

Older People Q&A notes 26th Nov 2024

Venue: Kingsway United Reformed Church, Church Street, Slough SL1 1SZ

Time: 1pm – 3.30pm

The question time event was led by Slough 50plus Forum in conjunction with Slough Older People's Steering Group to enable older people to ask questions and voice their views on life in Slough. There were information stalls and a question-and-answer panel.

Panel Members

Rob Deeks (Panel Chair), Dexter Smith (Leader of the Council), Dr Leidon Shapo (Public Health Lead), Andrea Rodin (Principle Social Worker / Head of Locality & Hospital Social Work Team - SBC), Sonia Khan (SBC-Director of Strategy, Change and Resident Engagement), Mike Wooldridge (Integration Delivery Lead NHS Frimley), Jane Senior (Director of Commissioning -SBC), Vicki Atherton (Director of Operations – SCVS)

Guest - Councillor Balwinder Dhillon (Mayor of Slough).

Questions asked.

The following are the question asked by slough older people and the response from the panel.

1. What services are there in the community that promotes healthier ageing for older people?

There are voluntary and community groups in Slough which people can connect to reduce loneliness and isolation. There are larger or regional groups like Age Concern and Age UK and smaller localised groups such as Living in Harmony, Ujjala, Rise and Shine, Recycled Teenagers all provide activities to support aging well for older people. I would encourage older adults to join in those activities and utilise what's on offer.

We may need to improve awareness and accessibility so that people know what is available in the community, there are more information on activities in Slough for all ages on the directory of services [Slough Wellbeing directory](#)

There will be a new resource tool coming to Slough in the future to support our health practitioners, in particular GP's to have much more awareness of those activities and services that are available in the community as a much easier way of referring people to activities and services. This will allow practitioners when supporting older people with health needs to combine social activities alongside prescription to improve overall wellbeing.

Volunteering helps with social connection where you could use your time to contribute back to the community.

Additionally, there's opportunity for older people to go for health checks either through GP or through our local provider Solutions4Health.

Solution4Health is currently based at the Britwell offering drop-in session on Thursdays. They offer advice around healthy eating, weight management, gentle exercises, stop smoking etc.

2. As there is a lack of services to support dementia care what plans are being taken to improve services in Slough?

The Council working with health care partners, is working to improve dementia services. Starting with dementia health needs assessment led by public health covering a range of different areas such as.

- **Slough memory clinic** - provides assessments where people are diagnosed and a range of options for treatment and living well with dementia, dementia advisors and support locally and Alzheimer's Society.
- **Adult social care** offers support where people are diagnosed. There's a range of residential and nursing care provisions locally, Direct Payment, home care and alongside that, there are services available to carers as well.
- **Improving dementia diagnosis** to identify the number of people living with dementia in Slough.
- **NHS health checks** open to people over the age of 65yrs
- **Dementia information pack** has been developed to help people to identify signs and symptoms of dementia.
- **Utilization of assistive technology** to enable people to live independently.
- **The dementia task and finish group** are focused on improving services for people living with dementia and their carers making sure services that support people are provide connected care.

NHS recognises dementia as a priority; therefore, we will utilise additional investment from the Better Care Fund and work with local authority partners to implement priorities identified in the older people Strategy. I would take this opportunity to ask people here to get involved to improve services.

3. For a relative or partner (of a person with Dementia: what signs would really indicate that they need to see the GP for an assessment?

As part of Task and Finish Group, we're developing dementia awareness leaflet which outlines signs and symptoms to look for and dementia risk factor which, we hope will help families to know the symptoms and when to see the GP.

- Loss of memory
- Difficulty performing familiar tasks.
- Frequent mood and behaviour changes
- Difficulty with communication (talking reading, writing)
- Problem keeping track of things.

More information [NHS-Dementia signs](#)

Dementia risk factors:

This is around genetics, excessive drinking, smoking, air pollution, depression, head injury etc. [NHS.uk-Dementia Risk factors](#)

4. How should I explain to a person with Dementia especially if they can't see any need to a doctor, but I can?

- Dementia support starts with family and friends. It is vital that support is provided at the earliest when simple changes to a relative's memory is noticed. The dementia information pack will help families to identify changes to loved one's memory.
- If a relative has developed consistently 2-3 symptoms, then it is time to access GP assessment. In terms of diverse communities in Slough it is how we link those people up with health professionals in a comfortable, culturally appropriate environment in their community so that they're more proactive to seek support.
- Slough borough council together with public health is committed to engage with people as well as families to reduce stigma associated with dementia and mental health. For individuals/families experiencing dementia for the first time, they may try to mask the symptoms for a long time.

Recommendations

- Health checks to include dementia assessment.

5. When should we consider hospital transport instead of driving for a person with Dementia? and who organises this?

Families should try to discourage driving if they are concerned about a relative but encourage use of public transport. However, you can report to DVLA who has the power to revoke their license especially when there is clinical evidence of unfit to drive.

We are committed to continue for as long as it takes to link the services and to raise the awareness in the population.

6. Day centres for the elderly are much missed. What plans are there for, older people's services in Slough?

Day centres offered valuable contribution to people's wellbeing, however with the introduction of Strength-Based approach to Care provision the emphasis is more on personalised support for people with eligible care needs.

Services like Step Together provide activities for people with learning disabilities, with the service modelled around finding out the person's interests and then offer one to one support to take them out to activities which may be within the day centre, or it may be out in the community.

For people without eligible care and support needs, the directory of services can help them to find out what is available in terms community activities and referrals by the Community connectors who have a wealth of information for available community activities to link people in a more personalised way based on interests. More info here Sloughcvs.org/community-connectors

There is more work being done on Older People and Carer strategies focussing on prevention and wellbeing.

Whilst the day centre provision isn't directly provided by the council, we will review our services over years 2025/2026, looking at what is available and how well are they working, identify gaps and focus on what is needed in the community.

For unpaid carers offer, together with the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead and Bracknell Forest we have received grants through the National Accelerated Reform Fund (ARF), which among other carer services, will support carers respite offer.

7. In terms of recent changes made to the Procurement Act – how will this impact on service user choice in Slough?

The Procurement Act 2023 introduces reform of the United Kingdom's procurement regulation, which is about how we buy public services. It encourages public services to open to new procurement entrants from small businesses and social enterprises providing effectiveness and efficiency in public sector procurement.

As this is a much more technical question, we have contacted the Council's commercial team to provide you with a more detailed response however this will be on a later date as they could not be here today.

8. What will the impact of the Rachel Reeves budget be for Carers in Slough?

The carers allowance changes introduced in the Autumn Budget has increased the amount working carers can earn whilst retaining their carers allowance. Whilst this is positive, other benefits such as winter fuel allowance will have a knock-on effect to people who already struggling financially.

If carers are struggling financially, they are encouraged to get in touch with the debt and welfare team to explore how they can be supported. [Debt and welfare support](#)

9. What are the plans for redevelopment in Slough High Street, Queensmere & The Observatory?

Queens mere and the observatory are owned by Abu Dhabi investment Group, they have recently, put those two shopping centres on the market for sale. Observatory has potential to attract investors whilst Queensmere which is partially occupied may be repurposed making it a good investment proposition.

There are ongoing discussions under section 106 planning conditions that go with redevelopment of shopping centres to plan for combination of traders, arts and crafts and other interested parties to organising for

- Funded security officers.
- Public protection - police force officers being given a floor.
- Cinema provision

10. Post Office disappears in town centre, the bus routes locally and bus station are not fit for purpose. The town centre is failing what is being done about this?

High street regeneration

- We understand the desire to see change in the town centre, bidding will be under way post-Christmas and new year. Queensmere may be repurposed, and Observatory improved.

Bus Station:

- On-going discussion with insurers for refunds
- Bus stop to be replaced by alternative facility and improved signage and timetable.

Street Lighting

- Plans to introduce adaptive street lighting adapting brightness depending on the level of natural light.

11. Why is there no control over cyclists and scooter riders down the High Street? Some scooters have two people on them. They take no notice of pedestrians, practically knocking them down. Please do something about it.

- Scooter was launched as a nationwide scheme; however, they are not supposed to be ridden on a pavement or without helmet. Members of the public should remain vigilant and report any issues to the police who has the power to challenge under public order offence.
- Issue to be looked at the council, may be necessary to launch a soft campaign to address the matter.

12. We have residents living in a converted garage which is not suitable because of their health needs. So far, housing team has been unsupportive. We would like to ask how we get answers and how we find out where they are on the housing list?

The council made mistakes when introduced what was intended to be a self-service model by moving services online inadvertently creating a digital exclusion for a lot of people in Slough. However, we have learned from it, and we have plans to.

- Re-introduce “My Council” services.
- Improve how the website is accessed.
- Housing allocation to prioritise those in need and provide housing applicants with account number where they will be able to see their position on the housing list.
- Review with the view to re-introduce face to face services.

13. With Slough Borough Council in financial difficulty and the government’s decision to end winter fuel allowances, what steps can be taken to prevent pensioners in Slough from facing severe hardship this winter? Are there any alternative support measures the council or local partnerships can implement despite the limited budget?

We encourage those who struggling to get in touch with the debt and welfare officers for assessment. We encourage people to apply for Pension Credit

- About 12,000 people in Slough have been affected by the changes.
- The council’s £1million household support grant in the current financial year spent £800,000 in food vouchers.
- The Household Support grant will continue through the financial year 2025/26.
[Slough.gov.uk/household-support-fund](https://www.slough.gov.uk/household-support-fund)
- Support people to access employment.

Additionally, there warm spaces in Slough where people can go for tea/coffee and friendly chat.

[Slough warm spaces](#)

14. Can it be explained why Mr. Tuckley is paid £1,100 per day, also Annabel Scholes as interim chief finance officer £1,375 which includes agency fee?

The chief executive and chief financial officer have a wealth of experience in leading struggling local authorities. They have been appointed by the government to steer the council to financial efficiency and long-term sustainability.

Whilst their salaries may appear to be higher, it is below national average for a chief executive and within national average for a chief financial officer.

15. What are your aspirations for older people in Slough?

Jane

For older people to be happy and health and living their lives to full potential, and to be working in partnership to deliver on our older people's strategy.

Mike

My aspiration for older people is well-being and high levels of satisfaction so that they can say, Slough is a great place to live, and we enjoy living here and it provides everything we need.

Vicki

Let's listen, listen to our residents, listen to our older people. What works for them? What do they want? What's the best thing for you? someone said it earlier. We can tell you all the answers. We can give you some solutions. So, let's listen and work out what's best for all our community.

Sonia

My aspiration for Slough is for people of all ages to have voice and influence across the borough, to improve customer access. Make Slough age friendly town.

Dexter

Better life expectancy - for people in Slough to live longer and healthier.

Resident focused – supporting multigenerational household.

Andrea

My aspiration is for people to be able to access services with kindness and attention offering appropriate information.

For Slough to be active and thriving town where we can live, shop, and have fun without having to go to Windsor.

Leidon

Focus on prevention, for better healthy life expectancy, to close the gap with the national average we must work in partnership.