

Quarterly Impact Report

Q2 July - September 2024

A few words from our CEO...

Welcome to the second quarter of Age UK Bolton's Activity and Impact Report! I'm excited to present this update, which highlights the progress we've made, the incredible impact of our services, and the community we continue to build together.

This quarter, we are thrilled to welcome two new members to our team: Kirti Mistry, our new Volunteering Team Leader, and Emily Wynn, our dedicated Information and Advice Officer. Their passion and expertise will help us strengthen our volunteer network and enhance the invaluable support we provide to older people in Bolton.

Our ongoing work with Age UK National and our partner charities across Greater Manchester remains a priority. We continue to align our efforts with a shared vision to ensure that Age UK services are at the heart of key regional strategies, service provisions, and commissioning conversations. By collaborating and working smarter, we aim to maximise the reach of our impact while being mindful of resource efficiency.

I'm proud to report that the first revised edition of our quarterly report was incredibly well received by trustees, commissioners, and partners alike. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and as a result, we have worked hard to build on that success in Quarter 2. This report is filled with case studies, updates, and statistics that showcase the incredible breadth of services we provide—from helping individuals like Rita regain their independence, to resolving energy billing errors, to supporting vulnerable clients with pension credit and financial advice. I truly believe these stories reflect the powerful, life-changing work that's possible when we come together to meet the diverse needs of older people in Bolton.

As you read through these pages, I hope you will be inspired by the tangible impact our services are having. The reach of our programs is growing, and the difference we make is being felt across the community. We've made significant strides, and we're just getting started!

Thank you for your continued support and belief in the work we do. We look forward to the exciting journey ahead and to further strengthening the collective impact of Age UK Bolton.

Kindest regards,



Lauren McKechnie
CEO



Emily Wynn



Kirti Mistry

Two new team members joined us this quarter: Emily Wynn, Information & Advice Officer and Kirti Mistry, Volunteer Team Leader

Case Study: A Holistic Approach to Health & Wellbeing



To set the scene, we want to tell you Rita's story. It illustrates the profound impact of Age UK Bolton's holistic approach to supporting individuals. By seamlessly connecting services, the charity helped transform the life of Rita, an 83-year-old widower, who faced significant health challenges and social isolation.

Rita, once an active and independent traveller, experienced a sharp decline in her health in December 2022. Diagnosed with diverticular colitis, diabetes, and the effects of multiple strokes, her memory became impaired, and her ability to navigate daily life was severely affected. A lengthy hospital stay highlighted her need for support, and upon discharge, she realized living independently would be a struggle.

Age UK Bolton's Home from Hospital team became Rita's first point of contact, providing reablement support and connecting her to a range of vital services:

- **Patient Transport, to assist when her daughter was unavailable.**
- **Information & Advice, securing Attendance Allowance and Pension Credit to alleviate financial stress.**
- **Home Services, for light cleaning and shopping while she regained her strength.**
- **Befriending, to help her combat loneliness and rebuild her confidence.**

Through befriending, Rita was matched with a volunteer who became a lifeline. The volunteer encouraged Rita to leave the house for activities like shopping, coffee mornings, and social groups. While these outings helped her regain some independence, Rita still struggled physically, finding it difficult to walk distances without becoming breathless. Her reduced strength and fitness further limited her activity levels.

Recognising the need for more targeted support, the volunteer encouraged Rita to attend a Strength & Balance class in September 2023. Initially apprehensive, Rita soon found herself among like-minded peers with similar health concerns. She realised her struggles were not unique, and the shared understanding within the group helped ease her fears.

After several weeks of consistent attendance, Rita began to see tangible improvements. She could climb stairs without losing breath, her legs felt stronger, and her confidence grew.

Motivated by her progress, Rita started attending sessions independently and even stayed afterward to socialise. Over the past year, Rita has become a regular at the class and now helps run the social group afterward.



Rita reflected on her journey:

"The exercises taught in class are very similar to what my doctors suggested during recovery, but it's so much easier and more enjoyable doing them as part of a group. I never felt motivated enough to do them on my own. I feel so much better after attending the Strength & Balance class – so much so that I even built up the courage to travel abroad on a family holiday, something I thought I'd never do again."

Rita's story showcases how Age UK Bolton's integrated services deliver far-reaching benefits, improving physical health, rebuilding confidence, and fostering social connections. It is a testament to the power of community-driven support in transforming lives.



Information & Advice

The majority of appointments are for benefit checks and applications for Attendance Allowance, Housing Benefit and Pension Credit, in that order.

In July the Government announced that pensioners are no longer automatically eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment and that they would have to claim a benefit such as Pension Credit to become eligible. This prompted an increase in enquiries for benefit checks.

Case Study: Pension Credit Project - Unlocking Financial Support

Mr. W, a Housing Association tenant living alone and managing respiratory issues, initially seemed ineligible for Pension Credit due to his reduced State Pension and two small private pensions. However, after identifying potential eligibility for Attendance Allowance, we referred him to our partner, Bolton Community Advice, who successfully secured the high rate of Attendance Allowance for him.

Following this, we conducted a benefits check that revealed Mr. W qualified for Pension Credit guarantee credit and savings credit, amounting to £48.88 per week. This entitlement unlocked further financial support, covering his full eligible rent and Council Tax, totalling £9,759.36 annually.

This intervention significantly improved Mr. W's financial stability, ensuring he could better manage his personal care and living expenses.

702 contacts

161 new clients

11 of those, the number of information and signposting only

26 of those, the number of information and signposting only

93 telephone appointments

59 office appointments

37 home visits



Case Study: Energy Project - Resolving a Billing Error

Mrs. C, an 80-year-old client living alone and managing multiple health conditions, faced a two-year ordeal with British Gas after being wrongly billed for a property she had no connection to. Despite her repeated efforts, the issue persisted, causing her significant stress and impacting her mental health.

The problem arose when British Gas mistakenly linked Mrs. C's Meter Point Reference Number (MPRN) to another property following a system update in early 2023. Bills addressed to "The Occupier" and later to her name became increasingly threatening, leaving Mrs. C considering payment to end the situation.

Our team visited Mrs. C on 3rd October 2024 and identified the duplicated MPRN. After lengthy discussions with British Gas, we resolved the issue, secured an official apology, and obtained £100 compensation for Mrs. C.

In addition, we provided tailored energy efficiency advice, helping Mrs. C improve her home's efficiency and achieve significant savings:

- **£566 annual energy bill savings**
- **1,604 kWh annual energy reduction**

More than three weeks later, Mrs. C confirmed no further bills had arrived, marking a successful resolution and significant improvement in her mental well-being.



**£374,
772.05**

total financial
gains for I&A
clients

Home from Hospital

It is important our staff are easily recognised whilst out and about in the community and in the hospital. We have now introduced Age UK Bolton Home from Hospital T-shirts and jackets to give us a more professional presence.



643

Discharge & Aftercare clients receiving care

650

Admissions Avoidance clients receiving care

1293

clients accessing in Q2

0.96%

Age UK Bolton Discharge & Aftercare average rate

8.4%

Bolton average 30-day readmission rate

Case Study: Restoring Independence and Confidence for a 91-Year-Old Client

Age UK Bolton recently supported a 91-year-old woman living alone in a first-floor flat rented from Bolton at Home. Previously independent, she managed her daily tasks despite living with poor eyesight and hearing. However, after a fall and subsequent hospitalization, her confidence was significantly shaken, leaving her struggling to resume her former routine.

Upon discharge, the client was referred to Age UK Bolton by the Royal Bolton Hospital. Although initially supported by Home Support Reablement (HSR) for a week, she quickly began to recover physically. Yet her reduced confidence and the challenges of winter conditions presented obstacles to reclaiming her independence.

Before the fall, the client routinely visited her local bank to withdraw cash, paid bills at the post office, and handled her shopping independently. However, with no supporting family or friends, and a savings account that didn't allow direct debits, she feared falling into arrears. Adding to her difficulties, her savings card was lost, and she was unsure how to transfer funds or establish direct debits.

Addressing Key Challenges

The team at Age UK Bolton provided a multi-faceted solution tailored to the client's needs:

1. Financial Stability

Assisted the client in opening a current account and acquiring a contactless debit card.

Updated her State Pension and Attendance Allowance payment details to the new account.

Liaised with utility companies to place bills on hold while setting up direct debits for rent, council tax, TV licence, Careline, utilities, and phone services.

Replaced her lost savings account card and PIN, ensuring access to her funds.

2. Practical and Health-Related Support

Transitioned medication delivery from a paid service to a free and reliable provider.

Escorted the client to the bank and to Age UK Bolton's Information & Advice (I&A) service to re-submit a housing benefit application that had been previously lost.

Coordinated with Bolton's bin assist service to manage waste collection safely.

3. Combatting Isolation and Future Planning

Referred the client to Halliwell's befriending service, where she is now on the waiting list for a match.

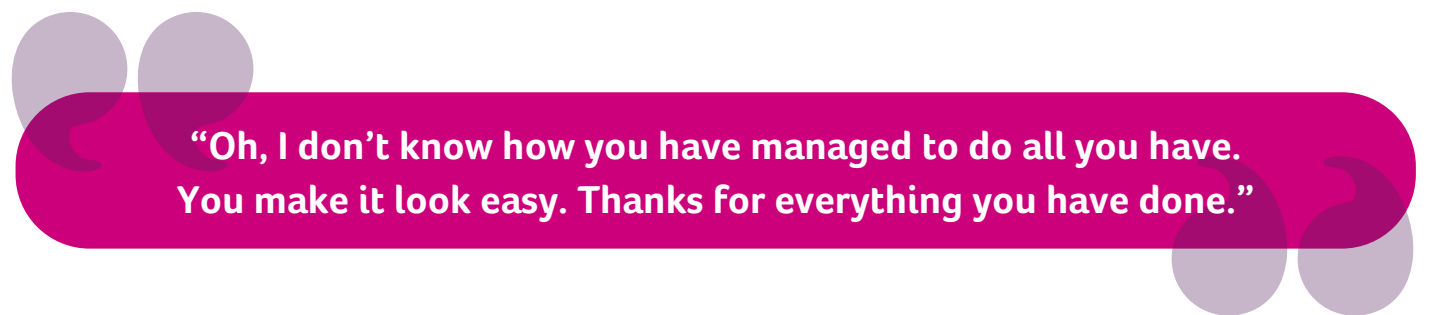
Completed a referral to HOOP (Housing Options for Older People), with an upcoming visit scheduled to explore moving to accommodation with on-hand support and social activities.

Involved an occupational therapist (OT) to assess her living situation and determine additional support needs.

Impact

Within weeks, the client's life had transformed. She regained control over her finances, with all income deposited into her new account and direct debits covering her bills. Her new contactless bank card allowed her to shop independently without the need to travel for cash or visit the post office. Free, timely medication delivery was established, and her bins were managed with ease.

While awaiting further support from the befriending service and HOOP referral, the client expressed relief and gratitude:



“Oh, I don't know how you have managed to do all you have. You make it look easy. Thanks for everything you have done.”

This case demonstrates how Age UK Bolton's holistic approach can restore independence and confidence, even in the most complex situations. By addressing practical, emotional, and financial needs, the organisation empowered this client to move forward with newfound security and peace of mind.

Strength & Balance

Falls Prevention in Care Homes: Train the Trainer Event

As part of the ongoing Falls Prevention in Care Homes Project, Age UK Bolton hosted a successful "Train the Trainer" event at the Ageing Well Centre. The session welcomed 18 participants from eight different care homes, including staff from homes new to the programme and newly recruited team members from existing partner care homes.

The event provided a valuable forum for care home staff to share experiences and address challenges in delivering strength and balance exercises to residents. Key issues discussed included motivating residents, managing distractions and noise, building confidence in delivering sessions, and accommodating a variety of health conditions.

Solutions and strategies emerged through collaborative discussion, such as involving family members to encourage participation, conducting sessions in quieter, separate spaces, tailoring exercises to individual health needs, and using appropriate music to enhance engagement.

Certificates of Attendance were distributed to participants, reinforcing their commitment to improving resident well-being. For some attendees, this marked the start of their journey with the Strength & Balance programme, further extending the reach of the initiative.

The event was widely regarded as a success, showcasing the benefits of shared learning and collaboration. Building on this momentum, plans are in place to host these events regularly, creating an ongoing forum for care home staff to exchange ideas and strengthen their practice. Future sessions will also integrate training on related topics, such as oral health and nutrition, to highlight their role in enhancing strength, mobility, and overall well-being for care home residents.

This initiative demonstrates Age UK Bolton's commitment to fostering a culture of continuous learning and innovation, ensuring care home staff are equipped to deliver impactful, resident-focused support.



605

users attending
sessions

269

instructor-led
sessions

3312

total
attendances

Social Prescribing

Allotment Site at Rawly Road: Wild & Fruity Community Garden

With the Community garden now holding a bank account and having a committee, we have started to look at funding options. In July we put together a bid for Awards For All through the National Lottery. It felt like a long time had passed while we waited for the outcome but, in September, we had the wonderful news that we had been awarded £9561. This money will help to make the garden more accessible and help to fund future projects that we have planned. We hope to get most of the work done over the winter so we can have a launch day in the spring.

In August we held a volunteer clear up day; our main focus was to dig out in preparation for the fire pit, and get our small greenhouse fitted with glass. Unfortunately, not as many volunteers came as we expected, so we focused on the fire pit area. It was a heavy day of weeding, digging and moving lots of soil, but we were more than happy with the finished result. We are now ready for the builders to come back and check it before they start to build

We met with Christine, the Community Life Champion from the local Asda. We had a productive meeting about upcoming funding options and how Asda could make small donations to the garden, such as tools and paint. Soon after our first meeting, we received a kind donation of paint for our shed and spring bulbs, which we will be planting with one of the upcoming groups.



113
total referrals

Ageing Well: Ageing in Place Pathfinder

This quarter saw our team busily working their way through the second year of the Ageing in Place Pathfinder, in what has been described as its 'create stage', being mindful also of how quickly we will soon find ourselves in the final third year phase, 'sustain' in 2025. Therefore, whilst we have been creative and very much still working on our social and creative offer, we also began work exploring ways to hand over these to the community, over time.



New Activity: The Pot Luck Club

The Pot Luck Club was created specifically as a consequence of the opening of Lever Gardens. This group is very much seen by both staff and attendees as a bridging opportunity, in that it involves both Lever Garden residents and those living in the wider Little Lever community.

The Pot Luck Club attracted 97 attendances during this period and interestingly, as the group has become more established, the percentage of community residents attending has risen.

11

weekly community-based activities

1026

total attendances

Case Study: Community Inclusion - Breaking Down Barriers

The Ageing in Place Pathfinder (AiPP) team, in collaboration with Age UK Bury and Little Lever Village Voices, recently contributed to a vibrant and inclusive family concert. This uplifting event brought together diverse groups from the local community, with enthusiastic participation from the Village Voices Choir and The Children's Happy Sign Singing Group.

The concert showcased the unique ability of music and community spirit to bridge generational divides. Notably, members of Bolton Cares—a group of younger older adults—took to the stage with confidence, performing for an audience of 100. Their participation delighted attendees, particularly the Village Voices Choir members, who appreciated the intergenerational connection and energy.

The event also highlighted the power of collective effort: many participants brought along family members, with some groups attending with four or five relatives. This strong turnout emphasised the concert's role in fostering togetherness and inclusion within the Little Lever community.

Underpinning this success was the dedicated support and encouragement of the AiPP team, who worked tirelessly to make the event accessible and welcoming for all. This concert exemplifies how projects like AiPP deliver outcomes that far exceed expectations, creating a ripple effect of positivity and connection across the community.



Our priorities for Q3

1

Work closely with Bolton Council, Bolton & Bury Citizens Advice Bureau and other local partners to support claim for Pension Credit for those who are eligible.

2

Commencing 2025 onwards, contract negotiations with commissioners, partners and stakeholders

3

Work with Portfolio Design and Bolton Council to launch the Home Exercise Resource to support Strength & Balance (Falls Prevention) in the community

4

Update to Age UK Bolton branding, in line with Age UK national, and continue to develop our internal and external communication

5

Host our Annual General Meeting in December!

