



GATESHEAD 50+

Strategic Plan
2024-2028



"I'm so pleased I plucked up the courage to enter this fantastic place. It's made my retirement so much easier."



"Having become a widow in my early 50s, this group has really helped my mental health by meeting people and enjoying many varied activities. The staff are fantastic – so friendly and enthusiastic."



Introduction

Gateshead 50+ is a charity that helps over 50s from Gateshead get the very best out of life. In consultation with our beneficiaries, we set up and support opportunities to socialise, exercise, and learn so that growing older in Gateshead is a positive experience.

Living in Gateshead, no matter one's age, can be a tough proposition. Gateshead is ranked 47th most deprived out of the 317 local authorities in England, and our centre is in the middle of the three most deprived wards out of the 22 wards that make up the borough of Gateshead (1).

Older people living in Gateshead are experiencing income deprivation that is 36.4% higher than the national average (1). As a result of this, Gateshead's residents live two years less than the English average. People born in Gateshead's most deprived wards will statistically live 15.1 years less (men) and 13.9 years less (women) than those living in the most affluent areas of our country (2).

In Gateshead, 33.9% of people aged over 65 live alone (1) People aged 50+ are 3.7 times more likely to be often lonely if they are in poor health, and 2.3 times more likely to be often lonely if they have money issues that prevent them from doing the things they want to do (3).

The cost-of-living crisis is having a far greater effect on people who have no savings and who are surviving on fixed incomes. Older people in Gateshead are far more likely to have to choose between heating and eating than those living in more affluent parts of England (4).

There is a very high proportion of pensioners living in poverty in Gateshead (19.4%), which is about 9,600 people (1). We know that women live longer than men and are more likely to be single pensioners and therefore are at increased risk of living in poverty. Nearly a quarter (23%) of single female pensioners are poor, the highest figure in 15 years (5).

The opportunities provided by Gateshead 50+ directly improve the lives of thousands of older people in our borough every year. In our most recent survey, our beneficiaries told us how they feel after taking part in our classes and activities, and the results are very positive:

- **81%** of people feel happier after taking part in our classes and activities
- **60%** visit their GP less since visiting us
- **86%** now socialise (and some even go on holiday) with someone they met at Gateshead 50+
- **100%** say we create a warm and welcoming environment for newcomers
- **60%** feel more relaxed
- **76%** say their physical health has improved
- **54%** feel more confident
- **63%** say their mental health has improved
- **59%** say they have more energy
- **100%** say they would recommend Gateshead 50+ to their friends and family

"It's a great way to learn new skills and meet with new people who are doing the same thing."

The context within which we operate and the wider external environment affecting Gateshead's older residents are not recent developments. Our borough and our region have existed in relative poverty and ill-health for decades - but never to this extent. What we are experiencing now is the effect of years of cuts to public services. Access to healthcare, leisure, and social services has been reduced year on year since 2010, leaving those most vulnerable in positions of destitution and despair. Over the past 14 years, Gateshead Council's net revenue budget has been reduced by 68% (6), resulting in a dramatic reduction in health, wellbeing, and social opportunities available to its residents.

This Strategic Plan will guide the direction of Gateshead 50+ for the next four years and will support the organisation's decision makers in maximising our resources to support people aged 50+ from Gateshead. It is a road map that will guide our efforts to help Gateshead's over 50s to live healthy and happy lives long into later life.

Mission

We improve the health, wellbeing, and happiness of people aged 50+ from across Gateshead by providing, promoting, and co-creating activities and opportunities that are empowering, engaging, and enjoyable.

Vision

Everyone over 50 from across the borough of Gateshead will live a full and happy life that is rich with opportunities to connect within their own community.

Our strategic priorities

1. We will increase the number and range of wellness opportunities for people aged 50+ in Gateshead
2. We will continue to listen to people aged 50+ from Gateshead to further understand and address barriers to participation in health and wellbeing activities.
3. We will strengthen links with partner organisations (e.g. NHS, local authority, and other VCSE organisations) to maximise opportunities for beneficiaries
4. We will continue to increase awareness of our new Gateshead 50+ brand to further increase the number of people aged 50+ accessing our activities
5. We will maintain our reputation as a trusted provider of services for over 50s in Gateshead
6. We will continue to evaluate the impact of our work to ensure we are meeting the needs of Gateshead residents aged 50+, and to ensure financial sustainability for the organisation

"I feel less isolated. I now have about 20 new pals."

"I really enjoy all of your activities and have made some friends for life. The instructors are fabulous, and I would recommend you to anyone."

Our strategic objectives

Reduce loneliness and isolation experienced by Gateshead residents aged 50+

- We will provide engaging and appropriate social activities in which people aged 50+ can participate
- We will provide spaces and facilities in which people can socialise
- We will ask our beneficiaries their opinions on what actions we can take to help reduce loneliness and social isolation
- We will offer free tea and coffee all day, every day so that people feel welcome to use our social spaces before and after classes and activities
- We will introduce every new beneficiary to an existing beneficiary and support further attendance by providing them with a copy of our activities guide
- We will regularly share our timetable of activities with referral partners and other organisations in our sector
- We will build opportunities to socialise into every activity we organise, not just the social activities

Improve the physical health of people aged 50+ to improve their experience of growing older in Gateshead

- We will ensure that there are at least two free or low-cost opportunities to exercise every day in our centre
- We will consult with people aged 50+ about exercise activities they would like to see taking place in our centre and around Gateshead
- We will support volunteer-run exercise activities, allowing us to maximise resources
- We will provide a wide range of exercise opportunities to encourage participation from as many diverse groups as possible
- We will provide opportunities for our beneficiaries to learn more about healthy eating and the benefits of exercise

Improve the mental wellbeing of Gateshead's over 50s

- We will offer at least three opportunities to learn and perform music each week
- We will offer a weekly free seated yoga/meditation class that is accessible to everyone
- We will offer at least three activities each week that allow people to be outdoors
- We will organise free weekly health walks that will take place in green spaces and encourage interaction with the natural environment
- We will maintain a peaceful and welcoming community garden with shelter from the elements in which people can sit in solitude or with friends
- We will work with a partner to provide talking therapies for our beneficiaries

Our Theory of Change



Increase and/or maintain the independence of older people to ensure Gateshead's over 50s are living happier and healthier lives

- We will provide opportunities to learn and develop skills and knowledge
- We will signpost our beneficiaries to appropriate activities and services that will support their independence
- We will engage with our beneficiaries as equals
- We will deliver a falls prevention programme across the borough that will reduce the risk of people falling and injuring themselves
- We will provide volunteering opportunities that will promote independence

Mitigate the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis on the lives of older people in Gateshead and increase our beneficiaries' financial security

- We will ensure that at least 75% of the exercise opportunities we provide are free of charge
- We will commit to providing free food and essential items every day through our community pantry
- We will support our beneficiaries in accessing an income maximisation assessment through our partner organisations
- We will provide information on reducing energy consumption by working with local experts
- We will offer free access to social opportunities through trips, cinema visits and cultural experiences

"I feel less lonely and isolated. I never came out of the house before this. I came out of my shell. My mental health has improved in a big way. This Monday group has done me the world of good."

- (1) Gateshead Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019)
- (2) Inequalities, it never rains but it pours – Gateshead DPH Annual Report (2017)
- (3) All the lonely people: Loneliness in Later Life – Age UK (2018)
- (4) Health Equity in England: The Marmot review 10 years on - Institute of Health Equity (2020)
- (5) Women's Budget Group (2019). DWP data reveals: women and children continue to be worst affected by poverty.
- (6) Gateshead Council Budget Statement by Martin Gannon, Council Leader (2024)



Over 50s living in Gateshead are at increased risk of experiencing deprivation and adverse outcomes as they grow older. These outcomes can include poor physical and mental health, a loss of independence, loneliness, social isolation, and financial insecurity.

Actions we will take

- Consult with over 50s to understand what opportunities and activities they'd like to see on offer in their local communities
- Develop an evolving programme of opportunities and activities designed to meet the needs and fulfill the wants of over 50s
- Create a welcoming and inclusive environment in which newcomers feel motivated to join and current participants feel motivated to stay
- Robustly evaluate our work and use the data we gather to inform future provision
- Maintain a reputation as a trusted provider of services for over 50s by keeping stakeholders informed of what we offer and how we make a difference via our website, social media, newsletter, communications, and reporting
- Build and maintain good relationships with other organisations and investors working to enrich the lives of over 50s

Over 50s can trust us to provide

Resulting in over 50s who feel



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GATESHEAD
OLDER PEOPLE'S
ASSEMBLY