

'A Voice for Older People in Gloucestershire'

Annual Report

Annual General Meeting 25th September 2007

St Augustine's Church Hall

11am - 12.30pm

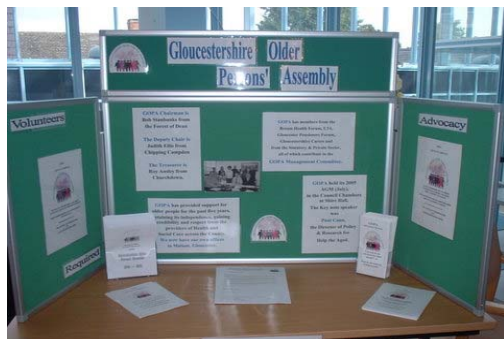


REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

In 2005 we agreed a Business Plan that envisaged core support from the seven local authorities in Gloucestershire, based on their needs to consult older people on their Local Strategic Plans. It was very disappointing that for 2006-07 we were only able to get support from only two Councils, Cotswold and Stroud. Naturally these grants were based on specific work with older people in those areas and it has been difficult to respond to other requests for consultation, without the resources to do so. Cotswold District Council's one year project is coming to an end, but Stroud has offered a three-year service level agreement which will enable GOPA to build up strong local networks of older people who can be involved in the Council's consultative work. In spite of Government expectations that older people will be actively involved in decision-making the local councils do not seem to be willing to prioritise the independent voice of older people in Gloucestershire.

Our Business Plan also envisaged separately funded projects, and we are particularly pleased to be a partner in the POPP project. This is potentially very exciting with real hope of making a difference in the lives of older people needing care and support to help them maintain their independence in the community for as long as possible.

Our Committee members come from all areas of the county and contribute their own local perspectives on the issues facing older people. Not surprisingly everyone is already heavily engaged in their own community yet find the time to put effort into GOPA. I am grateful to them for their support, particularly our Officers, Bob and Roy. We would welcome new members who can give some time and skills to help GOPA's further development.



In November Sharon Swift joined GOPA as Administrator, funded by a grant from the Henry Smith Charity. This much needed support for Mick has enabled him to undertake more development work, particularly involvement in the preparation for the POPP bid. Sharon has proved herself to be invaluable and we hope to find funding to continue her post.

Mick Churchward has put in a great deal of commitment and the Committee does value and appreciate his efforts to promote GOPA throughout Gloucestershire.

Looking to the future, our involvement with the Partnership for Older Peoples Project should enable GOPA to be a force for change in the way that older people can have their say about maintaining their independence in the community. This will be a new focus for our work and we hope that other local councils will join Stroud in placing a value on older people 'having a say'.

Judith Ellis

Advocacy Report

Looking back it was a challenging year for many of the county's advocacy schemes, with bids for the IMCA funding being put to the County Council via the Community and Adult Care Directorate, in an effort to secure appropriate advocacy to those with mental health issues. GOPA did not submit a bid, deciding instead to support the GASS bid. The contract was finally awarded to Citizens Advocacy Trust (CATs).

Jeanette left the Advocacy Service in March. She brought her considerable skills and experience to setting up and building a successful service with well-trained volunteers who together helped many people. Due to the uncertain funding the decision was taken to retain a freelance Co-ordinator on reduced hours. Jeanette put much effort into our application to Comic Relief to expand the Advocacy Service, but in vain – at least we are being allowed to resubmit quite quickly and that work is in hand.

We are now part way through our 3rd complete year of advocacy provision. Recruiting of new advocates took place and six newly trained ones were on board by the end of the year. We met the criteria set by our funders for the year. Some the casework has covered supporting an elderly lady with opening a bank account (it is amazing how difficult this can be at times), Council Tax banding which proved very beneficial to many living in the same road, and problems in leaving hospital and care home costs.

Gloucestershire Service Users Forum

The Forum continues to grow and go from strength to strength. The recent reorganisation within Gloucestershire County Council of 'Social Services' into two separate Directorates, Children and Young People and Community and Adult Care has re-focused the forum and Forum is now concentrating on adult services. The level of involvement of the members in the areas of consultation and training delivery now reflects a real commitment from the Directorate on the value of service user involvement. As well as increasing the members and their 'real' involvement the Forum is also concentrating on evaluation, to reinforce the real benefits of involving service users expert views in the delivery of their services.

A Voice for Older People in the Cotswolds

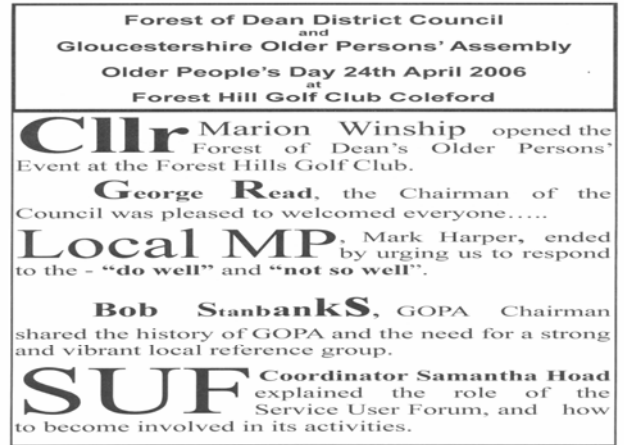
GOPA was given a one-year grant to develop more involvement of older people in the Cotswolds. One of our objectives was to give people more confidence in speaking up about issues that bother them. We trained 6 'facilitators', giving them materials and practice in using different techniques for engaging older people in discussion and helping them to be more assertive about their needs. They went to local groups of older people who ended up talking about issues such as dealing with bogus callers, being treated with respect by care staff, loss of services and family involvement.

We worked with Bill Wragge, Health & Well-being Officer for Cotswold District Council, to hold four events for older people in different areas of the Cotswolds, discussing topics of local interest. We are concluding the project with the development of a written process and mailing list for Cotswold District Council to use in the future for more involvement of older people in their planning and review of services.



Forest of Dean

Older Persons' Day was held in the Forest of Dean, jointly arranged and managed by the F o D District Council and GOPA, chaired by a local County Cllr, with presentations from GOPA Chairman, the local MP Mark Harper, Helen Webster from Gloucestershire Carers, Dr. Ian Donald from West Glos. PCT and Samantha Hoad of the Gloucestershire Service Users Forum. Four Workshop activities were provided with feedback from them, and a newsletter was produced by Gloucestershire Older Persons' Assembly, which the F o D District Council took on the responsibility of circulating, to these who attended.



South West Older Persons' Advisory Group (SW - OPAG)

After attending the SW-OPAG AGM it was agreed that support would be provided by Pamela Tawse, and every effort is being made to sustain the group. To achieve this Stroud DC (Dilys Warren & Phil Sullivan) are also supporting Pamela, as she agreed to become the secretary of the South West OPAG group, and Pearl Harris-Clarke, also from our committee, agreed to attend the quarterly meetings as the GOPA representative. Further work is being carried out to ensure that the group continues. It was also agreed that a series of events in the South West would be held, with the purpose of raising the awareness and understanding of older people of the role and relation between Better Government for Older People (BGOP) and South West Older Persons Group (SW - OPAG)

Stroud

Stroud District Council once again supported GOPA in the management of a Better Government for Older People (BGOP) event, involving older people from the County and the South West, liaising with Pamela Tawse on every front to ensure a successful day on 21st Sept 2006. The purpose of the day was to introduce an understanding of the relationships of both BGOP & OPAG and the need for local groups of older people joining this line of communication to Central Government; this was one of a number of events.

In the evening, at the Stroud Subscription Rooms a celebration of **The International Day of Peace** chaired by Mrs Lois Hainsworth MBE, took place, with people from a number of faiths reading, chanting or singing for us. Three speakers shared their respective views on "Rights, Wrongs, Rites and Wands" from Zarin Hainsworth; "Growing older with a Silver Lining" from Pamela Tawse and "Reflections of a Gloucestershire Muslim" was delivered by Mahmoud Patel.

Pamela regularly attends both the Equalities and the Health and Well-being meetings on behalf of GOPA.

Dignity in Care

The Facilitator attended the Dignity in Care Conference hosted by The Department of Health in Birmingham on 23rd January 2007, at which Ivan Lewis, Minister for Care Services, called for high quality care services that respect people's dignity. The purpose of the conference was to re-focus attention on delivering health and social care in ways that treat people with dignity and respect, and to build a new network of champions to raise the profile of dignity in care.

The aim of the day was to learn from each other's experience and acquire new energy and ideas to make a difference. Most of the work took place in small mixed groups and in plenary sessions.

Professor Ian Philp, National Director for Older People, opened and closed the conference.

Further work locally regarding Dignity in Care, is being under taken following an event in late January (2007), so do please watch for additional information in our next issue of the GOPA Newsletter.

Countywide Issues

Many of the Committee attended the meetings across the County dealing the Mental Health PCT consultation, which culminated in GOPA submitting feedback on the proposals. Finally many older people joining the march in Cheltenham to protest about the cuts to health provision across the County; with many being soaked to the skin as the torrential rain came down that afternoon!

Early Partnerships for Older Peoples Project(POPP)

GOPA was requested by the West Glos. PCT to carry out a piece of work, to support the POPP bid, which is aimed at gaining the views of older people of the potential use of care homes in a different way. GOPA carried out a survey to gain the opinion of older people throughout the County, to using Care Homes for a short stay, up to four weeks and their views and experiences of recent health care.

The GOPA database was used to contact people across the County, and many of the Committee also visited local groups to gain a range of views from those attending clubs, day centres and sheltered accommodation.

To say we had a wide, varied and direct responses to our questions would be true and we need to thank all of you who gave of your time and views, it is really appreciated. Regarding the big question of whether you'd consider going into a care home for a few weeks, we had a wide range of responses, along with advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages: No worry of meals and cleaning; social interaction with others; could free up hospital beds; give respite for carers; make one appreciate own home; some care and being local; its a short stay.

Disadvantages: Will I ever get out?; Do not like the poor publicity of care homes; independence being taken away; my domestic affairs would be left at home with no one attending to them.

The general consensus was that Care Homes were not really the best place to go; the CHALLENGE to the POPP team is to improve the perception that many hold of Care Homes.

With the success of the POPP bid, GOPA is now managing a “work-stream” and is fully committed to ensuring older peoples’ involvement with this Project.

Gloucestershire Older Persons' Assembly (GOPA)

	Consult	Communicate	Advocate
Chair	Judith Ellis	Cotswolds	
Deputy Chair	Bob Stanbanks	Forest of Dean	
Treasurer	Roy Ansley	Tewkesbury	
Committee	Ann Attwood	Carers Gloucestershire	
	Margaret Breckell	Tewkesbury (Maisemore Group)	
	Jan Bayhnam	Forest of Dean (FoD Health Forum)	
	Ruth Darbon	Cotswolds (Windrush Carers Support	
	Pearl Harris-Clarke	Gloucester (Nat. Union of Teachers; retired)	
	Paul Harries	Gloucester	
	Grace Marshall	Cheltenham	
	Pamela Tawse	Stroud (Uplands Day Care Service)	
	Elizabeth Price-Jones	Stroud (Gloucestershire Care Homes Association)	
	Bernard Westcarr	Gloucester (Black Elders Day Centre)	
Statutory Agency Representatives	Adrian Goode	Tewkesbury Borough LSP Dev. Co-ordinator	
	Clare Davis	Corporate Consultation Manager Glos. CC	
	Bill Wragge	Cotswold District Council	
Staff	Mick Churchward (P/T)	GOPA Facilitator	
	Freddie Cook (P/T)	Advocacy Co-ordinator	
	Sharon Swift (P/T)	Admin Assistant	

GOPA would like top take this opportunity to thank GCC, Glos. City Council, Stroud DC, Cotswold DC, Henry Smith Charity and Senseon for their financial support.