

Deal and Walmer Neighbourhood Forum on 27th January 2009

Active Older People

Speaker:

Julie Limbrick, Chief Officer, Age Concern Deal Centre for the Retired:

"Support for all older people".

Representatives from Age Concern Deal Centre for the Retired kindly attended one of our meetings in January 2009 to show the work that they do to support older people in the Deal area (which may surprise you to learn starts at the age of 50).

The Centre is federated to Age Concern (the UK's largest charity working with and for older people) but is an autonomous charity.

The principal object of the charity is to promote and assist the general good of all retired people in Deal and district. This includes providing services, care, meals, transport, social activities and much more. The Centre welcomes at least 1,000 visits each week by older people.

It has a very small staffing level and 122 volunteers, including the Directors, without whom they could not manage.

Local community support is vital for the continuation of support services in the future.

Julie Limbrick, Chief Officer, Deal Centre for the Retired, illustrated this work through an *imaginary life journey*:

"Today I have been asked to illustrate the Deal Centre for the Retired input to Active Living but before doing so wish to underline that our informal working relationships with both statutory and many voluntary organisations all contribute to the support we are able to give.

Imaginary Life Journey

I would like to invite you to take an imaginary journey with me – and learn along the way just some of the services, activities, resources and support available in the Centre.

I begin my reducing my age by 15 years to 50.

Aged 50: Redundant – lost direction – husband working – become volunteer. Some health promotion services are open to me in my 50's so I take advantage of Tai Chi and Exercise classes.

Aged 60: All Centre services open to me now. Still volunteering – I.T. or French perhaps?

Aged 65: Husband retiring, more time to spend together. Reduced volunteering.

Aged 70: I'm a carer, my husband's illness was such a shock. I'm supported by the Centre, we both are. I can pop out for an hour or so knowing my husband is safe and in caring hands. It is important for both of us that we keep social contact and it's lovely to stay for a meal when we wish. Carers Support give us additional support too – but it's hard being a carer.

Aged 73: I'm bereft and bereaved. In time, with gentle persuasion by family and the Centre I return to volunteering. But I also benefit from the Empathic Ear Listening Service at the centre when I am low

alongside a range of holistic therapies in the lovely Wellbeing Room including reflexology and relaxing massage.

Aged 75: Worried about repairs needed in my home. The Centre contact Dover District Council (DDC) Intouch who assist. They arrange a full benefits check in the Centre by Works and Pensions, Inland Revenue and DDC. I am also able to discuss other concerns with the Care Navigator and Social Worker all of whom are in Centre each month. An OT assessment is arranged to enable me to bath safely at home. I know I could have assisted bathing in the Centre in their lovely private bathroom - but I prefer to be independent. The Centre also arranges legal advice – I must put my affairs in order.

Aged 80: Mobility not what it was. Exercise classes changed to chair based class. Guided to use my IT skills to self assess on line. A volunteer shows me how to increase print size. I have the batteries and tubes in my hearing aids replaced in the Centre too.

Aged 85: Despite two long term health conditions I consider myself fortunate. I am still independent and in my own home. I have my hair done at the Centre weekly and my feet every 6 weeks with the podiatrist. I've been invited to become a member of the Consultation and Users Group – I'm determined to stay active in both mind and body.

Aged 90: Can't quite believe I'm 90. I now have some help at home, a little help goes a long way - but I'm still in control. I love the monthly Look Back sessions at the Centre – and the monthly film shows – its Mama Mia this month. I stay for lunch if I wish – lovely home cooked meals with two sittings times from which to choose each day.

I know the staff would arrange their minibus transport for me too – but I can manage if I take it slowly and I can just about get in a taxi. Others are not so fortunate.

Some of my peers in the Centre use much more than I do – some are depressed or confused and have great need for patient understanding and support.

Others of all abilities and disabilities just use it for friendships and social contact. But they know more help is available if they should need it.

It's a welcoming place that alleviates loneliness – loneliness is a dreadful thing.

I'm well into my 90's now: I know my family worry about me sometimes and discuss it with Centre staff. I know because we all sit down together and discuss any additional support I may wish to take advantage of.

And that's the secret really – what I wish to take advantage of – what I choose.

Yes, enabling choice is very important – I think they call it 'personalisation' these days."

The End

"I hardly need to add that many older people live very different lives – sometimes the Centre's support is short and sharp, perhaps it is for educational needs, information or sign posting, comfort or simply friendship.

But we all have the right to be treated with respect and to be assisted to maintain our dignity and this what upholds the philosophy of the Centre – that, and being available to offer support if required to both active and frail older people.

The statutory and voluntary organisations are looking closely at what they currently provide and considering carefully the financial and practical aspects of what they will be able to provide in future to an aging population

But we all, whatever our age, have a personal responsibility – to keep ourselves active in mind and body to the best of our ability – and to do our best to support those who lose that ability – despite their best efforts.

The Centre welcomes at least 1,000 visits each week by older people.
It has a very small staffing level and 122 volunteers, including the Directors, without whom we could not manage.
We have a Centre Deal and district can be proud of.

N.B. Currently only 40% of our expenditure is met by the Social Service's Service Level Agreement – 60% we must raise ourselves. Local community support is vital for the continuation of support services in the future."

Find out more:

Website: www.ageconcern.org.uk
3 Park Street, Deal, Kent CT14 6AG
Email: office@deal-cr.org.uk
Charity number 213898