

# **Appendix 1 - Older People's Commission: Final Report January 2019**

## **Contents**

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Chair's Foreword</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Councillor's Message</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Who We Are</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Our Work</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Findings and Recommendations</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>1. Better Services</b>	
<b>2. Better Information</b>	
<b>3. Stronger Communities</b>	
<b>4. Closer Collaboration</b>	
<b>5. Deeper Resident Engagement</b>	
<b>Next Steps</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Thank You</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	
<b>1. Focus Group report</b>	
<b>2. Interim report, March 2018</b>	
<b>3. Bibliography and additional resources</b>	<b>25</b>

# Chair's Foreword

Over the past year, we in the Older People's Commission have listened to the views and experiences of older people in Hammersmith and Fulham. We believe that this is their report, reflecting their ideas, ambitions and aspirations.

Older people told us that they are powerful, with knowledge born of years of experience – of personal and professional trials, of joy and laughter.

Older people accept that, in common with others in our community, we may need help and support but we are **not** passive recipients of services – we've usually paid towards them all our lives.

And we are **not** only users of services. Older people are carers for families, friends and neighbours in our community.

Older people are **not** a 'growing population' problem – **we are assets**, volunteering our time and skills, sharing what we know with those younger than ourselves and leading others to be the people they didn't believe they could be.

This is not a report just for today's older residents - we all get older. Older age should be something for us all to look forward to. Whatever your age now, you should be able to aspire to a healthy later life, a degree of comfort and the opportunity to keep contributing to your community.

So, what happens now, following the publication of this report? We will ask all organisations for older people, statutory and voluntary, to look at our recommendations and to consider the ways they work and provide services – so that these are developed and provided **with** us, not just **for** or **to** us.

We will ask them to improve communications and consultation and to work together ever more closely to improve outcomes for all older residents.

We do not underestimate the challenges posed by our recommendations, nor those of making improvements against growing needs and tight financial constraints.

We firmly believe that we can achieve our ambition to make Hammersmith & Fulham a model for older residents – a place where empathy with and respect for older people are second nature.

Through good communication, co-operation and a commitment to working together we can achieve results which are greater than the sum of our efforts – and make Hammersmith and Fulham a great place to grow old in.

Getting it right for people who are older now means getting it right for everyone in the future. Whatever your age now, this report is for you.

**Bryan Naylor**  
**Chair of the Older People's Commission**

# Councillor's Message

In H&F, we believe that our democracy and public services need to be reinvigorated together. So since being elected in 2014, we've been changing the council way relates to and works with residents.

We want to do things with local people, not just to them. Our numerous resident-led commissions are at the heart of this. They put local people in the driving seat for improving policy and services.

We also aspire to making Hammersmith & Fulham the best place to grow older. In 2014, we abolished home care charges, the only borough to do so. And together with the local NHS and charities, we still offer a wide range of support for older people despite fierce government funding cuts.

But we know more is needed. Loneliness, poverty and poor health affect many residents' enjoyment of older age. Services are not always planned or delivered in the way older people want. Not every older person is able to enjoy the opportunities our borough offers.

Making things better means listening to older residents themselves. I'm deeply grateful to Brian Naylor and his colleagues on the Older People's Commission for throwing themselves into the task of considering the challenges and recommending the way forward.

**Councillor Ben Coleman**  
**Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care**  
**Hammersmith & Fulham Council**

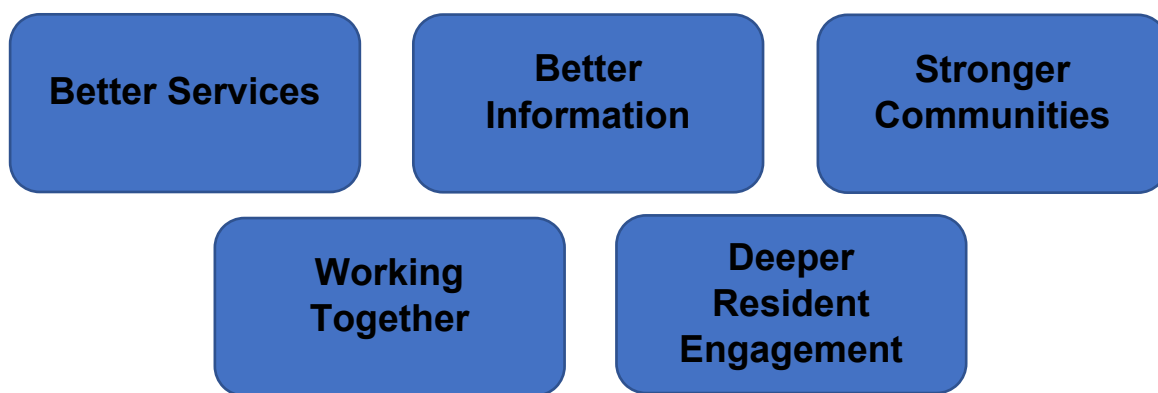
# Executive Summary

The Older People's Commission was formed in November 2017 to examine ways of improving the quality of life for all older residents and making Hammersmith and Fulham (H&F) the best borough in which to grow older.

An interim report focusing on isolation and loneliness was published in March 2018 (see Appendix 2). Since then the Commission has concentrated on how to ensure that all older residents benefit from the services they are entitled to, and how to make H&F an even better place to live.

We are proud of the cultural diversity that enriches H&F's life. We also recognise that meeting the needs of such a diverse and growing older population can be complex.

This report represents the range of priorities that older people told us they had for their lives in the borough. It sets out a series of recommendations focusing on five main themes:



The recommendations are backed by evidence that the Older People's Commission has collected from residents, officers and practitioners across the borough.

## Recommendations

### ***Better Services***

- *The Council should drive improvements to the training and monitoring of home care staff, and strengthen support for residents with a mental health condition and those who may be at risk of falling into poverty.*
- *The Commission endorses the establishment of a new Carers' Commission.*
- *H&F's hospitals and surgeries should reserve some phone appointments for older residents not able to book online.*
- *The Council and TfL should re-examine bus routes to less well-served residential areas.*
- *All commissioners of community transport should review their services to ensure they are reliably meeting the needs of older residents. This includes NHS/CCG/hospital transport and TfL's Dial-a-Ride, along with all others.*
- *The Council should review housing maintenance and management contracts, and drive performance improvements.*
- *The Government should provide adequate funds for the local authority to meet its obligations to provide social care now and into the future.*

- *The Council should consider increasing Council Tax income in line with the maximum allowed by current regulation and consider adding the social care precept to Council Tax bills in 2019/20.*
- *The Council should raise with RingGo the concerns of older residents and others about the new parking meters to explore where improvements can be made.*

### **Better Information**

- *To ensure that ‘Every door is the right door’, the Council, CCG and charitable organisations should work together to make sure older people are pointed towards the right services for them wherever they first make contact.*
- *Nobody should be excluded because they can’t get online or find forms difficult. The Council, CCG and Healthwatch should ensure all older people know what services are available and should reduce the complexity of forms that carers/older people need to complete to receive additional financial support.*
- *Notice boards across GP surgeries and sheltered housing should be used more effectively to promote services and activities.*
- *For those who are comfortable online, information websites such as People First should be updated and made user-friendly, with easy-to-access advice and information (for example on dealing with a cold home),*
- *The Council should substantially increase the numbers of volunteer Community Champions to support older people in every part of the borough.*
- *Older non-English speakers, particularly those living in poverty, must be supported, and the Council should work with the third sector to deliver this, for example by ensuring older people get all the benefits they’re entitled to*

### **Stronger Communities**

- *The Council, the CCG and local surgeries should not overly medicalise ageing and should embed social prescribing of activities to improve the health and wellbeing of older residents.*
- *Older people who wish to remain economically active should be encouraged to do so.*
- *The Council should bolster local third sector organisations running social activities for older residents. No two people’s tastes or pockets are identical. A greater wealth of culturally specific activities would recognise the diversity of H&F’s older population.*
- *Cost should never be a barrier. To ensure that activities are accessible to all older people, the Council should help organisations keep these activities free or affordable.*

### **Working Together**

- *The Council and providers should work with older residents on developing a consistent, year-round offer of activities across the borough*
- *The Council should identify all groups supporting older residents, and establish a policy of helping them to develop. Those tackling social isolation and loneliness and poverty should be a particular priority. Council staff should be offered volunteering or secondment opportunities with these groups.*

### **Deeper Resident Engagement**

- *The Council should appoint an H&F Older People’s Champion from its councillors to represent the interests of older residents. The Champion should work in partnership with an Older People’s Board made up of local residents, agencies and charitable organisation.*

- *The Council should involve older residents in any relevant service review or re-design of services, moving towards a policy of co-production with service users.*
- *The Council, CCG and other agencies should produce comprehensive guidelines for all resident consultations, including for the production and use of surveys, focus groups and public engagement events. These should give clear guidance on the need to report outcomes and how to do so.*

# Introduction

## Our population

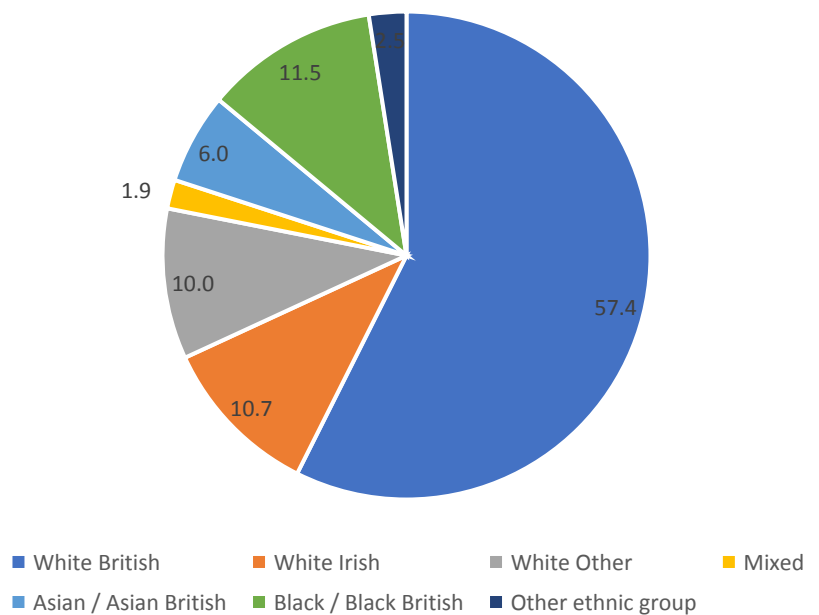
There are more than 19,000 residents aged 65 and older in Hammersmith & Fulham (H&F). Although only 10 per cent of H&F's population today, this group is the fastest growing, with projected growth of 37 per cent among those over 65 and 64 percent in those over 85.

The make-up of our older population is also continually changing. Our older people are a diverse group, with 22 per cent from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, projected to grow to 85 per cent by 2030.

Many of our older people face problems of low income or poverty. More than a third live in the top 30% of most deprived areas nationally, with over a fifth in the top 20%. Just under half (45%) live in council or housing association homes.

A higher proportion of our older people continue working into later age, with 17 per cent remaining economically active after 65 as against 10 per cent nationally.

Ethnicity in H&F, people aged 65+



Yet as people age health can become more of an obstacle to everyday living; Just over 51% of older people in the borough state that their day-to-day activities are limited to some extent by ill health. Dementia diagnosis is higher than the national level and expected to rise by 24% by 2025.

Older residents face a number of issues and challenges:



**Isolation:** 43% of our residents aged over 65 live alone, the fourth highest proportion in England.



**Poor health:** 4,000 (one in five) residents over 65 have poor or very poor health and more than half live with a long-term health problem or disability. Many have multiple health problems.



**Inequality:** 5,000 (one in four) residents over 65 live in poverty, and a third receive pension credit, higher than the London averages. Reflecting known links between deprivation and life expectancy, mortality varies from 300 annual deaths per 100,000 persons in Palace Riverside and Munster to 800 in Shepherds Bush Green and Askew wards.

### ***Our mission***

The Older People's Commission first met in November 2017 and identified priorities to work on, including social isolation and loneliness, poverty and deprivation, and access to services.

Commissioners have engaged directly with older residents and created an environment for everyone to share ideas, problems and solutions.

We want our work to help improve the quality of life for all older residents in the borough, no matter their race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ability, country of origin or economic and social class.

In March 2018 we published an interim report that focused on ways to reduce isolation and loneliness in the borough, looking at issues that prevent older residents from feeling connected and being a more valued and integrated part of the community. We made a series of recommendations to the Council and other organisations in the borough to improve, among other things, transport, care, information provision and; a sense of belonging and community. Our recommendations were presented to the Council, the H&F NHS Clinical Commissioning Group and third sector organisations operating in the borough.

One year on, we are ready to share our further findings and recommendations to ensure that H&F becomes the best place in which to grow older.



# Who We Are

## Local older residents and charities working with older residents

The Older People's Commission is one of a series of resident-led commissions established by H&F Council. The aim of these commissions is to put local residents at the heart of decision-making. The Older People's Commission is independent from the Council and we have been setting the Commission's agenda and priorities without interference.

Our chair is **Bryan Naylor**, who has been living in the borough for over 30 years. Bryan was the chairman of the Older People's Consultative Forum for more than 17 years before his election as President of the Forum in 2017. Bryan is also a Trustee of H&F Age UK and a volunteer speaker for the Macular Society and Blind Veterans.

Alongside Bryan, we are eight commissioners working together. Most of us are local older residents.

- **Rosalind Duhs** has lived in H&F for 12 years and was previously a Commissioner on the H&F Poverty and Worklessness Commission. She is a UCL academic and educationalist and an advocate of lifelong learning.
- **Lyn Hally** has volunteered with Fulham Good Neighbours for over twelve years since her return from France, where she practised as an architect. Her last job in London was as principal architect at Shepherd's Bush Housing Association. Prior to working in social housing, Lyn was a hospital planner.
- **Marilyn Mackie** is a retired Residential Care Manager and works as a volunteer in the borough. She chairs many forums and participates in workshops and panels. She is the current Chair of the H&F Older Peoples' Consultative Forum.
- **Keith Mallinson** has worked for HFMind for the past five years as a Primary Care Mental Health Advisor. He has been a trustee of Healthwatch Central West London since July 2015 and sits on H&F's Health and Wellbeing Board. Keith has an extensive background in teaching and was an H&F councillor for eight years.
- **Anne McAlpine-Leny** is the founder and director of Soup4Lunch Ltd, a local community-based social enterprise fighting isolation by bringing kitchen gardens and community cafes to sheltered housing across the borough. Anne is an advocate for mental health and positive, active ageing, with more than 40 years of national and international experience.

A few of us represent charities that offer services to local older residents:

- **Jazz Browne** is the Chief Executive of Nubian Life Resource Centre Ltd, a culturally specific day opportunities service for older people with complex health and social care needs. Jazz grew up on the White City Estate and has worked in the borough for over 20 years.
- **Iain Cassidy** is the Chief Executive of Open Age, a charity that promotes a positive approach to later life. Iain has over 15 years' experience of working for charitable organisations, including Teach First, Asthma UK and Age UK, and is motivated by the deep held belief that everyone should be afforded the same opportunities in life regardless of their background or personal circumstances.
- **Liban Muse** is the Chief Executive of the Lido Foundation, a charity founded in 2014 that empowers the Somali community in the borough. It aims to overcome disadvantage through

education, training, and guidance services. Liban came to the UK from Kenya as a refugee in 1999.

Our Commission is sponsored by **Councillor Ben Coleman**, who is the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care and the Chair of H&F's Health and Wellbeing Board, and by **Councillor Sue Fennimore**, who is Deputy Leader of the Council and champions social inclusion in H&F.

# Our Work

## Listening to residents, charities, and practitioners

The Commission's first meeting took place in early November 2017. Since then, we have met every two to three weeks, using a variety of ways to listen to the voices of as many older people as possible from every corner of the borough and every background.

- **Engagement meetings:** We ran a series of meetings across the borough in places where older residents meet for different social activities. We discussed with older residents their priorities for action and what needed to be done to make the borough the best for older people to live in. For example, we talked to older residents at Askew Road Library, the H&F Older People's Consultative Forum, the Grove Neighbourhood Centre, Fulham Good Neighbours, the Lido Foundation, the Macular Society, Midaye Somali Network, Nubian Life, QPR Football Club, the St Andrew's Project and a number of Open Age activities.
- **Interviews and hearings:** We interviewed and heard from councillors, national and regional experts, officers and practitioners about different aspects of the lives of older people in the borough. We met representatives from Age UK, Agewell, Brightlife Cheshire, Brook Green Medical Centre, Camden Council, H&F Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), DanceWest, H&F Adult Social Care, H&F Arts team, H&F Disabled People's Commission, H&F Getting Involved, H&F Healthier Homes, HFMind, the Integrated Care Partnership, the Iranian Association, the Iraqi Association, Lightshare intergenerational living and Sheltered Housing.
- **Surveys:** Our first interim report was based on a survey concentrating on isolation and loneliness in H&F. To prepare this new report, we launched a new survey in the spring to find out what older people think of the services that they are offered in the borough. We asked about the services they use, which they liked and disliked, how easy these were and if they were enough. Many answered the survey online but most completed paper questionnaires that our partners sent to residents all across the borough.
- **Mini-group discussions:** We also commissioned an external research company, Green Light International, to talk to older residents in small groups and individual interviews to understand more deeply what it was like to live in H&F. We used an outside organisation to encourage older residents to talk freely and say anything they wanted. The external researcher looked at services used, social activities attended, and what else older people wanted to improve their lives.

All these meetings, events, discussions and interviews gave us the opportunity to hear at first hand about your concerns and priorities. They also provided us with great insights into your lives and what makes you go out, what makes you smile and what makes you proud about living in H&F.

The next sections of this report are based on these various pieces of research and all the evidence you gave.

We do really appreciate everyone's help and support all along our journey. We acknowledge that we have not been able to meet every single older resident living in Hammersmith & Fulham. Thanks to our intensive work of reaching out to many different groups and individuals across the borough, however, we are confident that our findings and recommendations are representative of what it

means to grow older in H&F today and that we speak confidently on behalf of all older residents in H&F.

## **H&F is a great place to grow older**

Many older residents told us how happy they were to live in H&F and how they would not like to change it for another place. They said the benefits of living here include:

- A great location, close enough to central London without being central London and easy to get away from London when it becomes too much
- Excellent transport connections, with many tube, train and bus lines
- Pleasant surroundings, with particular pride in parks and the river
- Various amenities, with a good provision of libraries and shops catering for a variety of budgets and tastes
- Great culture, with theatres, cinemas and cultural activities all year round
- Huge diversity, where mixed communities make life more interesting and are a source of pride.

As some older residents told us:

- *“I’ve lived all over London and I can honestly say it’s a great place to live already. Some of the places I used to live in other parts of London were horrible”*
- *“I know we like a moan but actually it’s not a bad place to live. There are lots of parks, you can get anywhere pretty easily and there’s the river.”*
- *“An amazingly wide spectrum of people from all walks of life and a diverse selection of ethnicities. Wide range of shops, sports facilities, excellent schools, fantastic transport.”*

## **But how to make H&F even better?**

When we asked in our survey whether anyone had been particularly dissatisfied with any of the services on offer in H&F, more than 50 per cent of people could not think of anything they were unhappy with, or expressly stated that they have not been dissatisfied. As one respondent put it, *“people do their best”*. When asked whether there is any help, support, or service that respondents felt they needed that is not currently available to them in the borough, more than 40 per cent said *“no”*.

We know that there is a lot to do to make sure that all older residents in the borough can live fulfilling, connected and enjoyable lives. We are all aware that local authorities face spending cuts but most people seemed confident that services could be improved anyway.

In the following section, you’ll find our research findings and recommendations. We have linked the experiences of the people we have talked to and heard from with what we believe could make H&F an even better place in which to grow older.

People told us many different things about a variety of services and organisations and we have grouped their responses and our recommendations into five main themes:

1. **Better Services:** People told us of unreliable, sometimes unfit transport; inflexible parking systems; problems with GP appointments’ and bad housing maintenance.
2. **Better Information:** People shared their frustration at knowing that there is a lot going on in H&F but not having accurate, timely information about it. Similarly, they told us that they are not always aware of the help they can receive and the services they could benefit from.

3. **Stronger Communities:** People told us that they want to feel that they belong and that communities need to be more inclusive of those from different generations and ethnic backgrounds and with different life experiences. There is a feeling from many community groups that they are seen as “hard to reach” when they are available, waiting and ready to be an integral part of the life of the borough. This is often down to language barriers.
4. **Closer Collaboration:** People felt that the Council, its many different departments, the various national and local agencies, and all the charity organisations do not always work together. This lack of coordination leads to a sense of confusion and duplication which can cause older residents to be reluctant to persevere with enquires or complaints.
5. **Deeper Resident Engagement:** People told us that they felt that decisions were taken without them being consulted or that some of the existing services were not fit for purpose and had been put in place without thinking about older users. There was a widely held view that some “consultations” are just tick box exercises and outcomes are poorly communicated.

# Findings and Recommendations

## 1. Better Services

Over the past year, we tried to meet with and listen to as many older residents as possible to hear what they think of the services that are being offered in H&F. The three main services mentioned were health and social care, transport and parking, and housing.

### Health and Social Care

Older residents we met all felt that the NHS has deteriorated, especially in the last few years, with noticeably increased waiting times, less availability of health care professionals, and a poorer state of hospitals and GP surgeries.

While many agreed that the issue was national and not specific to H&F, they still mentioned local issues, such as concern about the running down of Charing Cross Hospital:

*“The doctors and nursing staff at both my GP and Charing Cross Hospital are wonderful, though the depletion in resources at Charing Cross is dreadful. When I was in with appendicitis there was no drip stand and I had to tell the nurse how to improvise one using the coat hanger from my coat!”*

Similarly, while doctors and staff at surgeries across the borough were praised, many people complained about the difficulties in arranging appointments with GPs, particularly since an online appointment system has come into use. Those who are less digitally savvy feel let down. One resident aged over 85 said, *“Now that appointments are online, when I telephone there are no appointments left for my doctor”*. Another one told us, *“Just trying to get through on the phone to my local GP is a nightmare”*.

### **Recommendation:**

***H&F’s hospitals and surgeries should reserve some phone appointments for older residents not able to book online.***

Older residents also told us of their satisfaction with free home care and the quality of day care centres across the borough:

*“My husband uses a day care centre. It’s just a great service. He goes two days a week, enjoying it very much and for me, as his carer, it gives me a great break and I know that he is happy and well looked after! I also use the support group and I find that very helpful.”*

However, fewer hours of help, poorly trained staff and high turnover of staff are all causing problems with older residents using home care.

Similarly, much of the work of caring for older residents falls upon family and friends rather than professional services. Caring can be a difficult and isolating task as our previous report noted. We believe that carers, professional and unpaid, need better and stronger support and we particularly welcome the Council’s intention to set up a Carers’ Commission to look at the needs of carers in H&F.

At the same time, many survey respondents told us of a gap in mental health counselling and support. One resident told us that she felt *“too much is left to mental health charities”* and that she is lucky to have access to counselling in a neighbouring borough. Another resident from White City who is caring for her son said, *“I really believe this borough needs a mental health advocacy hub”*.

*serving all ages including older people caring more and more for families, their children, other neighbours [...]. We deserve support.”*

### **Recommendation**

***Adult Social Care should drive improvements to the training and monitoring of home care staff, and strengthen the offer to residents with a mental health condition and those who may be at risk of falling into poverty, so they are able to direct them to support mechanisms.***

### **Recommendation**

***The Commission endorses the establishment of a new Carers' Commission.***

The Commission notes that the administration adhered to a policy of no increase to Council Tax during its first term in office. We also note that the administration decided not to use the government-approved precept to raise funds to provide additional resource for social care.

The demand on social care services will continue to increase so additional resources are required. The Commission believes that the anticipated continuing demand upon social services, not least to support the growing needs of the older population and the administration's own expressed wish to address the issues of inequality across the borough, make it imperative that these decisions be reconsidered in the administration's second term of office. The alternative of facing cuts to services and quality is, in our view, unacceptable.

### **Recommendation**

***The Council should consider increasing the Council Tax income in line with the maximum allowed by current regulation, and should consider adding the social care precept to Council Tax bills in 2019/20.***

### **Recommendation**

***The Government should provide adequate funds to the local authority to enable it to meet its obligations to provide social care, now and into the future.***

## **Transport and Parking**

Older residents acknowledge that good public transport is a benefit of living in H&F. On the whole, the borough is very well-connected to bus and tube networks for journeys around London and has an easy access to the road network and Heathrow airport.

For those with minimal or no mobility issues, TfL's Freedom Pass enables them to get out of the house and remain active. One survey respondent aged over 65 said that her Freedom Pass was one of her *“most valuable possessions”* and she used it *“practically every day”*.

However, not all respondents agreed that the current transport offer was satisfactory and one even felt that transport in H&F was *“diabolical”*. Overall what people told us suggests that the current transport arrangements for older people are satisfactory in concept but need attention to ensure that they work as intended.

Although TfL is viewed as having overall responsibility for transport, a few feel H&F could do more to agitate for bus routes along less busy main roads as they claim that certain areas of the borough are effectively bus-free zones. A Hail & Ride system could be launched for use by those with reduced mobility who cannot walk too far to a main road. Better training for bus drivers should be provided to be aware of the barriers older residents face getting on and off the bus.

### **Recommendation**

***The Council and TfL should re-examine bus routes to less well-served residential areas, such as the No.424.***

Many people also complained about the current offering of taxi services and other forms of local transport, which are seen as not being up to scratch and offering poor customer service:

- Hospital transport was criticised for its late, slow, and unreliable service. Many users reported that they had become so frustrated that they used their Taxicard to attend hospital appointments. Many were unaware that this was not a proper use of the Taxicard service, which is separately funded.
- Many regrets were expressed about the loss of the H&F Community Transport service and its replacement with a service in Kensington and Chelsea, the main concern being availability and reliability.
- The Taxicard scheme was valued by many but many others felt it was too expensive. The Dial-a-Ride service was praised by some regular users but not valued by many others, who felt that it did not often meet their specific transport wishes or timetables. One resident told us, *“Dial-a-Ride is a good service when it works but I’ve been let down so many times as it’s taken them ages to arrive if they DO!”*. Another older resident complained that taxi drivers only allow one carer when two might be needed.

Many of you told us of missed GP and hospital appointments. Many people also told us that such an unreliable service had an impact on their social life as they felt house bound and unable to attend activities because of such unreliable services. On the whole, older service users felt let down and disempowered.

### **Recommendation**

***All commissioners of community transport should review their services to ensure they reliably meet the needs of older residents. This includes the NHS/CCG/Hospital Trust’s hospital transport and TfL’s Dial-a-Ride, along with all others.***

Similarly, many respondents to our survey said the new parking service was a “disaster” or a “nightmare”. The new RingGo app is deemed “difficult to install” and “since there is no signage on the street to indicate where the meters are, it is impossible to find a meter to use when RingGo is not working.” The new service seems to have been designed only with the most digitally-savvy in mind and does not seem to take into account the needs of users that do not have/use a smart phone.

### **Recommendation.**

***The Council should raise the concerns of older residents and others about the new parking meters with RingGo, to explore where improvements can be made.***

### **Housing**

When it comes to housing, the main issue mentioned by participants in our survey and discussions is the high cost of housing in this borough. This either affects older residents directly or means that family members are unable to buy or rent somewhere nearby. This can create isolation.

Many of those living in sheltered accommodation seem to have better day-to-day experiences than those in non-sheltered council housing, even though some survey respondents praised the work of those who manage their estates:



- Small repairs are carried out quickly as someone is usually on-site
- There is a strong sense of community and neighbours look out for one another
- Many social events and activities are taking place on site
- Residents are connected directly to organisations like Open Age or Nubian Life who visit and advertise the activities they organise.

Still, those in sheltered accommodation have issues with wardens leaving and not being replaced. Many are also unhappy with both Mitie and Pinnacle, the organisations which provide housing maintenance and, in the south of the borough, management services.

The Commission welcomes the Council's Older People's Housing Strategy that was published earlier this year and looks at ways to provide comprehensive housing services through partnerships between housing, adult social care and the third sector to increase and improve options for older citizens.<sup>i</sup>

### ***Recommendation***

***The Council should review housing maintenance and management contracts, and drive performance improvements.***

## **2. Better information**

A major issue that came to the fore when talking to older residents was a general lack of information. Some residents are very well aware of everything H&F has to offer but we were sometimes surprised to see how many older residents are left without any accurate and tailored information on the services they are entitled to, particularly older residents with a migrant background.

The research we carried out indicates that there are three major obstacles to engagement with older residents:

- A widespread lack of knowledge of the services and assistance available to older residents
- An equally limiting ignorance of how to access services
- A shared belief that council services are bureaucratic and of poor quality.

People told us about the numerous social activities they attend, such as trips and excursions organised by Agewell Rambles or dancing sessions organised by DanceWest. However, many felt better and more coordinated information about these activities should be provided.

Our research shows that most people find out about groups and classes in a passive and haphazard way: through a better-connected friend or through healthcare professionals, sometimes after an accident or a fall. Very few people receive leaflets or information through their doors and few use the internet to discover new activities.

A webpage currently exists, *People First*, which contains links to and information on many such resources and activities but it needs updating and to be made more user-friendly. A new updated People First would be useful to charitable organisations, council officers and healthcare providers as well as residents who might be isolated and unaware of the many support systems in H&F.

However, not all older residents can access online resources. Online is not a way in for most residents aged over 75, who rely more on word of mouth and print. A known person – a familiar face – should be available to older residents to get in touch with when support or information are needed. Community Champions could be asked to perform as “personal referral guides”. Notice

boards across GP surgeries, council and sheltered housing should also be used more intensively to post information on the different services and activities available.

**Recommendation**

***Nobody should be excluded because they can't get online. The Council, CCG and Healthwatch should ensure all older people know what services are available and should reduce the complexity of forms that carers/older people need to complete to receive additional financial support.***

**Recommendation**

***Information websites, such as People First, must be updated and user-friendly. They should make advice and information easy to access, for example dealing with a cold home.***

**Recommendation**

***Noticeboards across GP surgeries, council and sheltered housing should be used more intensively to promote services and activities.***

**Recommendation**

***The Council should substantially increase the numbers of volunteer Community Champions in every part of the borough.***

**Recommendation**

***"Every door is the right door": The Council, CCG and charitable organisations must work together to make sure older people are pointed towards the right services for them, wherever they first make contact.***

Better information should also be provided to Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups. Many older residents told us that language was a barrier. One older female resident from Eastern Europe said, *"It was difficult for me to deal with paperwork in the Council housing department. It is difficult for me to access local services that do not provide interpreters as I do not speak English very well."*

Charitable organisations like the Eastern European Centre, the Lido Foundation, Midaye and Nubian Life provide advice and support to older residents, and more needs to be done to ensure that BAME groups can find a safe place to meet, exchange and receive the information they need on the services they may benefit from.

**Recommendation**

***Older non-English speakers, particularly those in poverty, must be supported, and the Council should invest in the capacity of the third sector to deliver this, for example encouraging and facilitating older people to maximise their benefit take up.***

### 3. Stronger Communities

As older residents we met pointed out, H&F truly benefits from its thriving and diverse communities. The borough's diversity is a source of pride to many older people. Older residents can equally be an asset to their community and many want to be more involved and integrated.

There are many local initiatives that help older residents feel connected in their everyday lives, from lunch clubs to street fests and arts activities. One way to use such assets and initiatives is "social prescribing".

As defined by NHS England, social prescribing is a means of enabling GPs and other frontline healthcare professionals to refer people to services in their community instead of offering only medicalised solutions. Often the first point of referral is a link worker or "community connector" who can talk to each person about the things that matter to them. Together they can co-produce a social prescription that will help to improve their health and wellbeing.<sup>ii</sup>

Older residents told us they feel transformed by attending an activity or group for a variety of reasons:

- They feel more connected and part of the community, making the most of the services available to them and not isolated, and more open to meeting new people and making new friends (should they wish)
- They feel an increased sense of well-being, both physical and emotional, and feel better about themselves
- They may feel more flexible (for example they can walk to the shops without losing breath) and their mood lifts
- They can feel more confident – the activity can help re-build their self-esteem and give them a boost;
- They get a sense of achievement, for example driven by a pride in taking part and finishing a class, or participating in a choir/music/theatrical performance or winning a prize.

One older resident said that attending an Open Age Steady and Stable session helped rebuild her confidence after she had her fourth hip replacement. Another participant in the Agewell Rambles programme told us:

*"Agewell Rambles is under threat at present although it is a life-changing thing for the walkers. It is good for our health, it takes us into the country for fresh air. It is sociable and combats feelings of isolation and loneliness. It gives respite to those of the group who are carers for someone in their family (at present one third of the group are carers). I have seen shy, unfit people who have joined and within a term they are stronger, healthier and happier as they have made friends."*

Given that activities make a real difference in older residents' lives from the physical to more-higher level self-actualisation, H&F's goal should be to get as many older residents taking part in group activities as possible to enhance their quality of life.

#### **Recommendation**

***We need a social, rather than medical approach to ageing. Social prescribing of activities should be embedded to improve the health and wellbeing of older residents.***

Some participants, however, had to stop attending some activities due to increased fees. For many, there is also a worry in advance that they won't be able to afford an activity. Even though participants

almost always commented on how pleased they were when they discovered that a class was available only for a couple of pounds, this can still feel expensive for some residents in the borough.

Some people would also like to see activities taking place all year round. Many feel they lose form, confidence and consistency if they suddenly stop doing something for two months. They feel daunted by the effort of trying to find a similar class elsewhere and nervous at the idea of meeting a new group.

As one older resident said, *“I wish [a particular organisation] did classes over the summer. Everything just stops round about now [June] and won’t start up again until September. You might try and meet up with friends but it’s not as easy.”*

At the same time, some people feel that activities are not tailored to their needs and they lack a place where they can meet and socialise without being on guard. This is true, for example, for one older resident who *“has yet to find any meetings/clubs for gay people”*.

Similarly, some older residents who do not use English as their first language might not be taking classes which are in English as they fear they might not understand the instructions. For some groups, a safe place to meet and socialise should be offered.

#### **Recommendation**

***The Council should bolster local third sector organisations running social activities for older residents. No two people’s tastes or pockets are identical, and a greater wealth of culturally specific activities would recognise the diversity of H&F’s older population.***

#### **Recommendation**

***Cost should never be a barrier. To ensure that activities are accessible to all older people, the Council should help organisations keep these activities free or affordable, and ensure they take place all year round.***

#### **Recommendation**

***Older people who wish to remain economically active should be encouraged to do so.***

## **4. Closer Collaboration**

As these first three sections have shown, there is a lot of good things going on in H&F but there is still a lot to improve. Many older residents we met and talked to praised staff working in various Council departments and locations. Staff from the Council’s parking and housing teams, libraries, charitable organisations and surgeries and hospitals across the borough were particularly praised.

Still, many felt that the Council’s different departments, and the various national and local agencies and charitable organisations do not always work together and stay in their separate silos. This a lack of coordination leads to a sense of confusion and duplication.

For example, more joined-up thinking is needed regarding the provision of social activities for older people. Several organisations have the same type of classes and may be seen as competing for funding for their activities and for attracting older residents. Many providers stop their activities at the same time of year and older residents cannot find anything they can attend for long periods of

time. With a coordinated programme of activities making the best of all the resources available in the borough, older residents would be able to enjoy the classes they need and like all year round.

### **Recommendation**

***The Council and providers should work together to coordinate a consistent, year-round offer of activities across the borough to older residents, regardless of their ability to pay.***

Joined-up thinking is already at the heart of the Integrated Care Partnership, which is made up of health and care providers and commissioners, working since 2016 to integrate the services they offer.

Similarly, Sobus, the community development agency for H&F, has launched the POPS initiative (Providers of Older People's Services) to get the voluntary sector in the borough working in collaboration on older people's issues. POPS meetings give a platform for providers to develop a shared understanding of older people's issues and work together to increase capacity and effectiveness.

Our research has shown more than thirty different groups providing services to older people. Some of those we met and engaged with, for example in the north of the borough, told us of their feeling of being let down and of a lack of interest and engagement from the Council. As these offer valuable support to older residents across the borough and are often older people's only way of accessing information and advice, the Council should map out these groups and engage with them. Knowledge of these groups and of the needs of the people they work with could be increased by a scheme in which Council staff could volunteer in such organisations. Secondments could also be organised.

### **Recommendation**

***The Council should identify all groups supporting older residents, and establish a policy of helping them to develop. Groups tackling social isolation and loneliness and poverty are a particular priority. Council staff should be offered volunteering or secondment opportunities with those groups.***

## **5. Deeper Resident Engagement**

Collaboration is needed within the Council and between the Council and the different agencies and organisations operating in the borough. However, collaboration is also needed between those organisations and older residents.

While some of the services currently on offer seem to work well, many still need to be improved to make sure that they are fit for purpose and take into account the needs of older residents. In particular, many people told us that they feel that decisions are taken without them being consulted, that consultations are often a tick-box exercise and that the Council does not really want to listen to older residents. Equally when proper consultation does take place, there is a widespread feeling among older residents that the process makes little discernible difference to outcomes for them or that they are not given any feedback explaining what difference their involvement made.

### **Recommendation**

***The Council, CCG and other agencies should produce comprehensive guidelines for all consultations, including the production and use of surveys, focus groups and***

***public engagement events. These should give clear guidance on the need to report, and means of reporting outcomes.***

However, while consultation is a first step in the right direction, we believe that a full strategy of residents' involvement based on co-production would be better to ensure that services on offer to older residents in the borough are fit for purpose.

This same conclusion was drawn by the H&F Disabled Peoples' Commission, which put forward in its final report published in 2018 a strong message of *"Nothing about disabled people without disabled people"*, seen as the only way to break down the barriers disabled residents encounter in their everyday lives.<sup>iii</sup> Similarly, we believe that older residents and decision-makers need to be working together in an active way to plan, design and review policy and services that affect older people's lives, to get rid of the barriers they face.

### ***Recommendation***

***The Council should involve older residents in any relevant service review or re-design of services in its move towards a policy of co-production with service users.***

To ensure a continuous link between the Council and the community and to ensure that older residents can always find a quick and efficient way to communicate with the Council, the Council should appoint an Older People's Champion from its councillors.

Having such a position would send a strong message to older residents that their needs and concerns are being addressed. An Older People's Champion offers a good way for H&F to convey that it takes its older residents seriously, recognising that they are a distinct group with specific needs.

Other councils across the country and the capital have such Champions. We met with Cllr Alison Kelly, Camden Council's Older People's Champion, who told us about her role and how she works with local residents. The H&F Older People's Champion would represent the interests of older residents in the borough and would focus on the more strategic areas affecting them.

The Older People's Champion should be working together with an Older People's Board made up of older residents and third sector organisations working with older residents that would meet quarterly to discuss local issues affecting older residents.

Such a board should be diverse and include the voices of those who are not usually heard. It should be set up through a transparent process of recruitment open to any older resident, agency and charitable organisation operating in the borough. As one resident told us, this board *"would need to be representative, reflecting the diversity of the older people who live here. A lot of the time it's the same people who go on these things who harp on about just one issue that affects them rather than thinking about the whole borough."*

The board should have more than a simple consultative role and should have the power to influence decision-making and put issues of concern and the priorities of older residents on the Council's agenda. As a first task, the board could monitor the implementation of the recommendations in this report and the interim report we published earlier this year (see Appendix 1).

### ***Recommendation***

***The Council should appoint an Older People's Champion from its councillors to represent the interests of older residents. The H&F Older People's Champion should work in partnership with an Older People's Board made up of local residents, agencies***

***and charitable organisation, and work among other things to tackle poverty in later age.***

## Next Steps

The H&F Older People's Commission has worked for over a year and we have tried to cover in this report everything older residents, officers and practitioners have shared with us, including their ideas and their solutions, to improve the lives of all older residents in all areas of H&F.

However, this is only the first step of an exciting and challenging journey of working together with the Council and other service providers in the borough. By improving services, information, collaboration and resident involvement, the Council can really make a difference to the community and make H&F the best borough in which to grow older.

We will now ask the Council to take stock and see how our recommendations can be acted upon. We will remain at the Council's disposal to discuss these findings and recommendations to find the best practical ways of working together.

## Thank You

We would like to say a big thank you to all the residents and organisations, including those below, who have engaged with us and shared their views and experiences.

We would also like to thank all the officers and practitioners who have supported us and answered our questions. Finally, we would like to thank Cllr Stephen Cowan, Leader of H&F Council, and his colleagues for giving us the opportunity to work together to improve the lives of older residents in H&F.

### Organisations consulted

Camden Council (Cllr Alison Kelly)  
Munden Street Sheltered Housing AGM  
Askew Road Library  
St Andrews Project  
H&F Older People's Consultative Forum  
H&F Housing Representatives Forum  
HFMind  
Fulham Good Neighbours  
Lido Foundation  
Grove Neighbourhood Centre  
Healthier Homes  
Open Age  
Age UK  
Macular Society  
Iraqi Association  
Midaye Centre  
Nubian Life  
Eritrean Group  
QPR Extra Time



**Appendix 1:** [Focus Group results, Greig Burnside- Green Light Research](#)

**Appendix 2:** [H&F Older People's Commission Interim Report, March 2018](#)

**Appendix 3: Bibliography and additional resources**

## Bibliography

### *Strategies, plans and other actions aimed at older people in other London boroughs*

Barnet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <a href="#">Homeshare</a></li><li>- Independence, Choice and Control: Services for older people. An integrated Commissioning strategy for Barnet 2008-2017</li></ul>
Brent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <a href="#">Social Isolation in Brent Initiative (SIBI) Project</a></li></ul>
Camden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Fact Sheet</li><li>- A borough of opportunity for people in their 50s and beyond plan (within the general Camden plan)</li><li>- <a href="#">Ageing better in Camden – Loneliness and Isolation (with Age UK – Older People's Advisory Group and Community Connectors)</a></li></ul>
City of London	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <a href="#">Dignity Code</a></li><li>- <a href="#">Reach Out Network</a></li></ul>
Croydon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <a href="#">Croydon Older People's Network (OPeN)</a></li><li>- Outcome based commissioning (2015) (with CCG)</li><li>- <a href="#">Partnership for Older People POP</a> (Advice Service)</li></ul>
Enfield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Older People's Profile</li></ul>
Hackney	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <a href="#">Considering the wider social and economic needs of older people</a></li></ul>
Haringey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <a href="#">Haringey Over 50s Forum</a></li></ul>
Harrow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <a href="#">Harrow Senior Residents' Assembly</a> (HSRA), organises <a href="#">Information Morning for Older People</a>.</li></ul>

Havering	- <a href="#">Loneliness for Older People (Havering Care Point)</a>
Hillingdon	- <a href="#">Assembly for Older People</a> - Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA): Older People in Hillingdon: Demographics - <a href="#">Older People's Team</a>
Hounslow	- <a href="#">Loneliness and social isolation in the London Borough of Hounslow</a>
Islington	- <a href="#">The Islington Fairness Commission</a> - <a href="#">Managing the care of older people with frailty (with Camden)</a> - <a href="#">Older People Factsheet 2014</a>
Kingston	- <a href="#">Handyman service</a>
Lambeth	- <a href="#">Positive ageing - an older people's strategy for Lambeth 2009-2014</a>
Lewisham	- <a href="#">Arts for Older People</a> - <a href="#">Positive Ageing Council</a>
Merton	- <a href="#">Strategy for People over 50</a> (2007)
Newham	- <a href="#">Ping Pong</a>
Richmond	- <a href="#">Older People's Mental Health Strategy Group (OPMHSG)</a> - Champion for older residents (Cllr Brian Marcel)
Southwark	- <a href="#">Take part in the arts</a>
Tower Hamlets	- <a href="#">Tower Hamlets Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2016</a> - <a href="#">Loneliness and Isolation in Older People: Factsheet</a>

Waltham Forest	- Older People's Charter
Wandsworth	- <a href="#">Older People's Strategy (2015-2020)</a>
Westminster	- <a href="#">Isolation and loneliness, with People First and Age UK</a> - <a href="#">Silver Sunday</a>

## Additional resources

Age UK (2012), *Loneliness and Isolation: Evidence review*, retrieved 04/09/18:

[https://www.ageuk.org.uk/documents/en-gb/for-professionals/evidence\\_review\\_loneliness\\_and\\_isolation.pdf?dtrk=true](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/documents/en-gb/for-professionals/evidence_review_loneliness_and_isolation.pdf?dtrk=true)

BBC (2018), "Minister for loneliness appointed to continue Jo Cox's work", *BBC News*, 17 January 2018, retrieved 05/09/18: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-42708507>

Campbell, D. (2017), "Loneliness as bad for health as long-term illness, says GPs' chief", *The Guardian*, 12 October 2017

Centre for Mental Health (2017), *Supporting carers: Mental health carers' assessments in policy and practice*, retrieved 04/09/18: <https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/supporting-carers>

H&F Disabled People's Commission (2018), *Nothing About Disabled People Without Disabled People*, retrieved 04/09/18: <https://www.lbhf.gov.uk/councillors-and-democracy/resident-led-commissions/disabled-people-s-commission>

Harris, J. (2018), "We need to talk about ageing – and it's about far more than the NHS", *The Guardian*, 4 February 2018

Healthwatch Central West London (2017), *Meeting the needs of socially isolated older people in RBKC*, retrieved 04/09/18: <https://healthwatchcwl.co.uk/report/meeting-the-needs-of-socially-isolated-older-people-in-rbkc/>

Kharicha, K. et al. (2017), 'What do older people experiencing loneliness think about primary care or community based interventions to reduce loneliness? A qualitative study in England', *Health and Social Care in the Community*, 25(6)

The King's Fund (2013), *Improving the public's health: A resource for local authorities*, retrieved 04/09/18: <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/projects/improving-publics-health>

Littleford, C., Mandalia, D. and Oskara, A (2016), *What does ELSA tell us about growing older? An overview of the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing, wave 7 (2014/15) data*, retrieved 04/09/18: <http://www.natcen.ac.uk/our-research/research/english-longitudinal-study-of-ageing/>

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham (2014), *Borough Profile*, retrieved 04/09/18: <https://www.lbhf.gov.uk/councillors-and-democracy/about-hammersmith-fulham-council/borough-profile>

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham (2016), *Housing Support and Care: Integrated solutions for integrated challenges*, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, retrieved 04/09/18: [https://www.lbhf.gov.uk/sites/default/files/lbhf\\_housing\\_support\\_and\\_care\\_jsna\\_sept\\_16.pdf](https://www.lbhf.gov.uk/sites/default/files/lbhf_housing_support_and_care_jsna_sept_16.pdf)

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham (2018), *Social isolation and loneliness: facts and figures for Hammersmith and Fulham*, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham (2018), *Older People's Housing Strategy*, retrieved 05/09/18: [https://www.lbhf.gov.uk/sites/default/files/section\\_attachments/older\\_peoples\\_housing\\_strategy\\_-\\_march\\_2018.pdf](https://www.lbhf.gov.uk/sites/default/files/section_attachments/older_peoples_housing_strategy_-_march_2018.pdf)

Runnymede Trust, *London Ethnic Inequality Report, Borough Profile: Hammersmith & Fulham*, retrieved 04/09/18: <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/projects-and-publications/equality-and-integration/london-ethnic-inequalities/london-ethnic-inequalities-2.html>

Sobus (2016), *65+ Engagement with Health & Wellbeing Services in Hammersmith & Fulham*, retrieved 04/09/18: <http://sobus.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/2016-04-GP-FED-REPORT-Final.pdf>

Victor, C. (2011), *Loneliness in old age: the UK perspective. Safeguarding the Convoy: a call to action from the Campaign to End Loneliness*, Age UK, Oxfordshire.

---

<sup>i</sup> [https://www.lbhf.gov.uk/sites/default/files/section\\_attachments/older\\_peoples\\_housing\\_strategy\\_-\\_march\\_2018.pdf](https://www.lbhf.gov.uk/sites/default/files/section_attachments/older_peoples_housing_strategy_-_march_2018.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.england.nhs.uk/personalised-health-and-care/social-prescribing/>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.lbhf.gov.uk/councillors-and-democracy/resident-led-commissions/disabled-people-s-commission>