able to identify challenges regarding developing and sustaining group activity as well as ways to address these issues:

- Lack of experience managing a group
  - Attended workshops with Novascarman Trust
- Gaining funding
  - Formed a committee & group bank account
- On-going support and recognition
  - Group presentations - Media coverage

Whilst some issues continue to concern the group, for example, on-going funding to support activities, this has not dampened the group’s enthusiasm – as we write this article the Young at Hearts are hard at work making plans for their next arts project and discussions have began for activity in 2011.
Ardwick—West Gorton

Group Plan for 2011

Arts Activity—Working with artists Ian and Andrew McKay, the group are in the process of developing plans for an exciting project which aims to create an Interior Public Arts Mosaic. Building on the skills developed in a workshop run by Ian, the group aim to create a mosaic which documents the changes that are taking place in West Gorton as it goes through the process of regeneration. When completed the art work will be unveiled at a public ceremony and installed for West Gorton residents to view.

Group Outings — The group also have plans for a return to The Windmill public house to enjoy a Christmas lunch together after an excellent time was had by all last December. Talks are already underway to decide on a destination for the group’s outing to the seaside next summer! Having registered for membership in the early part of 2009, the group will once again make use of Community Transport and the excellent services of their regular friendly driver Darrell to travel to their destinations.

In this final issue of the Call-Me Newsletter group members summarise the project in their own words......

“Coming to this group is very important to me – I think it keeps me feeling well and happy. I have been on trips out which I can’t go on my own, this has been good for me…but I enjoy working with the art material, it makes me feel relaxed and happy. I feel I am improving each week and my daughter is very surprised with all my art work, she tells me this.” Pat Page

“We’ve shown what can be achieved when you share your ideas and pull together. We’ve formed a real sense of community here– which hasn’t only benefited the group but in a small way improved opportunities for the whole community. When you think back to all the open days and events we’ve had, everybody’s been involved. Yes, I think we’ve surprised everybody, including ourselves, but it shows what can be achieved when you get that little push.” Audrey Hurley

“I’ve lived on this estate since it was first built in 1969, and apart from a pensioners club we used to have back in the 70’s this is the only thing I can think of what we’ve had for older people. It’s been marvellous, all the different things we’ve done; art work, projects, days out and meals. I’m registered blind so I didn't think I’d be able to join in but everybody is so friendly and helpful I’ve managed to do it all. Yes, I’m very pleased with all of it”. Marge Wade
Ardwick—West Gorton

“I love coming to the group, I don’t go anywhere else only the shop. I’ve got all my friends here and I enjoy doing all the art work, I didn’t think I could do all these things. But the best for me is the trips out. I went to the seaside for the first time, I never thought I would ever go to the seaside and now I have. The beach and the sea were really beautiful; I shall remember the trips for the rest of my life.” Jean Ward

“Looking back to that first meeting when we first came together to talk about getting some activities going, I don’t think any of us knew what to expect or how to go about it. But with your support and our hard work, here we are- a very successful activity group. It’s been hard work, but well worth it. Look at all the things we’ve done, which we’ve never had the chance to do before. I think everybody agrees that it’s been a success and I’ve tried to express that in my poem”. Maddie Blakey

From an empty space and an empty room
A Community Centre has come
With something to do for everyone
It’s somewhere to come and have fun.

A cup of tea and friendly chat
A project for you and I
There’s no need to shy or even scared
You can do it if you try.

It’ll give you a sense of belonging
A sense of achievement too
And more than that a sense of pride
In the things you’ve learnt to do.

So welcome to our little group
We hope that you will stay
And come to visit in these rooms
Each week at 12 – Tuesday.

Maddie Blakey

And finally………..

How the months have flown by since we first visited West Gorton over two years ago. We were strangers from outside Manchester and we were perhaps a little unsure about how we would be received. But after a few stumbles we were warmly welcomed and quickly established many new friendships. Over the years the group has produced many wonderful art pieces. But this we are sure is just a start. We are proud of the many achievements of the group and look forward to more. We would like to thank all of those who helped the group at various stages. We are confident that the group will continue to meet and take on new challenges. There are many changes ahead in West Gorton and the local residents will need to keep up the pressure to make sure that not only is their art admired but that their voice is heard.

Amanda Crummett and Michael Murray (Keele University)
Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall

Overview of the project—From autumn 2008 a health-related project was undertaken by Sian Maslin-Prothero and Jan Bailey, initially with support from Friederike Ziegler and Amy Bennion. In the first 6 months numerous approaches were made to local community groups and organisations. We met with a number of key individuals and representatives in the Cheetham area who currently provide services for the local population; each of these were enthusiastic about the proposed research project and would like to have worked with the team - over 30 possible partners were contacted and we visited 15 of these. From these meetings with current community groups we found that there were some common issues and concerns:

- securing future funding;
- having an affordable place to meet;
- that there were isolated, hard to reach older people in the area;
- access for people with disabilities;
- each group does not seem to know what other groups are doing, or connect with them;
- the cost of transport to and from activities.

We were not able to work with everyone and had to narrow the number of groups we engaged with following consultation with colleagues from Zest and Manchester City Council. We worked with older people from: George Halstead Court (Northwards Housing), Clifford Hilditch Court (Johnnie Johnson Housing Trust), and the Afro-Caribbean Men’s Carers' Group.

Development of the project through various stages

Jan Bailey and Sian Maslin-Prothero started by meeting the older people from the three different groups over a period of 9 months, where we gathered information on individuals’ needs, the types of health-related activities they were interested in, as well as residents suggestions on how we might invite other older people who are not already using local services.

George Halstead Court

We have continued to work closely with the residents and the scheme managers (Sue & Sheila) at George Halstead Court in Cheetham. They are an enthusiastic group and identified gardening as a shared interest and formed the Four Seasons Garden Club, which successfully secured funding from Manchester City Council for gardening equipment.
Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall

As well as developing their own space at the George Halstead Court the Four Seasons Garden Club have engaged with other community activities; for example in July 2009 Geraldine Wall and Naomi Davies from ZEST held an open afternoon at the community allotment in Cheetham – their aim was to encourage others from the community to participate in growing fruit and vegetables. Kath, Margaret, Barry and Brian from the garden club took part in the event and some of them enjoyed it so much they decided to join up.

On 30 September 2009 George Halstead Court had a multi-cultural day, which was part of the Full of Life Festival (Manchester City Council). People were invited from as many different ethnic backgrounds as possible, and everyone had to bring one plate of food which they felt best represented their heritage and culture. Children from Abraham Moss High School gave a performance of African drumming and folk songs, which they sang both in Swahili and English. A group of older women and their instructor from the Wai Yin Chinese Women’s Society gave a Tai Chi demonstration.

The Four Seasons Garden Club has been running since December 2008 and have engaged in lots of different activities including the advisory board meetings and presenting their work at conferences.

Five members of the group attended the Full of Life Festival at Manchester Town Hall in November 2009 where Brian and Edmund gave a talk about the Four Seasons Garden Club and their experience of working with the NDA team. All who attended said that they enjoyed the day and particularly valued seeing what other groups had done and talking with them about their projects. As Kath said:

“It was good to see that academics are taking an interest in older people”.

Tai Chi demonstration at the Multi-cultural day

Visiting the allotment at Hazel Bottom Road

Edmund, Brian and Jan presenting at the Age Debate
Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall

Garden club members also worked with the craft group run at George Halstead Court by Ageing Well to produce a mosaic to brighten up a dark wall adjacent to the patio area. The mosaic was unveiled by Alison Firth, the Lord Mayor of Manchester in April 2010.

The Four Seasons Garden Club were very keen to enter the Manchester In Bloom competition in 2010, which they did and won a prize in the ‘small neighbourhoods’ category! Margaret, John and Ned represented the club and picked up the award at Manchester Town Hall in November 2010. Well done!

Clifford Hilditch Court, Johnnie Johnson sheltered housing scheme

Jan and Sian first met residents of Clifford Hilditch Court in August 2009. The residents decided that they would like to start a gardening and film club – this was aptly named Roses and Reels. Roses and Reels have secured a number of grants that have been used to purchase equipment, plants and sundries for the garden, and a projector and screen for the film club.
Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall

*Roses and Reels* were also keen to enter the Manchester *In Bloom* competition in 2010. This is the first time residents from Crumpsall have been able to enter *In Bloom*. They have been able to achieve this with support from the CALL-ME team. The group won First Prize in their category and Roni, Pat and Eddie went to pick up their award from the Town Hall in November 2010. The judges were so impressed with the garden that the group was encouraged to enter the wider Britain *In Bloom* competition in 2011.

In August 2010 *Roses and Reels* held a garden party for the local community; it was a lovely day and was attended by Councillor Keegan, members of other gardening groups from Moss Side and across Cheetham, friends and family of residents and neighbours.

The photographs show Councillor Keegan at the garden party in conversation with Roni and Edmund; the cake provided by Slatterys, and Ben, Sidney, Danny and Barry discussing their gardening experiences.

The *Roses and Reels* film club now owns over 300 movies and runs regular weekly screenings which are open to everyone, including people who do not live at the scheme.

There has also been an IT project where Jan and Sian have worked closely with the residents and Richard Wright (Johnnie Johnson’s Housing Trust Resident Involvement Manager). The IT project has been enabled through a grant secured by the scheme manager, Teresa, to fund the purchase of equipment. This initiative has had its ups and downs but training is now being coordinated by Adam Pinnock from Johnnie Johnson Foundation.

The *Cheetwood Caribbean Gardening Project* run by the Afro-Caribbean Men’s Carers’ Group

Jan and Sian had first met the North Manchester Afro-Caribbean Men’s Carers’ Group in November 2008, when they were based at the Woodville Centre. We reconnected with the group when they relocated to the Cheetwood Community Centre. The men meet every day Monday to Friday to socialise and play dominoes and Kalookie. The group decided that they were interested in health and gardening, and were keen to secure funding for these activities. *The Big Life Company*, who manage and run the centre, also expressed an interest in developing the grounds around the centre and to provide a pleasant outdoor space for older people to sit.
Members of the group wanted to develop a Caribbean themed area and plant fruit and vegetables, as well as colourful bedding and shrubs. The group have been successful in securing funds, and have met with council officers to discuss the provision and cost of raised beds. Danny, Sidney, Richard, Ben and others worked very hard to plant the raised beds and were very pleased with their efforts. The group intended to enter the *In Bloom* competition in 2010. However, they experienced a number of frustrations and delays including outside organisations not responding to requests for quotes, and local children vandalising the flower beds. Undeterred the group have continued gardening and hope to enter the *In Bloom* competition in 2011.

**Garden Club Networking Event In April 2010**

Jan Bailey and Sharon Middling organised a networking event at Clifford Hilditch Court for members of the CALL-ME garden groups from Cheetham/Crumpsall and Moss Side.

Sara Wolfe from Manchester City Council spoke about financial and other support available to community groups. Sarah Hawkins, also from the council, spoke about *In Bloom* and the help available to local garden groups; and Katherine Moores from Hulme Community Garden Centre spoke about the services on offer there. Attendees enjoyed the day and said that, as well as gaining useful information, they had been able to make valuable contacts with people from the other groups.

**Review of the project**

The research participants in Cheetham and Crumpsall have participated in a number of events where they have had a chance to share their experiences and learnings from the CALL-ME research project. This has included: the Age Debate, part of Manchester's annual Full of Life Festival in 2009; two CALL-ME Advisory Board Meetings on 13th October 2009 at the Royal Exchange Theatre, St Ann’s Square, Manchester, and 14th October 2010 at Gorton Monastery, Manchester.

Edmund and Vicky attended the CALL-ME Advisory Board meeting in October 2009 and commented that they found it very informative and would like to be involved in similar meetings. Edmund said “I enjoyed hearing from the other groups about what they are doing and I think it would be good if we could all get together…I would like to go to other meetings and keep up to date with what is going on.”

We are particularly keen to maintain the enthusiasm of each member of the groups as well as developing their confidence and skills. The CALL-ME team are working with other colleagues at Keele University to develop a six week, part-time course which could meet their needs for further development.

*The NDA team would like to also remember those who have been active participants in the CALL-ME project but have passed away: Michael, Vicky and Alan.*
Moss Side

Moss Side Community Garden Group

Sharon Middling and Thomas Scharf have been working in Moss Side since Autumn 2008. We initially spent some weeks meeting with existing community groups, representatives and professionals.

The garden project idea initially came to our attention before Christmas 2008 and at this point in time it was going to be a ‘Peace’ Garden (located at the junction of Moss Lane East/Upper Lloyd Street), due to be completed during Moss Side’s annual Peace Week in March 2009. The project was to be ‘intergenerational’ involving young people from the Powerhouse Library’s ‘Young Voices’ and a group of older people initially recruited from Our Lady’s Church Lunch Group. Some of the reasons people got involved in the group include:

“Yes, yes and I thought well it’s a nice spot anyway and it’s a nice thing to do and I did used to always be doing my garden at the other place.” Lillian

“...just nice that they left that plot with the lovely trees on, so yeah it’s pretty close to me heart, that plot...” Anne

In March 2009 a group of older people came together including individuals from the sheltered housing scheme at Cardinal Court, Our Lady’s Church Lunch Group and other interested local residents. This group was willing to be involved in improving a plot of land. The group consisted of 10 members, who would become the core members of the group. They developed the project, creating and designing the garden jointly with members of the Young Voices group.

The garden group has been able to establish itself as a formalised group by nominating a secretary, treasurer and chair person and have been meeting regularly to discuss the project and to share ideas. Local support for the project has grown over time from the initial support by Kath Constable (Ward Support Officer, Hulme & Moss Side), Mike Berry (Street Environment Manager) and Councillor Cox. The core group now includes other professionals such as Katherine Moores (Hulme Community Garden Centre), Natalie Myers (Adactus Housing), Rhiannon Lloyd (GB Building Solutions), Erica Webb (Street Environment Officer) and Councillor Roy Walters. Funding was initially secured from Manchester City Council (£880) through their change grant funding. Additional funding has been secured through Mosscare Housing (£1,000), Manchester City Council Cash Grants (£3,600), and Adactus Housing (£3,100).

Since the beginning members of the group have taken part in a number of different activities. These included initially visiting local gardens for ideas, designing the garden plans, and setting an artwork and naming competition. More recently the group have supported local events, entered the In Bloom 2010 competition, done a radio interview about the garden, held a launch event for the garden, and have undertaken planting activities with local primary school children and residents.

These events are reported on in more detail in the following pages.
**Moss Side**

**First visit to the garden site** — Following a meeting members of the group, including Millie, Sahra, Anne Charles, Anne Goldrick and Selwyn, visited the site to gain an insight into the job ahead: to create a community garden that could be used by all who lived in the area. This visit also generated a lot of enthusiasm amongst the group and consequently a lot of ideas were discussed and developed.

![First visit to the garden site](image1)

**Visiting local gardens for ideas** — Anne, Selwyn and Sahra (pictured right) travelled around Moss Side and Hulme looking at other gardens which have been developed by community groups to gain ideas for their own garden. The day was enjoyed by all and they came back with ideas to share with the rest of the group on planting, security and what they did not want for their garden.

![Visiting local gardens for ideas](image2)

**Designing the garden plans**— The group were introduced to Katherine Moores from Hulme Community Garden Centre who helped the group to organise and develop their ideas for the garden and who facilitated different activities to reach their desired goals. She talks about her involvement with the group:

“...then I was invited to an initial meeting with the group that had already been formed and it kicked started a wonderful relationship really! We have the expertise here at the garden centre to develop areas and gardens and they’ve pulled on that to help them achieve their goals... My role within the group is more of an advisory role, and helping them to achieve some of their goals that perhaps they couldn’t, through contacts of my own, through working here at the Centre to even mediation between various different kinds of organisations that are giving their services to the group to help them with the garden.”

![Katherine discusses plans for the garden](image3)

Eventually the group decided on a woodland theme for the garden which included three animal tree sculptures, woodland borders, wildlife habitats and a bulb garden.

![Katherine discusses plans for the garden](image4)

An architect was employed by GB Building Solutions to draw up the plans for the site. The picture to the left shows Anne, Sylvia and Hazel discussing the architect’s plan with Katherine.

![An architect was employed by GB Building Solutions to draw up the plans for the site.](image5)
Moss Side

Supporting local events—Anne has become involved in the organising committee for the Marketplace Event which was held at the West Indian Sports and Social Club; she also attends Valuing Older People meetings, and takes part in the local residents’ forums. As a consequence the group have had stalls at the Moss Side Marketplace event and the Valuing Older People over-50s event.

The group attended the Garden Group Networking Event, organised by Jan and Sharon, where they had the opportunity to meet other CALL-ME garden groups and learn more about funding options, In Bloom and other resources available. The day was such a success that the groups wanted to meet up again and report on their progress.

Anne Charles, Hazel and Anne Goldrick attended the CALL-ME showcase event held at Gorton Monastery in October 2010, where they shared stories of the project to date and their future plans.

In Bloom Entry—The garden group decided to enter the In Bloom competition in 2010. Anne Goldrick, Councillor Cox, Katherine Moores, Kath Constable, Hazel Walker and Sharon Middling all talked to the judges, explaining the intentions for the garden, as well as current and future plans for the site. The idea was to show the organisers the progression of the garden from its present condition to future improvements by re-entering the competition in 2011. The competition was also a useful way of obtaining different perspectives and ideas for the garden from local residents and from the judges.

A radio show—Anne Goldrick, who is the chair of the group, was brave enough to take part in a radio interview with Katherine Moores from Hulme Community Garden Centre regarding the development of the garden site and to advertise the launch event.

RIGHT: Anne Goldrick being interviewed for local radio
Moss Side

The Launch Day—A very successful community launch event was held on the 24th July 2010. During the event group members raised money towards developing the garden, decided on the materials to be used for pathways, compiled a list of local residents keen to be involved in the project, and cleared rubbish from hedges on the site.

As part of a community Summer Service Day Anne joined a group of volunteers who cleared the rubble and dug the borders around the site.

Bulb Planting with Holy Name Primary School—Anne, Councillor Cox, Katherine Moores, Washington Alcott and Sharon Middling joined Holy Name Primary School to plant bulbs on the site. On two separate occasions the young people planted nearly 3,000 bulbs which next spring will give the garden a completely different feel when the flowers surface and bloom.

Planting the first shrub - Katherine Moores was keen to get the shrubs planted for the garden bed by the gable end. Although only a few people turned up, all the planting got done and will have chance to bed in.

The group continue to work on a timeline for the history of this plot of land. They are working with a local primary school (St Mary’s) to develop the artwork, and are continuing to work with the CVS and a local artist to create the artwork throughout the winter. Hazel expressed her feelings about the project in early summer 2010:

“...as it’s building up and things are coming on and we’re getting ideas and things; now the plans have been done and we’ve having an Open Day and really it’s getting quite exciting isn’t it now, the thought of it, you know…”

The group have done really well in getting this far and the future of the garden will see three trees sculptured, paths laid, more plants, benches and raised beds put in.

Women’s Support Group

This group arose from our meetings with the Manchester Somali Senior Citizens Care group, who arranged for us to hold two focus group discussions – one with men, the other with women. During the women’s discussion it became evident that they needed a place where they could meet each week and socialise. At the time most of the women spent their days at home with nowhere to go and nothing to do. Asha and Mariam stated their reasons for joining the group:

“We hope to, what shall I say, come together and make a big group, a community and to help the children also” and “I would like to tell stories to children and teach them about the history of Somalia.”
Moss Side

The Somali Women’s Support Group has continued to grow in numbers since March 2009, and considerable progress has been made in establishing the group as open to individuals of all ages. The older women meet separately on Thursdays and have been approached by a number of health agencies who wish to talk to the group about a range of health issues.

The group continue to apply for funding to sustain their activities, specifically for running the lunch club and to put on a Somali Cultural Show. The group have held a few events during the course of the summer. This included a Somali Independence Day celebration, an event linked to the election of a new President of Somalia, and the Muslim Festival of Eid. The sharing of experiences and knowledge across generations through dancing, singing and stories, remains the main focus of the group.

The group was represented at the Moss Side Marketplace event and Valuing Older People over-50s events. Participating in these events enabled the group to meet local stakeholders and to network with other groups. It also provided the older women with the opportunity to socialise with other older residents of Moss Side and Hulme. The group are now seeking a new venue that is more appropriate to their needs, and that can accommodate the growing numbers of women who are joining in the various activities. Some of the women comment on how they see the activities, speaking through a translator:

“Basically she says, first of all, that she does appreciate these meetings ‘cos she likes to speak with her friends that come along and have a chat with them and stuff, so she really appreciates that and if there’s more things that could be done as well during the week then she would be happy to do those. Plus she said she’s just like to get involved with other people that are non-Somalian’s as well, if she knew the language.”

“Yes, she waits for them! She looks forward to it! She said: It kind of reminds me of when I was back at home ‘cos you often got together and sat around. We used to do a bit of dancing and chat around a cup of tea. So she said: It reminds me of back at home ‘cos we did that a lot over there, so I do look forward to these meeting days that have become available.”

The group have had recent problems with the venue they have been using and have just secured the use of the communal room at Frank Hatton Court. They will be joined by residents of the Court many of whom are Somali.
Newton Heath

“Keep Fit …while you sit…”
OR: We’re the dynamos! Rearing to go!

A short history of nearly everything about Keep Fit Newton Heath

When Friederike Ziegler and Roger Beech met with members of the Over 60s club in Newton Heath in autumn 2008 the ladies expressed a wish for a gentle exercise class. Joan says she wanted the class because “I was having trouble after I had my hip done and I’ve been to exercise classes at the doctors but you only go for so many”. In spite of aches and pains it is important to keep moving. Other participants hoped that the exercises would help to tone muscles. Elsie says she “always liked to keep fit” if she could. Some came just to see what it was like or were persuaded by friends to join. The class began with Don as a qualified instructor in early 2009. It was initially funded for 10 weeks through Valuing Older People at Manchester City Council. Since June 2009 funding has been received through the GATE 65+ project at the Manchester Public Health Development Service.

The exercises were found to be beneficial and fun. Doreen says: “All the things we do we try to get every part of your body, an exercise for every part of your body”. Mary agrees: “And the exercises I enjoy because it’s not strenuous. It gets bits of you going that you wouldn’t, you know, get going. It does feel good and you can have a laugh now and again”. One exercise proved to guarantee an outburst of laughter among participants: throwing 6-8 balls across the room to each other simultaneously aims to promote hand-eye coordination but also leaves everyone in fits of giggles:

“When we throw those things I love that, yes, I do love that!” says Elsie. The benefits of the exercises extend beyond the weekly class. Pat feels that she is now watching her posture, while others admit to trying the exercises at home: “I do that first thing in the morning, I hang my legs over the bed and I’m swishing my ankles round one way, then the other way.”

Although the ladies were initially motivated to join the class because of the exercises they soon began to make friends and to enjoy each other’s company to have “a little talk and a natter” before the class. Doreen comments: “I’m really pleased that this started. It brings us together like this, so it’s social as well as doing you good”.

Members of the class enjoying the exercises
Newton Heath

The group have met several times to discuss and reflect on issues around running the class, its finance, membership and future. The ladies reflected on the process of getting involved in the class: “I think it’s good. Friederike really got us motivated”. Members felt happy with the group and the instructor. Doreen feels that Natalie “is quite serious with it; I think that’s really good. She says like ‘I’m not in charge but if this is what you’re here for then you do this’.” Many particularly enjoy the music: “The music is great; it helps. When it’s a little sharper you start swinging your hips”.

The aim of the discussions was to support members of the group to take on responsibility for running the group, such as finances and bank accounts, funding and other organisational aspects. Recently Pat has taken on responsibility for looking after the finances. Although she was at first a little unsure of what this involved she said “somebody will show me”. She has done an excellent job of keeping a weekly register, submitting monthly invoices to the funders and paying the instructor.

Being part of a research project has provided opportunities for the group to present at a workshop on ageing at Manchester Town Hall, and to attend an advisory board meeting at the Royal Exchange Theatre. The group also gave a well received performance at the showcase event in October 2010 at Gorton Monastery, where Pat discovered a talent as a comedian.

The members of the group are highly committed to keeping the class running and some new recruits have recently joined the class. Well done!
What next?  
– a view from the VOP team

Since 2004 the Manchester Valuing Older People (VOP) team has developed a strong working relationship with colleagues from Keele University, which has been based on shared values of social justice and equality, and a shared commitment to improving the lives of older people, especially those living in disadvantaged communities.

The Call-me project has given the Council and its partners an opportunity to develop new research findings in the four distinct Manchester neighbourhoods whilst supporting the development of a range of local projects from which Manchester residents have benefited.

The next, critical, stage is shaping the research findings into recommendations for agencies and organisations from the public, private and third sectors in Manchester, and beyond. These recommendations will cover a wide range of topics and issues and build on the commitments set out in the Manchester Ageing Strategy, A Great Place to Grow Older, launched in 2009. They will also contribute to the Manchester ‘Age-Friendly’ programme, which represents the city’s contribution to the World Health Organisation’s Age-Friendly City programme, of which Manchester is a founding, and only UK, member.

The policy areas that the VOP team will be working on are as follows:

- Improving social interaction through access to local facilities.
- Supporting community-based activities, such as arts and culture, gardening, exercise and IT, which aid social interaction and active ageing.
- Identifying and targeting certain groups of older people who are at higher risk of social isolation and loneliness, such as those from black and minority ethnic communities, and particular groups of men.
- Supporting opportunities for personal and social development for older people, such as training to help them develop local projects, including financial management and group skills.
- Finding ways to break down barriers between communities and generations.
- Working to develop local facilitators to work with older residents whilst supporting community professionals to enhance their skills and abilities.
- Developing a shared vision and priorities across partner agencies.

During the next few months colleagues from the VOP team, working closely with the Keele colleagues, will be meeting with local and city-wide partners to identify how this agenda can be taken forward through city and corporate plans, such as regeneration, transport, housing, care and health service and community planning processes.

If you would like to be involved in this process you can contact me on p.mcgarry@manchester.gov.uk or call 0161 234 3503.
The Research Team

From left: Michael Murray, Amanda Crummett, Roger Beech, Friederike Ziegler, Tom Scharf, Sharon Middling, Jan Bailey, Sian Maslin-Prothero

OUR PARTNERS:
Manchester City Council
Valuing Older People Project

Paul McGarry:
Senior Strategy Manager, Tel. 0161 234 3503
Sally Chandler:
Programme Manager, Tel. 0161 234 3513
Jane Morris:
Research and Planning Officer, Tel. 0161 234 4810
Rebecca Bromley:
Project Assistant, Tel. 0161 234 4049
Tracey Annette:
Community Engagement Officer, Tel. 0161 234 4299
Patrick Hanfling:
Intergenerational Strategy Coordinator, Tel. 0161 234 4188
Rachel York:
Programme Officer (Generations Together), Tel. 0161 234 3547
Sherry De Wynter:
Cultural Offer Manager (external), Tel: 0161 234 2962
Email: r.bromley@manchester.gov.uk

And finally…..The CALL-ME Team would like to pass on their thanks for funding and assistance received from a wide range of local agencies and organisations including:-

Manchester City Council, Valuing Older People, Esmee Fairburn Foundation, Learning Skills Employment Network, Granada Foundation, Community Development Foundation, Sports Relief, GATE 65+, Help the Aged, Tesco Community Trust, Moss Care, Comic Relief, BT Community Connections, Age UK, Adactus Housing, Johnnie Johnson Housing, Manchester Library Theatre Company

What Is the NDA Programme?

The New Dynamics of Ageing programme is a seven year multidisciplinary research initiative with the ultimate aim of improving quality of life of older people. The programme is a unique collaboration between five UK Research Councils - ESRC, EPSRC, BBSRC, MRC and AHRC - and is the largest and most ambitious research programme on ageing ever mounted in the UK. Find out more at:

http://newdynamics.group.sh ef.ac.uk/