



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

North East Forum on Ageing is a regional network enabling the direct voices of older people to be heard by those who create and deliver the policies, strategies and services that affect their lives

Our Mission is to

“To influence public opinion of the contributions of older people in society by listening to and engaging with older people and supporting the organisations which represent them”

Our Vision is that

“All older people in the North East are seen as equal members of

Our key focus is on those older people whose voices are seldom heard (for instance diversity in terms of ethnicity, sexuality, disability, isolation, and life experiences – any older person who is underserved)

To achieve all these things we :-

1. ensure that the specific challenges experienced by people who are socially excluded in later life (hard to reach/seldom heard older people) are heard.
2. Hold regular virtual and face to face meetings with partner organisations to share good practice and ideas.
3. Develop projects which involve member organisations listening to and recording the views of their members and users.
4. Publish and publicise findings of regional consultations and use these in meetings with those in positions of influence.
5. Link with EngageNet to ensure the views of the north east region are heard at a national level.
6. Through our website, social media, and press releases, NEFA encourages, and support network member organisations to publicise positive stories about older people.

A KEY MESSAGE

By 2050, the number of adults over the age of 65 in UK will double.

As will the number of hard to reach/seldom heard older people

THE BIGGER PICTURE

It is predicted that there will be a shift in the global older population from 7% today to 20% in the next few decades. This increase will be one of the greatest social, economic, and political transformations of our time. It will force changes in systems, have impact on families, and will require new solutions

Much of society has outdated beliefs about ageing. Older adults are often described as frail, as “challenges” to be addressed, and they are discriminated against, particularly in the workplace, where their experience and knowledge should count.

While we celebrate the birth and growth of children and their early adulthood, we fail to properly respect those with wisdom and important stories to pass down to younger generations. Planners and Commissioners tend to focus on younger people, but one of the largest segments of society, ‘the baby boomers’, are largely forgotten.

Rethinking stereotypical beliefs about ageing and changing the discourse around older adults will positively transform society into one where everyone can age with purpose.

The challenges of getting older

By 2050, the number of adults over the age of 65 in the UK will double. This growth will be one of the greatest social, economic, and political transformations of our time, and it will impact on existing healthcare, government and social systems, that today are largely not inclusive of the older population or built to the scale needed to support it.

These are some of the issues that will inform the solutions agenda

Ageing in place

Ageing in place refers to the desire to be independent in one’s own home and to be able to participate in the community.

Independent mobility

Giving up driving is associated with increased depressive symptoms and a variety of other health consequences. Therefore, meeting the mobility needs of the older population is crucial to minimizing the adverse impacts on their health and well-being.

Health challenges

The health challenges faced by older adults undermine the potential opportunities of increased longevity. Unfortunately, older adults are disproportionately affected by chronic ailments, with 80% of older people in UK having at least one chronic disease and 70% having at least two. Heart disease, stroke, cancer, and diabetes are among the most common. The number of older people with dementia is predicted to nearly triple by 2050.

Social engagement

Social inclusion or active engagement in clubs and society via a social network (whether through employment, volunteering, childcare, learning or teaching) has a positive impact on mortality, well-being, and life satisfaction. The fallout from social isolation and loneliness has a considerable impact on the cost of healthcare in the UK

Financial health and reskilling

A significant number of low- and medium-income older people experience financial challenges. With increased longevity, even those individuals who have the means to retire want to stay in the workforce longer but can face age discrimination, despite the fact that an intergenerational workforce that embraces mentoring and reverse training and mentoring can spark innovation and organizational success.

Diversity in abilities

It is important to acknowledge that older adults are a heterogeneous group of individuals, with varying physical, sensory, cognitive, and sensory abilities. Contrary to popular belief, there is not always a clear relationship between chronological age and health status.

In fact, a significant proportion of older people are healthy across a broad age range, from 51-54, 55-59 all the way to those aged 85+. There are also enormous variations in educational levels, skills and technological experience among older people.

Ageing with disability

While disability in the older population can arise as a result of age-related decline in sensory, mobility, and cognitive functions, individuals can also experience disability as a result of pre-existing impairments. In addition to supporting older people with a range of abilities, it is also important to support those with long-term impairments. For example, someone who was born blind and relied on auditory cues to interact with a system may experience age-related decline in hearing and may not be able to rely solely on auditory information anymore.

Lack of professional carers

Globally, health and social care systems are struggling to meet the needs of older people, and in UK it's the same. For example, a recent longitudinal study conducted in the UK revealed that more than 50% of older adults who needed assistance with daily activities get no support. There is a palpable need for a sustainable social care system with enough care workers to support an ageing population

Family carers

The growth in the population of older people coupled with the desire to live independently at home and the shortage of professional care providers is requiring families and friends to fill the gaps.

In the UK, one in five adults are carers. Coordinating the care across the care continuum, which disproportionality affects women, includes balancing healthcare decisions, Care Plan adherence, and medications can be difficult. General tasks associated with the day-to-day care for a loved one is stressful and expensive.

As a result, family carers suffer from cognitive overload, balance of time and especially relationship loss as they shift from the role of daughter, son or spouse to a caring role. In fact, family carers suffer a significantly higher rate of depression.

North East Forum on Ageing

Chairmans Report

Sometimes older people dislike change but, in order to survive and thrive, everything must evolve, and the Forum is no exception. We are continually listening and learning.

It is still the case, even after several years, that we can say that the pandemic changed so many things for us all, and in 2024 we at NEFA are not only facing the same old challenges, but many new ones as well.

NEFA activity is now very much IT based, with our regular Partner Forums and meetings being held on zoom and teams. This and many others things has made us realise that one of the key issues facing older people is just how much they are disadvantaged if they can't access the internet. But there are many other things that still remain as barriers to older people enjoying the quality of life they are entitled to expect. More about that later.

Our partnership has grown stronger and new members have brought new ideas and knowledge to our organisation. New things to think about, new ways of working.

Often change is a good thing, and so we are continually reviewed our ways of working and considering alternative new ways of achieving our aims and objectives.

NEFA now has 36 partner/member organisations reaching over 10,000 people. I very sincerely thank them for all they are doing. The majority of our partners are especially reaching out to hard to reach /seldom heard people. We have monthly partnership zoom, meetings, capturing the views and concerns of our members and their individual members. We also reach our partners, through our Facebook page and our website. With the support of our Board, our co-ordinator and volunteers, we have been able to attend too many to mention face to face meetings across the north east of England, always reaching out to hard to reach people.

It is disappointing to report that the key issues highlighted by our membership have not changed over the years, but here I will note the headline concerns, and these are common across the whole of our region. Getting to actually see a GP or a dentist is still an enormous challenge, getting any sort of meaningful social care is strictly limited (and apparently most older people don't even try these days), the costs of residential care or buying in help at home is getting beyond the means of many older people, getting signed up onto the NHS app, issues with the availability and accessibility of public transport, and more and more mentions of cycles and scooters being a real hazard. I could go on and on. But we also hear of some exceptionally good things.. individuals working in health and social care who go above and beyond, local community groups doing marvellous things, people actually being listened to and things changing/improving because of what they have said....We continue to wait for some sort of announcement from 'government' about the future of social care...I wonder just how much longer we are expected to wait....

Our excellent Trustees and volunteers continue to strengthen our work and our links into the community. They are our conduit with our members and with real people. They keep the work of NEFA going. Without them there would be no NEFA.

Our key priority remains to listen to the voice of older people and ensure that voice is heard. Here I must thank those organisations who actually listen to what we are saying, the local authorities, the universities, Healthwatch across the region, the very many voluntary sector organisations and their networks. Our focus is on health, social care, poverty and disadvantage. We are committed to working inclusively on these issues with other groups and other organisations to get the best possible outcomes for all older people, but especially hard to reach/seldom heard older people.

One thing that hasn't changed over the years, is our need for volunteers and finally, our gratitude goes to everyone who has volunteered for NEFA this year. We are also deeply grateful to our co-ordinator Sarann who really keeps the Forum going.

This will be my last Annual Report as Chair of NEFA. After four years I have decided to retire, but I know that the organisation will go on from strength to strength – it is in a very good place and in very good hands.

NORTH EAST FORUM ON AGEING

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS

FOR PERIOD 1ST APRIL 2023 TO 31ST MARCH 2024

INCOME

EXPENDITURE	3587.90	
	SALARY	3451.90
	DATA	40.00
	INSURANCE	96.00

Balance at bank 1st April 2023 £5413.06

Balance at bank 31st March 2024 £1825.16

Excess of annual expenditure over income £3587.90


Signed _____ Chairman

Examiner. I have examined the above statement for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 and confirm that the information therein agrees with the books and records of the Forum.


Signed _____

Date 23 April 2024