

Quarterly Impact Report

Q3 October - December 2024

A few words from our CEO...

As I reflect on this quarter, I'm filled with immense pride and gratitude for the incredible work our team, volunteers, and partners have achieved. Together, we've continued to build a more connected, supported, and empowered community for older adults across Bolton.

This report celebrates some remarkable milestones. Our social media platforms have experienced a surge in engagement, a testament to our renewed focus on sharing stories that resonate with our audience and spotlight our partnerships with local organisations. The warmth and dedication of our volunteers have shone brightly, with nine new individuals joining our ranks and many being honoured for their long-standing service at our Annual General Meeting.

We've also seen significant growth in participation across our Ageing Well activities, from creative workshops and fitness classes to festive events that brought joy during the colder months. These initiatives are more than just services—they're lifelines that reduce isolation and foster a sense of belonging.

Our befriending and Home from Hospital services continue to provide crucial support, with inspiring stories of lives transformed through small yet impactful acts of kindness. These stories remind us why we do what we do and the difference we can make when we listen to the needs of our community.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to addressing challenges, from increasing demand for our services to sustaining resources in a changing landscape. We'll continue to adapt, innovate, and work collaboratively to ensure that Age UK Bolton remains a cornerstone of support for older people in our borough.

To everyone who has contributed to our journey this quarter—thank you. Your passion, dedication, and generosity are the heart of our success. Together, we're creating a brighter future for older adults in Bolton.



Lauren McKechnie

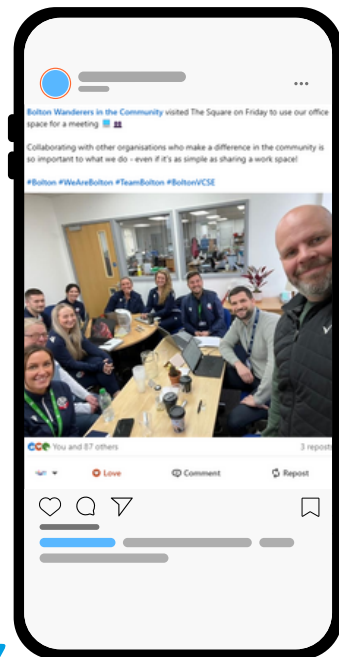
Lauren McKechnie
Chief Executive



Communications and engagement

All our social media platforms gained at least 30 followers during this quarter, representing a significant increase on the previous quarter.

The surge in LinkedIn followers is due to a renewed focus on the platform, with the aim of highlighting our work with other organisations in the local community. Posts in collaboration with other Bolton-based organisations have seen some of our best engagement to date. For example, our post with Bolton Wanderers in the Community reached 1478 individual users and received 88 reactions.



The bi-weekly Staff Update, introduced in September 2024, was developed across this quarter. It has since become a valuable source of information for staff, who - being based across two different sites, as well as out in the community - are often not aware of the goings-on in the Charity.

As part of ongoing efforts to strengthen Age UK Bolton's brand, a new email signature was introduced for all staff. We now have an updated, consistent email signature across the organisation, cementing our professionalism to our stakeholders.



1488
total followers

+37
followers vs
previous quarter

1143
interactions (likes,
comments, shares)

73,418
total content
views



435
total followers

+43
followers vs
previous quarter

321
interactions (likes,
comments, shares)

6775
total content
views



438
total followers

+32
followers vs
previous quarter

303
interactions (likes,
comments, shares)

6819
total content
views

Volunteering

We were delighted to warmly welcome 9 new volunteers to Age UK Bolton during Quarter 3. These individuals will be supporting our vital work across the following areas and services:

3
strength and
balance
volunteers

3
AiPP (Little
Lever) class
volunteers

2
reception and
admin volunteers

1
befriending
volunteer

The addition of these brilliant 9 individuals, brings our running total of active volunteers for the quarter to an incredible 197!

We also hosted our Annual General Meeting in Quarter 3, where a number of our volunteers were presented with their prestigious long service awards. The Mayor of Bolton, Cllr. Andrew P Morgan JP, and Mayoress, Karen Holdsworth kindly joined us to hand out the honours. We are always looking for ways to celebrate and acknowledge the incredible contribution from our volunteers – celebrating so many individuals 5, 10... even 25 years of commitment to our Charity was truly humbling.

Client feedback

Margaret's kindness and friendship make our dance class a joy.
- Doris, volunteer-led class member

Jeff's patience and enthusiasm give us purpose and a reason to
leave home.

- Pauline, volunteer-led class member



Information & Advice

Age UK Bolton's Information & Advice (I&A) service continues to play a pivotal role in supporting older people in Bolton, particularly during a time of heightened challenges surrounding the Winter Fuel Allowance and Pension Credit. Our team remains committed to ensuring financial resilience, offering guidance and expertise, and leading in partnership working to achieve meaningful outcomes for our clients and the community.

Contacts made:

1395

total contacts

460

total new clients

49

new energy clients

Appointments conducted:

216

telephone appointments

100

office appointments

96

home visits

**£313,
566.05**

secured through
benefits checks,
Attendance Allowance,
Pension Credit and other
entitlements

Streamlined Service Delivery

A redesigned I&A service ensures all new referrals are seen within two weeks. Clients who cannot be accommodated are signposted appropriately, eliminating waiting lists and increasing efficiency.

Strengthening Partnerships

The I&A team's collaborative efforts highlight their leadership in partnership working. Notable initiatives include:

- Supporting clients through a free legal advice clinic in partnership with Bolton Law Society and six local solicitors.
- Developing robust reporting systems to ensure consistent data on Will signings.

Addressing the Pension Credit and Winter Fuel Allowance crisis

In response to the UK Government's changes to Winter Fuel Payments for pensioners not receiving Pension Credit, Age UK Bolton has taken a leadership role in Bolton's coordinated response:

- **Leadership Role:** Appointed lead provider for Bolton, presenting our work at the Greater Manchester Live Well Financial Resilience Group.
- **Collaborative Communications:** Partnered with Bolton Council to draft and distribute letters to affected residents, ensuring clarity and accessibility.
- **Weekly Coordination Meetings:** Initiated meetings with advice agencies across Bolton to manage capacity and ensure seamless support.

Community Access Points

These initiatives have significantly increased the number of benefit checks conducted, maximizing financial support for Bolton residents during this critical period.

- **Bolton UCAN Centre:** Weekly drop-in sessions every Monday.
- **Bolton Central Library:** Drop-in support every Friday afternoon.
- **Helpful House:** Hosted sessions every Friday morning at The Square reception area.

Spotlight on Success: Case Studies

Energy Project: Mrs. C's Battle with Utility Bills

Mrs. C, an 80-year-old living alone with multiple health conditions, was facing threatening gas bills for a property she didn't own. After two years of stress and unsuccessful resolution attempts with British Gas, Age UK Bolton intervened.

- **Action Taken:**
 - Identified a billing system error and resolved the issue with British Gas.
 - Secured £100 compensation for Mrs. C's stress.
 - Provided tailored energy-saving advice, enabling annual energy savings of £566 and 1,604 kWh.
- **Outcome:**
 - No further erroneous bills received.
 - Improved mental health and financial stability for Mrs. C.

Pension Credit Advocacy: Mr. D and the Fight for Pension Credit Entitlement

Mr. D and his wife faced financial instability due to incorrect advice from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), leading to a transition to Universal Credit (UC) and loss of legacy benefits.

- **Action Taken:**
 - Urgent intervention with the DWP national policy team to rectify the mistake.
 - Reinstated Pension Credit, Housing Benefit, and Council Tax Support.
 - Secured three months of backdated payments and preserved eligibility for the Winter Fuel Payment.
- **Outcome:**
 - Annual financial improvement: £9,828.
 - Additional £1,928 received in time for Christmas.

Client **feedback**



"Thank you so much for all you've done for me. It's so nice to know there's **someone there to help**. Much appreciated."

"I wouldn't have received Attendance Allowance **without your help**. I am extremely grateful."



Ageing Well

Befriending

Demand for our befriending services increased, with referrals rising to 48 this quarter.

Active Matches: 43 face-to-face and 18 telephone matches supported.

Volunteer Impact: Volunteers contributed an incredible 1,144 hours, offering companionship to isolated older adults.

- Billy visits Ken twice a week, forming a genuine friendship that's mutually fulfilling.
- Geraldine continues visiting her befriender even after they moved into residential care, showcasing exceptional dedication.

61

active matches supported

1,114

hours of befriending given by volunteers

Social events

Our social events continue to thrive despite seasonal challenges:

- **Afternoon Tea:** Welcomed 47 attendees, one of the highest turnouts this year.
- **Friendship Café:** Hosted 21 guests, featuring a visit from local artist Verona Medhurst and her stunning handmade models.
- **Festive Highlights:** A joint event for Lads@Lunch and Friendship Café clients included a heart-warming performance by Eagley Junior's Y3 pupils.

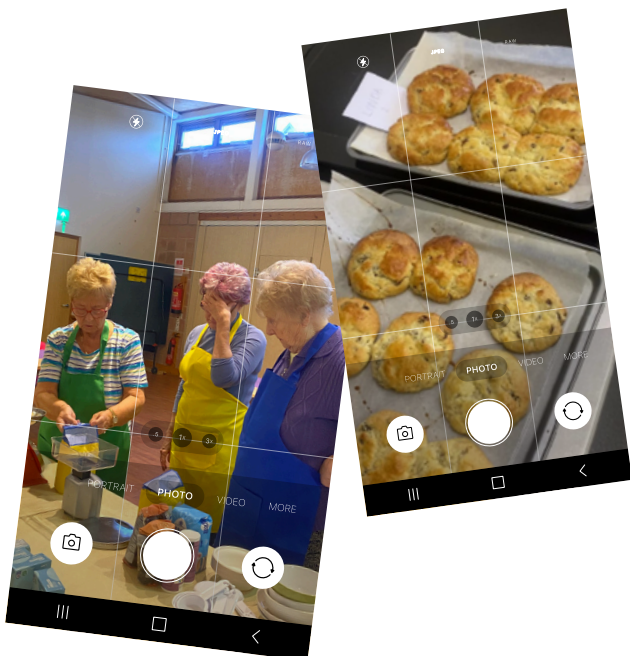
Activities & lunch groups

The Ageing Well Centre is pleased to report it again received a 5-star food hygiene rating following the latest visit from the council's environmental health team, with no recommendations. The inspectors particularly liked our procedures for dealing with allergies, which has really boosted and encouraged the team, particularly with us increasing the number of cooking and eating activities at the Centre.



This quarter featured 67 groups and classes covering wellbeing, exercise, and leisure, alongside festive breaks and adverse weather challenges:

- **Creative Activities:** Pat a Cake cooking classes showcased sausage rolls and scones. Art workshops thrived, with certificates awarded to proud participants. To meet growing demand, self-employed artists were introduced.
- **Exercise Classes:** New chair-based sessions launched, though venue hire costs and volunteer availability remain challenges. Plans are underway to trial formal paid-for services to sustain offerings.
- **Lunch Groups:** Served 1,423 hot meals across five groups, with glowing feedback for dedicated volunteers like Ann, whose efforts were described as "exemplary."
- **Board Games:** Declining participation in games like dominoes and Scrabble is under review to uncover reasons and spark renewed interest



Funding and donations

- **£1000 from the Age UK Winter campaign** - purchased £500 in vouchers for community groups to spend on keeping participants refreshed and warm at their classes; £500 on 'Winter Warm & Well' packs for 50 older people, including items such as a warm blanket, microwaveable wheat pack and soup.
- **£2040 from the Warm Spaces Campaign** to support participants at classes in Little Lever and the Ageing Well Centre to keep warm and towards energy costs.
- **£3250 for IT equipment** and other relevant costs towards a 'new' IT drop-in room at the Ageing Well Centre from Bolton Libraries, via the UKSPF Community Digital Inclusion Fund
- **500 Christmas gifts from Dunelm**, purchased by their very thoughtful and compassionate customers as part of this year's supporting Age UK Campaign. We were overwhelmed by the generosity and kindness of all involved and not only distributed these gifts to the older people directly engaged with Age UK Bolton, but to partner voluntary organisations supporting older people across the borough.



Ageing Well: Ageing in Place Pathfinder

As we approach the final year of the AiPP project, the team has been working with renewed enthusiasm to deliver innovative activities and events that enrich our community. This quarter saw the launch of a new and permanent group that is expanding our service delivery in exciting ways, alongside the continuation of popular one-off events.

The team bid farewell to Gaynor, one of our exceptional Ageing Well Coordinators, who stepped down due to unforeseen family commitments. Gaynor has been a vital part of the project since its inception, known for her energy, creativity, and ability to create meaningful community connections. Her contributions over the last 18 months will leave a lasting legacy. Keith, our remaining coordinator, continues to lead with dedication, stepping up to take on additional responsibilities and ensuring the Pathfinder's success. His commitment to the project is unwavering as he continues in his role until January 2026.

Over the quarter, the team delivered 13 community activities, engaging a remarkable 822 attendees despite facing severe weather challenges.

13

community activities delivered

822

attendances

Exciting developments

- **Lever Gardens Pot Luck Club:** The Pot Luck Club continues to thrive, with participants honing their skills in board games and quizzes while fostering new friendships. The group's success lies in its inclusive nature, bringing together residents from Lever Gardens and the wider community to create bonds and challenge misconceptions about access to extra care facilities.
- **Village Voices Community Choir:** Our choir remains the most popular activity delivered by the Pathfinder. Affectionately referred to as "Gaynor's Choir" in honour of its original coordinator, it continues to grow in size and reputation. Meeting at a local church, the group has developed a strong sense of camaraderie, with many participants engaging in other AiPP activities.
- **Civic Involvement:** The community remains actively involved in shaping local issues through forums, strategy meetings, and partnerships. This quarter, the team identified two "Community Reporters" supported by Yellow Jigsaw partners. These reporters are beginning to share stories about their local area, AiPP activities, and broader community issues, amplifying the project's impact.



Case Study: The Little Lever Supper Club

At a community event, a conversation between two local residents and a team member highlighted a shared struggle: widowhood had left them hesitant to dine out alone, despite their love for meals shared in good company.

Motivated to address this, the team collaborated with a local restaurant to launch a supper club. After securing preferential rates and promoting the initiative through posters, social media, and word of mouth, the first meeting exceeded expectations with 50% more attendees than anticipated.

The Little Lever Supper Club now hosts over 15 residents per session and has become a vital social outlet for participants, fostering connections and combating loneliness. This initiative is a shining example of how listening to the community can lead to meaningful and lasting change.



Social prescribing

In Quarter 3, our Social Prescribing service received 98 new referrals, bringing the year-to-date total to 332—70% of the annual target. Despite a temporary waiting list of 17 due to staff sickness and leave, our Link Worker engaged with 61 patients through home visits and phone consultations, offering tailored support and referrals.

Most referrals were for patients with social needs and long-term health conditions, with 19 directed to Age UK Bolton services. Age demographics showed 57 patients aged 61–90, highlighting the wide-ranging impact of our service.

98

new referrals
received

19

directed to Age UK
Bolton services

Wild & Fruity community garden

November was a milestone month for the Wild & Fruity Community Garden. Thanks to a generous £1,200 grant from the Asda Foundation, we began planning much-needed improvements to the site's toilet facilities, ensuring they meet the needs of all visitors, particularly those with health vulnerabilities. The work will commence in the coming months as part of the garden's preparation for its Spring 2025 relaunch. Progress continued with site maintenance and development:

- A small greenhouse was erected and fitted with glass.
- The large greenhouse was cleared, preparing it for future use as a creative workshop space.
- A significant clean up day, supported by Bolton at Home's donation of a skip, helped remove accumulated rubbish, and two tonnes of soil were relocated within the site.



Case study: restoring family time

When a referral was made for Audrey, an elderly woman with dementia, her daughter expressed feeling more like a carer than a daughter. To support them, we:

- Referred Audrey to adult services for both a needs and carer's assessment.
- Arranged interim support through Age UK Bolton's Home from Hospital Team.
- Provided information on Bolton Carers Support and Bolton Dementia Support.

The daughter later shared how these resources helped: **"Somebody has been from Occ Health and assessed her, and Age UK is visiting tomorrow. It's been very useful—thank you."**

This case highlights the importance of tailored support in easing caregiver strain and improving quality of life for families.

Health & Social Care: Home from Hospital

100%

of clients would
recommend the
service

Despite facing some capacity challenges, the team demonstrated resilience and delivered outstanding outcomes. Through a proactive and solution-focused approach, we've minimised the impact on service delivery, supporting nearly as many individuals as in the previous quarter. Their efforts contributed to exceptionally low readmission rates, well below the Bolton average, reflecting the high quality of care provided.

Additional capacity: Supported 117 D&A and 261 AA clients (378 combined), delivering 2,250 support contacts.

Case studies

D&A Client: Rediscovering Independence After Stroke

Mr. D, an 83-year-old stroke survivor, and his wife, Mrs. A, were struggling to adjust to life at home following his hospital discharge. The transition was overwhelming, leaving both feeling uncertain and isolated. Age UK Bolton stepped in, providing regular welfare visits and a listening ear for emotional support. Through personalised referrals to local services, Mr. D gradually regained his independence, improving his confidence in day-to-day activities. This support also eased the emotional and physical strain on Mrs. A, allowing her to better navigate her caregiving role. Together, they are now more empowered and connected to their community.

AA Client: Finding Strength After Loss

Mrs. A, an 80-year-old widow, was facing profound emotional and physical challenges following the loss of her husband. She felt isolated, grieving, and unsure how to manage her day-to-day tasks. Through the Home from Hospital (HfH) program, she received tailored welfare visits that provided companionship and encouragement. Age UK Bolton also helped her reconnect by introducing her to IT support, enabling her to keep in touch with loved ones online, and linked her to community resources for ongoing support. With these interventions, Mrs. A has started to rebuild her confidence, manage her grief, and re-engage with the world around her.

GM Sort Client: A Lifeline for Stability

Mrs. G, an 85-year-old woman, faced a perfect storm of challenges, including financial instability, housing insecurity, and mobility difficulties. Feeling overwhelmed and at risk of homelessness, she turned to Age UK Bolton for help. Our team provided compassionate and holistic support, addressing her urgent needs. This included practical debt advice to ease her financial burden, a referral to audiology services to improve her hearing, and housing assistance to secure her living situation. Thanks to this intervention, Mrs. G avoided homelessness and gained a renewed sense of stability and security, significantly improving her quality of life.

Discharge & Aftercare:

352

D&A clients supported

1.13%

30-day readmission rate

0.28%

7-day readmission rate

Admissions Avoidance:

259

AA clients supported

1.15%

30-day readmission rate

0.38%

7-day readmission rate

Health & Social Care: Strength & Balance

Quarter 3 was another busy one for our Strength & Balance team as we continue to deliver a high degree of provision across the borough. Across the quarter we delivered:

193

instructor-led
sessions

327

users attending
sessions

2552

total
attendances



Case study: Finding Strength and Confidence: MT's Journey

When 70-year-old MT stumbled upon our awareness event at Little Lever Library, she was intrigued. Eager to improve her fitness but hesitant about traditional gyms, she decided to give our Strength and Balance classes a try.

From her first session, MT embraced the challenge. Despite initial self-doubt, she grew stronger and more confident, often sharing her delight:

"I can't believe how good and [how much] fitter these classes make me feel; it's crazy, isn't it?"

Her newfound confidence opened doors to even more opportunities. MT explored backward chaining sessions at Nuffield Health, joined wellbeing classes, and even took up gentle dance classes—each step further improving her health and happiness. Inspired by her progress, she began considering volunteering to help others find their own strength.

However, a personal challenge—car troubles—took a toll on MT's mental health, leading her to withdraw from activities. Recognising the importance of staying connected, our team reached out, offering support and guidance. We introduced her to the 'Someone To Talk To' service, where she has now scheduled her first session. MT's story reflects the heart of what we do: empowering individuals to thrive physically, mentally, and emotionally. Through tailored support and a sense of community, we help people like MT rediscover their strength and build brighter futures.

Our **priorities** for Q4

1 Working with partners, funders and commissioners to plan services for 2025-26

2 Continuing to invest in staff support and development across the organisation with a particular focus on staff wellbeing

3 Strengthening connections and partnership with other VCSE organisations working with, for and supporting older people across the borough