



Search project

Resource Centre for Older People

- Drop-in advice and information
- Home visits
- Community health
- Activities



**Annual Report
2008-2009**



Community Health Work at Search

Funding

Search receives core funding from the Newcastle Primary Care Trust to provide a range of community health work with local older people. In the past year we have also received funding for health promoting activities from the Northern Rock Foundation, Communities for Health (New Deal), Inner West Area Teams, the Co-operative Group and the Lord Mayor's Centenary Appeal.



Activities

We have a wide range of varied activities and aim to have something for everyone. Some activities are more energetic including our three walking groups, aquafit, swimming lessons, gentle exercise classes, new age kurling, Qi Gong etc. Other activities are aimed at enabling local older people to learn new skills or rediscover old ones – currently we have classes in painting and drawing, crafts, digital photography, using computers, local history, flower arranging and 'knit & natter' groups – volunteers provide hand massage for older people in care homes and sheltered housing. We also have regular days out with the long-standing 'Head for the Hills' and 'Tuesday' groups.



What all our activities have in common is that they are friendly and informal and also free or very low cost, making them accessible to everyone.

Complementary therapies

The various therapies we provide at Search are hugely popular with our clients,



many of whom would find it difficult to afford and access them elsewhere. We now have 151 people (including 27 men) who are regular clients and enjoy the many benefits of the therapies. We are fortunate in having a great, committed team of therapists who are now providing an increased number of 25 hours a week of one to one sessions. Aromatherapy massage, shiatsu, reflexology and sport injury massage are all available at low cost at Search. The first session is free with a charge of £5 per hourly session after that.

Foot care at Search

We noticed that many of our clients experienced difficulty with cutting their toe



nails and other basic foot care and this was confirmed when a questionnaire about foot care was widely distributed. We are therefore now providing a weekly low cost pedicure session at Search which is proving very popular

Learning computing at Search

Our computer classes go from strength to strength. Uk onLine has once again supported Search in providing one to one tutored sessions on Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 10am - 1pm, as well as Wednesday morning's Computer Club, with access to the tutor on an informal basis.



Another successful digital photography course has been held, where participants were given the basics to understand how to take and process digital photos. The group visited Bradley Gardens (on a beautiful sunny day!) to practise their skills.

Volunteering at Search

Our volunteers really make a huge difference at Search – in fact we wouldn't be able to provide many of our activities and groups without them. We now have 30 volunteers including minibus drivers, a



gardener, reception/admin workers and complementary therapists. Volunteer led groups include our two 'Easywalks' sessions, flower arranging, new age kurling, local history, craft

sessions and 'Knit & Natter' sessions. We also have five volunteers who provide hand massage in various care homes and sheltered housing schemes. Most of our volunteers are aged 50+ and live locally, often they discovered Search by being involved in one of our activities themselves. They deserve a big thank you for all they have done to support our work over the past year.

Information

We provide a range of information about local activities and services available alongside our advice and income maximisation service at our Drop In on Adelaide Terrace and also on our website – www.searchproject.co.uk.

Search Newsletters and information sheets keep everyone informed of new developments and other local news and events. During the winter, in partnership with the Quality of Life Partnership, we ran a ten week Positive Ageing course in Cruddas Park Community Centre which looked at the health concerns of older people in detail. The course was very popular and provided an opportunity to ask the 'experts' questions on a range of health care issues. Each session ended with a healthy lunch provided by the Community Kitchen.





Local History

During 2008 – 9 Search continued to work in partnership with the Newcastle Community Heritage Project on a range of local history projects.

These included:

- A local heritage guide focusing on Benwell Hall and the surrounding neighbourhood.

- An autobiographical account of a west end life by local resident, Ron Henzell.
- A research project with local residents which explored the history of the big houses and mansions of Benwell.

Spring 2009 saw the launch of a new West End Local History Group, which meets in the new West End Library to hear speakers on a variety of topics of local interest and share memories.



The Woolly West

One of the highlights of 2008/9 was the Woolly West project.

Successive clearance and regeneration programmes have drastically transformed the west end of Newcastle. More than 50 local residents from the knit and knitter groups joined together with people from St Margaret's Church in Scotswood and the Pendower Good Neighbour Project to build the area up again in wool. The Woolly Westers



worked with a local filmmaker to make an animated documentary film about the experience of living through these major changes. Knitting Together features the woolly models and scenes created by local residents. It was launched at the Baltic Art Gallery in autumn 2008. The Woolly West exhibition was displayed

at The Biscuit Factory art gallery for three months in spring 2009, attracting huge interest. It has also been on show at local venues including the new West End Customer Service Centre.

Search has produced a booklet about the project called The Woolly West, which can be obtained from Search. There is also a DVD available which features local older residents talking about their experiences and memories of living in the west end over past decades and contains photographs and images of the area past and present. The DVD also includes the story of the making of the Woolly West in participants' own words.



Search Welfare Rights Advice & Information



Search Case History

Mrs B visited the drop-in with an overpayment and recovery letter from the housing and council tax department.

We looked at the letter in detail and discovered that there was not an overpayment. In fact the department who had sent the letter did not have all the client's correct financial details, which lead to this error – resulting in the client not having to pay anything back.

We enquired about the client's health and we found that she had quite a few illnesses and disabilities. We were eventually successful in claiming Attendance Allowance for her.

The client's income increased by £67.00 a week and her carer qualified for carers allowance, which was another boost to their income.

Search's drop in advice and information service takes place at no.74 between 10am and 1 pm, Monday to Thursday. It has been another busy year for us and maximising entitlement of benefits is still the main enquiry.

These everyday enquiries are what lead us to identify further entitlement to other monies like Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance and Carers Allowance. People are being more pro-active in getting benefits entitlement checked out but the stigma of means-testing and filling in copious forms however are still very off-putting and many people need assistance and encouragement to make claims.

We have also seen a marked rise in the number of clients coming through the doors with debt problems.

Future Work

As well as maintaining the on-going work, in the coming year we plan to:

- Identify specific client groups and deliver concentrated income maximisation work, including take-up campaigns.
- Become involved with the soon to be rolled out Personalisation Budgets, covering care and support.
- Continue to produce one-off leaflets highlighting new developments or changes affecting local older people.

Home Visiting Service

Home visits are always in great demand by our housebound clients and their carers. Home visits are a greatly important service because on the initial visit the worker may, and on most occasions does, identify more serious issues including housing, home and personal care.

105 Home Visits were made this year.

Telephone Advice Service

Advice and information is also available via the telephone. Search does not have the resources to provide a dedicated telephone advice and information line but we do answer all telephone queries there and then if an advisor is available. If there is no advisor available we take names, addresses and telephone numbers and an advisor makes contact with you at the earliest opportunity. The telephone advice and information service is available between 9am and 3pm. Monday to Friday. Over 400 telephone enquiries were made to us in the last year.



Quality Mark

The advice and information service are continually monitored through external audits carried out by the Legal Services Commission. "The Quality Mark" provides benchmark standards to provide high quality advice services. This year's audit is very favourable and goes on to say we have strong and dedicated leadership who take personal pride getting the desired results for clients. It also says how we embrace the LSC QM standard in order to achieve business excellence and congratulated us on our achievements to date.

Search continues to make a firm commitment to provide a quality service to all our clients.



Value for Money

Search continues to produce a value for money service on behalf of our funders. We have recorded seeing over 1200 clients last year. The majority of the advice requested was around benefits and allowances. One of the most positive outcomes of the advice given is the increased income obtained through successful claims.

Of the cases where the outcome was known for that period, the total increased income obtained for pensioners and their carers is £607,198.



Presentations

We have carried out 5 presentations to various housing associations and groups, reaching over 100 people. At the presentations we give advice on benefits and how to claim what is rightfully yours. We have an open question time where individuals can ask questions. Then after the presentation we hold private interviews and arrange appointments and home visits.

Debt write offs

By negotiating with creditors on behalf of the clients we were able to get £20,000 of clients' debts written off.

Funeral Grants and Community Grants

We have assisted 10 people with funeral grants and 6 people with community care grants.

New Central Heating Systems

8 people have been assisted to get new central heating installed.

What's New in 09-10?

The following changes that may affect you?

Winter Fuel Payments for 2009 -2010

You should automatically receive a payment if you received a payment last year.

How much do you get?

If you or your partner are 60 – 79 in the 'qualifying week' beginning (21.09.09). You may qualify for the Winter fuel payment.

You will get £250 if you are the only one in the household entitled to payment or £125 if you share a household with one or more other people entitled to a payment – eg a married couple.

If you are 80 or over and living alone you will get £400 or £200 each if you are a couple.

The State Pension Age for Women is changing from 60 to 65

This takes effect between 2010 and January 2020. Ask Dee or Kath for further information.

Improving State Pension Coverage

People reaching state pension age from 6th April 2010 onwards will find it easier to gain a full basic state pension. A key change is the number of years of contributions or credits needed to qualify for the full basic pension of £95.25 a week will be reduced to 30 (currently men need 44 years and women need 39 years to receive a full pension).

Attendance Allowance and Disability Living Allowance Reviews

Do not lose your present award of AA/DLA because of an anytime review.

What is a review and why are you receiving one?

A review is when the DWP ask you to make a new claim for AA/DLA before the old award runs out.

Why are you receiving one

- You may only have been awarded the allowance for a specific period of 1 to 3 years and you now need to reclaim to continue to receive it.
- It may be for an anytime review. This means that they want to check that you are getting the correct amount of benefit. You may be on a low rate and your needs have changed and you require more help now, or you may need less help and your award goes from high to low.

It is very complex and it is always best to seek expert advice, as you may have everything to lose.





Chair's Report 2008/9

In the past I have started my report by thanking the organisations that have contributed toward the costs of Search's work with older people and their carers in the West of Newcastle.

However, at last year's Annual Meeting we remembered our Treasurer, Ella Short, who had died a few days earlier. Like other members of the Management Committee, Ella was involved in other ways in the local community including the Credit Union and her church.

And so, firstly, I wish to place on record my thanks to the officers and other members of the Management

Committee and support groups, who help maintain and develop our services.

None of this would have been possible without the continued support of Newcastle Primary Care Trust, the City Council's Adult Services Directorate and the Northern Rock Foundation and Rank Foundation. A full list of the donors is shown on this page. We are grateful to them all.

Finally of course thanks are due to the staff and volunteers who help to provide the huge variety of services and activities which are reported on other pages of the report.

Steve Cohen
Chair

Who's Who at Search

Management Committee

Steve Cohen (Chair)	Billie Cummings Cllr Rob Higgins
Ella Short (Treasurer)	P J Morrissey Rani Svanberg
Helen Hodder (Secretary)	

Staff

Linda Adamson	Dee Johnson
Maggy Crane	Kath Smith

Tutors/Therapists

Niki Black, Pauline Bridger, Eileen Devoy, Katie German, Ethel Johnson, Shirley Irving, Rachel Kitchen, Pat Milton, Helen Richardson, Dorrie Stilgoe, Lisa Van Der Velde, Sheila Wilson, Jeremy Wood

Independent evaluator and researcher

Judith Green

We are grateful for the support of our funders:

Newcastle City Council -
Adult Services Directorate
Newcastle Primary Care Trust
Northern Rock Foundation
Rank Foundation
Communities for Health
West End Community
Development Consortium
UK online

Search is also thankful for support from other donors

A copy of Search's accounts are available from the Search offices (contact below).



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