

**Norfolk Older People's Strategic Partnership (NOPSP) Meeting**

**Minutes**

**Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at Diamond Centre, Sprowston, Norwich,**

**NR7 8TR**

**Attendees:**

Mary Ledgard	NOPSP
David Button	NOPSP
Janine Hagon-Powley	NOPSP
Tasha Higgins	Community Action Norfolk (CAN)
Susan Lake	Great Yarmouth Borough Council
Lucy Cubitt	North Norfolk District Council
Brian Wells	Broadland Older People's Partnership (BOPP)
Sue Whitaker	Age UK Trustee
Amel Elleily	Age UK Norwich
Tim Gardiner	Headway
Paula Doran	Age UK Norwich
Ben Scarlett	Norfolk Community Advice Network (NCAN)
Sarah Walsgrove	Age UK Norfolk
Caroline Varney- Bowers	Norfolk County Council (NCC) Library Service
Kaitlin Ferguson	Creative Arts East
Judith Berry	Careline King's Lynn West Norfolk Borough Council

Ana Lloyd-Williams	NCC Development Team
Carole Williams	Age UK Norfolk
Denise Rutherford	Public
Richard Headicar	Public
Lucy McDowie	Careline King's Lynn West Norfolk Borough Council
Michael Chenery of Horsbrugh	OP Champion
Sarah-Jane Niles	Office of Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)
Julie Davies	Norwich City Council
Ann Donkin	Age UK Norfolk
Peggy Germany	Public
Jonathan Pace	NCAN
Jean St Clair	Broadland Housing Group, Housing for Older People (HOP) Panel
Rita Wright	Broadland Housing Group, Housing for Older People (HOP) Panel

**Apologies:**

Catherine Van Battum	North Norfolk District Council
Erica Betts	Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital (NNUH)

Malcolm Court	Representing Your Voice in South Norfolk (YVISN)
Sarah Oldfield	South Norfolk and Broadland District Council
Sharon Brooks	Carers Voice
	Chair, Norfolk & Waveney NHS; Deputy Chair, Norfolk & Waveney Integrated Care Partnership
Rt Hon Patricia Hewitt	
Angela Steggles	Norfolk & Suffolk Care Services (N&SCS) Ltd
Niki Park	NCC
Audrey Harnden	BOPP
Bridget Penhale	University of East Anglia (UEA)
Sue Moore	Deaf Connexions
Jeanette McMullen	Great Yarmouth Borough Council
Derek Land	Public
	Representing Your Voice in South Norfolk (YVISN)
Julie Helsby	

## **1. Welcome and Introduction**

<sup>1</sup>Mary Ledgard welcomed everyone and led a round of introductions.

## **2. Speaker: Ben Scarlett, Director Norfolk Community Advice Network (NCAN) and Jonathan Pace, NCAN Coordinator**

<sup>1</sup> The following points were made by Ben and Jonathan in addition to the presentation shared:

- NCAN's Steering Group works with NCAN's Board of Directors in determining the direction of the Network. Steering Group organisations deal with specific areas of advice or advocacy.
- They see a lot of clients struggling with the process of signposting, so the NCAN Referral System takes away the responsibility from the individual who only has to tell their story once.
- On slide 'NCAN Referral System Traffic (Growth by Year)' the plateau between 2022 and 2023 is mostly attributed to the significant level of demand on advice and as a result, organisations have sometimes suspended services. NCAN do a lot of work around the quality of referrals and ensuring the right information is included in referrals. Currently there are 80 organisations accepting referrals; new members include Norfolk Citizens Advice Wise and Warm (energy related support), and existing members include victim support. To join the Referral System organisations/teams need to attend an online 1-hour training session and complete relevant forms, with the process only taking a few weeks. Have a universal access agreement with statutory organisations e.g. police, and NCAN regularly train call handlers so they are aware of the kind of organisations that can be referred to.
- Anyone can access the NCAN Directory. NCAN represents the advice sector and communities in a number of forums to promote the quality and strength of that sector, accessible routes into services and other needs to influence change. NCAN have a Campaign Lead who works on developing strategies for things like the Household Support Fund e.g. writing to MPs and looking at process led ways we could influence change. NCAN sit on a number of Boards and highlights issues to relevant stakeholders. NCAN is a small organisation with a small team limiting its influence, although a lot of the time in the right

spaces to start the conversation. Happy to develop resources, campaign messaging, communications etc to get issues on the radar as long as they come from the communities that work with which is anyone vulnerable or seeking advice.

- On slide 'Referral System 2023 Headlines' stat = statutory. Slide 'Your Norfolk Advice Network' 22/23 refers to the 2022-2023 financial year. Slide 'Age Specific Data' refers to 2023. On slide 17 'Ben.' = Benefits, 'SI' = Social Isolation and 'CAP' = Capability.
- Anyone wanting to attend NCAN Partnership Meetings, which are usually on a Wednesday morning on Teams, contact NCAN via email.
- In 2023 there were 8,841 referrals on NCAN's system around 2,932 (33%) of which were for over 60s. For all referrals the top issues were welfare benefits (6% higher for over 60s - e.g. form filling, accessing what entitled to etc), loneliness and social isolation (6% higher for over 60s), debt (18% of all referrals and 6.3% for over 60s - can we do more to highlight what support is available) and housing (14% of all referrals and 7% for over 60s - can we do more to highlight what support is available).
- Our ethos is to join up services so that anyone can access the referral system and make a referral - we want people to get to the advice that they need. We don't think everyone is aware of the breadth of options of advice that are available, and we do a lot of work promoting the idea of advice. The more organisations that join the stronger the Network is.
- We monitor the referral process to make sure referrals are acknowledged / accepted by organisations or what the next course of action is - if a referral has been rejected there must be a reason why.

<sup>2</sup>Attendee Comments:

- Trend of increasing demand for support related to financial issues.
- Telephone 'options' present a challenge when trying to access services and sometimes means you can't get to speak to right person, or anyone, and this can be confusing and frustrating. If it is not a free number, waiting also leads to additional cost and face to face access to services/organisations is not always viable. As a society we are losing the ability to interface with each other as human beings. One of the reasons that we are seeing a huge rise in enquiries is that VCSE's are providing a valued human/person interface for people to talk to, particularly for those that need to have a long conversation as they have multiple issues.
- Due to the volume of calls don't repeatedly call people back because haven't got the time or resource, but people who don't have a telephone answering system will never know if they were called back.
- Are we inviting representatives from banks, utilities etc to these networks to be part of these conversations and to challenge them with feedback and problems in our communities, to improve services and raise awareness of what they can offer. We need to work together to solve issues and explore opportunities to build partnerships so that their Community Champions etc can support solutions and act positively. Age UK Norwich are looking into this and have been in discussions with banks about connecting with Champions. Example of a 19-year-old with an acquired brain injury who can't access their bank accounts because they can't do online banking, they can't ring the bank and they live in a village where isn't a bank within 20 miles.
- Are there resources e.g. social media packs that NCAN members could utilise as organisations to promote NCAN. Response from NCAN - Yes

**3. Speakers: Carole Williams (Volunteer), Sarah Walsgrove (Information and Advice Assistant Manager at Age UK Norfolk) and Paula Doran (Information, Advice and Welfare Lead at Age UK Norwich)**

<sup>1</sup> The following points were made by Carole, Sarah, and Paula in addition to the presentation shared:

- In 1998 Age UK Norwich joined with Norwich Alzheimer Society to form a charity devoted to supporting people with dementia and their carers. In the same year Money Matters (1 to 1 support to older people regarding paperwork and finances), and the Advice Line was started, which are still very much at the core of Age UK's services, supported by volunteers across the county (currently 191). In 2011, the Surviving Winter Appeal was launched by Age UK Norfolk to support vulnerable older people during the cold winter months. In 2014 their first charity shop opened, however these have now all been closed due to a lack of income.
- I&A on slide 3 = Information and Advice and AA = Attendance Allowance on slide 22.
- NHS complaints are via POhWER and all Age UK Norfolk services can be accessed via their information and advice line. People should be more aware of Attendance Allowance as it is not means tested, with welfare benefits a significant area of demand. Their Lasting Power of Attorney service is free, but they value donations. They have an Age UK Lottery.

<sup>2</sup>Attendee Comments:

- Sheringham is being piloted as an Age Friendly Community scheme which will be rolled out across North Norfolk over time.

- Our population is getting older / living longer, ageing is changing, and the cost-of living is having a significant impact on charities income such as variability in legacies, retail and trading alongside competition for grants, resources etc. The evidence is there for us to get far more money into the system, but we need to be a bit cleverer. Norfolk is very modest about some of the great things it does, and we don't showcase that enough to get resources in.
- VCSE (Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise) organisations have already had to cope with significant change. With the statutory sector raising the bar in terms of eligibility for access to services the needs VCSEs are now meeting are more acute, rather than just social, and VCSEs are filling the gap where people's needs are not being met by any part of the system, which is why calls to us go on for so long. We need to hold groups like NOPSP to make sure older people's voices are being heard. We also need to be preventative.
- There are 12,000 charities and voluntary sector organisations that are linked in with the Norfolk and Waveney ICB - collaboration and working together is key to offering services. We also need the general public to understand that nothing is free, and everything has a cost attached to it and is more difficult to get. The statutory sector is more difficult and there is a big push that charities will fill the gap. Expectation from service users that as a charity our services should be free to access. If a charity is asking for a donation or charging for a service that is not being driven by profit instead it is because money is really hard to get - need this to be understood amongst the general public. For example, it costs money for staff to be here and we need to be honest, as charities and people who access charities about these costs, that it is becoming more difficult and there is less to go around. We need to make sure we are putting the pressure on



services and the organisations/businesses that offer them appropriately.

- The emergence of the West Norfolk VCSE Hub (facilitated by Community Action Norfolk) and others around the county has been really useful in bringing together charities, voluntary organisations and people from the statutory sector, which supports working together and each other. There are ICB structures such as Place Boards and Health and Wellbeing Partnerships (the North Norfolk Partnership has older people as a priority) to provide information, insights, evidence etc. too.
- For power of attorney applications to be processed/registered there is a four-month minimum wait although there is a new online registration process which may reduce this.
- The public give massive support, but individuals are limited in what they can support and often have to choose who they give their time and money to. The public play a fantastic role in keeping vital services going but we need to keep reaching more people and make sure there is an offer for everyone.
- Over the years staff and trustees have had to become more professional and spend more and more time looking at how to pay staff salaries when you are dependent on voluntary income etc. There is an imbalance in terms of the spread of volunteers across VCSE and statutory services / organisations and where people direct their time, energy etc - often volunteers perform multiple roles or wear multiple 'hats'.
- Norfolk County Council are making it very difficult for voluntary organisations with the example given of a day centre, because it has people from adult social services, having to fill in a tender. When they complained that the tender wasn't suitable for a service

operating one day a week with 30 members, NCC said everybody must fill in the same tender (the instructions for setting it up were eight pages). Completing this took ages and there was a lack of support from NCC. Tender processes deter innovation, new ideas, commitment and assumes everyone has got the same resources and capacity as larger organisations. Is this something that the infrastructure organisations could have conversations with NCC about in terms of smaller groups and VCSE support etc. - tell commissioners that organisations found this difficult, and it is not appropriate for certain organisations or adjustments need to be made.

#### **4. Speaker: Kaitlin Ferguson, Creative Arts East on Arts for Health Programme**

<sup>1</sup> The following points were made by Kaitlin in addition to the presentation shared:

- Creative Arts East aims to use the transformative powers of the arts to fight rural and social isolation, increase employment, skills, health, and wellbeing and make a positive difference to the lives of people living in rural communities. Our community gatherings involve supporting volunteers in and from rural communities to host nationally and internationally renowned live performance and cinema events. Our targeted intervention projects use arts as a tool for personal health, wellbeing improvement and increasing skills and learning. The Arts for Health Programme was previously called Our Day Out and Silver Social which were amalgamated into one programme. We have seen a huge uptake in our programme, showing the need for it.
- Creative Socials are free monthly workshops (15 to 25 people per workshop) in Attleborough, Thetford, Dereham, Great Yarmouth,

Great Massingham and Hunstanton. We welcome anybody who might be experiencing degenerative diseases and carers. Dynamic range of activities, with professional artists, from visual arts such as print making to song making. We offer a cup of tea and a piece of cake and time to socialise. Voluntary donations are welcomed.

- Seasonal Soundscaping will feature experimental music making, exploring the seasons using different sounds and instruments to compose a soundscape for the year. No skills are needed, just a willingness to give it a go. Kathryn Roberts and Sean Lakeman bring a feeling of inclusivity and informality, whilst showcasing a variety of music from old traditional ballads to self-penned story songs. Tickets are free.
- We can send digital copies of our flyers to any organisations or hard copies and have a newsletter. Currently no activity in North-East Norfolk due to loss of funding in that area previously.

#### <sup>2</sup>Attendee Comments:

- Art encompasses every age group, and it is important that creativity is encouraged throughout our lifetimes despite the economic landscape getting worse.

#### **5. Speaker: Mary Ledgard, NOPSP Chair (Update on NOPSP's work and Living Longer, Living Well) and General Discussion**

<sup>1</sup> The following points were made by Mary:

- NOPSP have advertised for Vice Chairs in two consecutive editions of its newsletter but have not received any expressions of interest. According to NOPSP's Terms of Reference we are expected to fill these roles from members of NOPSP. We need Vice Chairs for a number of reasons particularly risk management as at the moment

only three people are running the Partnership. It was agreed via voting of those present to advertise more widely.

- Now NOPSP's meetings and newsletter are sorted we are starting to work out in the community across the county and need people who live in different geographical areas because current NOPSP leadership is Norwich based. We also need a mix of skills that will help us, including knowledge of communities, health and social care, communications, inclusion etc or an interest in one of our Living Longer, Living Well priorities.
- For each District we are picking a couple of communities based around market towns and their surrounding areas, such as King's Lynn and Hunstanton/Heacham in West Norfolk and Great Yarmouth, to go and talk to older people. In those areas we are hoping to work with DIAL, Churches Together and Parish Councils. This will take time to get off the ground and the more people we have involved the easier it will be.
- NOPSP has recently met with BT because there has been a lot of misinformation etc about how the digital switchover (copper to digital) is going to work. We are pulling together a list of FAQs to clarify the basics like will I need a different phone? (Answer is if you have got a digital hub, you will simply need to plug your phone into this as there is already a slot for it.) There is a list of five different groups of vulnerable people, from those who have care alarms, to people who have electrical equipment that involves telephone systems and providing them with backup. There will be some events in May 2024 which the public are entitled to attend. The first leaflets will be going through people's letterboxes in April and important that people read these. This will probably generate a lot of calls to VCSE advice lines.

- It is unclear what will happen for people who have not got internet at all. Also, other issues around teletext, mini comms, people who are dependent on remote monitoring systems for conditions or home call systems and the risk of electricity power failure where battery power backup or hybrid phone with built in batteries needed, or simply being able to call 999 if no internet. Example of someone being told they would need another phone to be able to call 999 if there was a power cut but they have never used a mobile phone.