



COMMUNITY ACTION
NETWORK

Voices of the Future: Research Report

September - November 2025



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Executive Summary

BCP’s State of Ageing report (2024) highlights a significant demographic shift: between 2026 and 2031, over half of the growth in the older population will be among those aged 65–74, as the post-war baby boom generation enters its mid to late 60s.

This presents a timely opportunity for commissioners to plan how best to support the needs of this emerging group.

To inform this planning, the Trusted Reviewer team at CAN partnered with BCP Council, older people’s services, and community groups to explore what contributes to a happy, healthy life for adults aged 60–75.

The research project, Voices of the Future, gathered insights through online and in-person questionnaires focused on the Five Ways to Wellbeing: Connection, Being Active, Taking Notice, Keep Learning, and Giving, as well as attitudes toward digital technology and factors that positively impact daily life.

Over 104 days, 130 residents from across the BCP area shared their views.

This report presents the findings and analysis of the research project, offering valuable evidence to shape future strategies for supporting younger older adults.



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Introduction

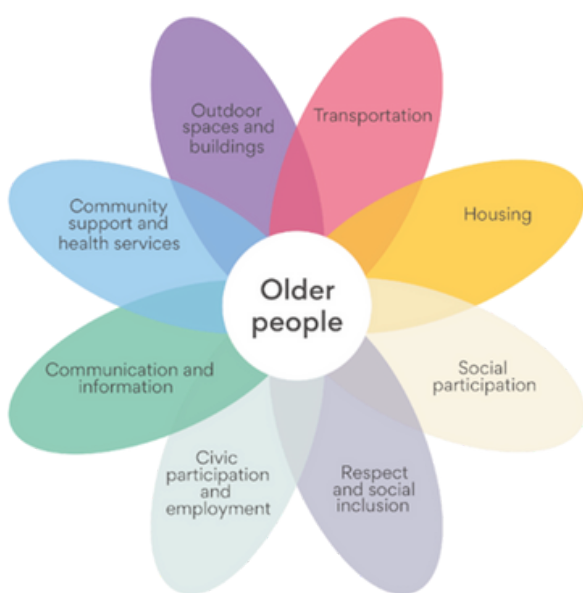
The Voices of the Future (VOTF) research project, led by Community Action Network (CAN) in partnership with Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council, aims to strengthen age-friendly practices across the region.

Building on BCP Council’s Age Friendly Action Plan (2023-2025), Adult Social Care Prevention Strategy (2025-2030), and the World Health Organization’s Age Friendly Communities Framework, the project began with a comprehensive desktop review.

The review mapped existing services for older adults (60+) across BCP, drawing on intelligence from statutory, voluntary, and community partners.

It provides a baseline for understanding current provision and gaps, shaped by challenges such as health inequalities, housing insecurity, transport accessibility, and digital exclusion.

Insights from the State of Ageing in BCP report (2024) reinforced the urgency of inclusive, accessible services in a region where 41% of residents are aged 50+.



Desktop Review: Key Findings



AGE-FRIENDLY DOMAIN

KEY FINDINGS

Social Participation

- BCP has a strong network of community-based initiatives promoting inclusion and wellbeing for older adults, such as activity groups, befriending services and tailored support to reduce isolation and maintain independence.
- Community hubs and volunteer-led schemes further strengthen opportunities for connection, particularly for those facing mobility or health challenges.

Communication & Information

- Effective communication is recognised as essential for ageing well. Mixed approaches are used to ensure accessibility, such as printed materials and in-person engagement.
- Initiatives like the library-based IT support and learn courses aim to build confidence and inclusion.

Community Support & Health Services

- Local services provide personalised health and wellbeing coaching, social prescribing, and NHS health checks to help older adults manage long-term conditions, improve lifestyle choices, and connect with local opportunities.
- This often reinforces the link between physical health and social engagement.

Respect & Social Isolation

- BCP prioritises dignity and inclusion through dementia-friendly initiatives, such as Memory Lane Groups and various place-based projects, alongside support for ethnically diverse communities.
- Digital inclusion programmes further reduce barriers, ensuring older adults remain active participants in community life.

Transportation

- Accessible transport options are critical for independence and participation.
- Schemes like SEDCAT, community transport services, and the Older Person's Bus Pass help address mobility challenges and reduce isolation.

Housing

- Safe, adaptable housing for older adults is a priority for BCP.
- Initiatives include the Supportive Living Framework, Handyvan home maintenance service, and energy efficiency programmes to support ageing in place and reduce health risks linked to poor housing.

Civic Participation & Employment

- BCP promotes age-friendly employment practices and volunteering opportunities for people to maintain purpose and engagement in later life.
- Training programmes, such as dementia awareness sessions, help workplaces and communities become more inclusive.

Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

- Investment in parks, town centres, and seafront accessibility ensures older adults can remain active and connected. Projects like Parks in Mind and beach accessibility improvements reflect BCP's commitment to inclusive outdoor environments.

Understanding the lived experiences of older adults in BCP is essential to creating an inclusive, age-friendly community. Hearing directly from older residents allows us to:

- Identify gaps in provision.
- Highlight barriers and unmet needs, such as accessibility, affordability, and cultural relevance.
- Ensure services reflect real priorities, enabling person-centred planning and commissioning.
- Strengthen collaboration between statutory, voluntary, and community partners.

By combining this evidence with the insights from the Voices of the Future research, BCP can continue to develop a connected, inclusive, and age-friendly environment where older adults feel valued, supported, and able to thrive.

Research Methods

From September - November 2025, the Trusted Reviewer team at CAN undertook extensive fieldwork to capture the lived experiences of older residents across BCP.

Working with partners, we:

- Distributed over **130 questionnaires** structured around the Five Ways to Wellbeing, exploring themes of belonging, social engagement, and wellbeing, alongside digital inclusion and reflections on what contributes to a happy, healthy later life.
- Complemented survey data with **in-depth interviews** and **observations** with individuals actively engaged in community and wellbeing-focused activities.



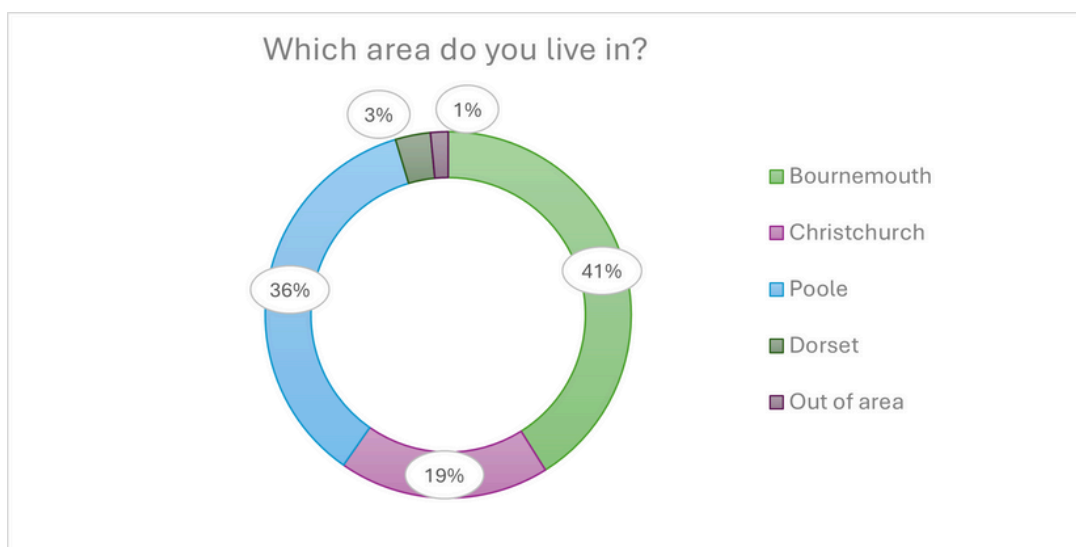
Questionnaire Respondents

Questionnaires were completed either online or face-to-face, with researchers visiting community group settings, residential accommodations, and community events. Posters and flyers containing QR codes were distributed in community venues and shared electronically through local networks to encourage online participation. While engagement with QR codes was lower than anticipated, over half of the responses were submitted online.

Responses were predominantly from BCP residents, with a small number from Dorset and one international response from Australia.

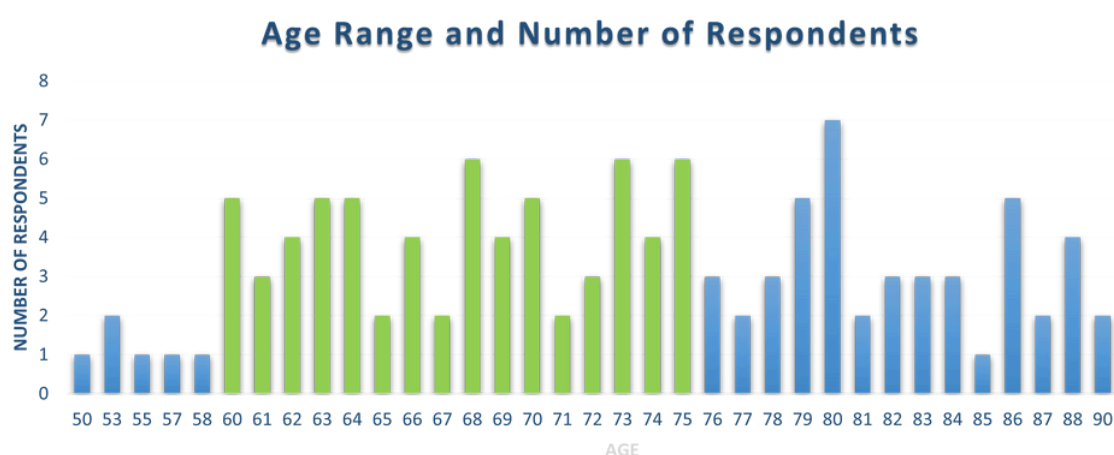
The geographic distribution included:

- 41% from Bournemouth,
- 36% from Poole,
- 19% from Christchurch, with
- 3% from Dorset and 1% from other locations.



Questionnaire Respondents

Of the total respondents, 55% (66 participants) were within the target age range of 60-75 years. The remaining responses came from individuals aged between 50 and 99, which provided a useful benchmark for comparison and helped identify trends across different age groups.



In addition, a small number of interviews and observations were conducted to capture priorities for ageing well in BCP. The following sections present our findings, structured around the Five Ways to Wellbeing framework. They highlight both strengths and gaps in current provision, offering practical insights into how services and community initiatives can better support positive ageing across BCP.

1. Connection

Connecting with the people around us can be central to wellbeing in later life. We explored how people connect with others by asking the following 4 questions:

- *How do you like to spend time socialising?*
- *How do you find out about social activities or new things to try?*
- *How do you keep in touch with the people around you?*
- *What could make these connections even better, if anything?*

KEY THEME

INSIGHT

Spending Time with Family & Friends

- Most respondents prioritised spending time with family and close friends.
- Social activities included meals, coffee mornings, and home visits.

Being Involved in Community-Based Activities

- Popular choices were coffee mornings, lunch clubs, bingo, knit & natter groups, church events, and hobby/interest classes.
- Local venues included community centres, libraries, and churches forming central hubs.

Being Active & Outdoors

- Many people combined physical activity with social interaction (e.g., walking with friends).
- Walking groups, gardening, swimming, and exercise classes were the most common.

Hobbies & Shared Interests

- People valued activities that provide both enjoyment and a sense of purpose.
- Crafting, volunteering, music, theatre, and quizzes featured strongly.

Key Insights for Ages 60-75:

For the 60-75 age group, people's preferred social activities favoured community-based, low-cost, and light physical activities, with younger respondents learning toward fitness and cultural outings.

Motivators & Barriers

AGE COHORT	MOTIVATORS	BARRIERS
60-75	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sense of purpose, routine, and companionship. • Volunteering opportunities. • Community venues. • Face-to-face or telephone interactions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health • Transport • Internet and social media platforms were used for planning but not socialising.
Under 60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferred more active opportunities • Digital platforms, including social media and online groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time constraints due to work and caring responsibilities.
Over 75	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More home-based activities or within living facilities. • Examples include armchair keep-fit, knitting groups, bingo, coffee mornings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher reliance on carers or family members for transport and support. • Digital engagement was also minimal with a preference for in-person contact.

Preferred Social Activities for Age 60-75

	Coffee mornings		Lunch clubs
	Walking groups		Volunteering
	Knit & Natter		Gardening
	Church events		Exercise classes

Finding Social Activities: Comparison by Age Group

Of 130 participants, there were clear differences between those aged 60–75 and all other respondents in how they discover social activities or new things to try.

AGES 60-75

- Word of mouth was the most common source for information, often through conversations during social activities, or by carers or family members.
- Digital engagement was more common in the 60–70 year-olds, (compared to older age groups).

BELOW 60 OR 75+

- Demonstrated a greater reliance on noticeboards, and diverse informal sources.
- Printed materials and word of mouth was valued more by over 75s.
- Social media and internet searches, particularly among younger adults.

Challenges & Gaps

Exclusion: Some respondents mentioned that they struggle with technology or dislike online groups. One person told us they found it hard to find suitable groups for older people with learning disabilities.

Centralised Information: many people wanted easier ways to find activities, although there was no clear ‘vision’ for what this would look like when asked.

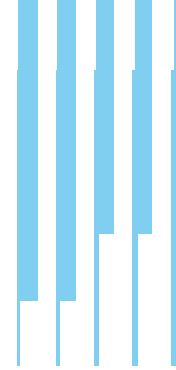
Transport issues: Even when people were aware of activities, getting there could be a barrier due to transport or health.

Keeping in Touch

- Face-to-face was most common, followed by over the phone.
- Strong use of WhatsApp, email, texting, and Facebook for seeking information and/or making arrangements.
- Meeting in person.

Key Insights for Ages 60-75:

- Respondents aged 60-75 showed a higher adoption of messaging apps and email, whilst in the older age group digital tools were less prominent.
- Church/Faith Groups were also mentioned as important by all groups.



Connect: Key Learning

- **Accessibility Matters:** Transport and proximity are recurring barriers. People want activities closer to home or on better bus routes.
- **Health and Support Needs Impact Participation:** Long-term health conditions, poor mobility, and diverse support needs often limit involvement, making inclusive and adaptive activities essential.
- **Information Gaps:** Many rely on word of mouth or posters; lack of centralised, easy-to-access information is a challenge.
- **Socialising = Wellbeing:** Respondents link social interaction with happiness, purpose, and mental health.
- **Preference for Informal, Low-Cost Options:** Coffee mornings, walking, and chatting are favoured over expensive or highly structured activities.

Overall Insights

- Overall the 60–75 age group is active, digitally engaged, and values both physical and social activities.
- Both groups prioritise friends, family, and community, but differ in how they connect and discover opportunities.

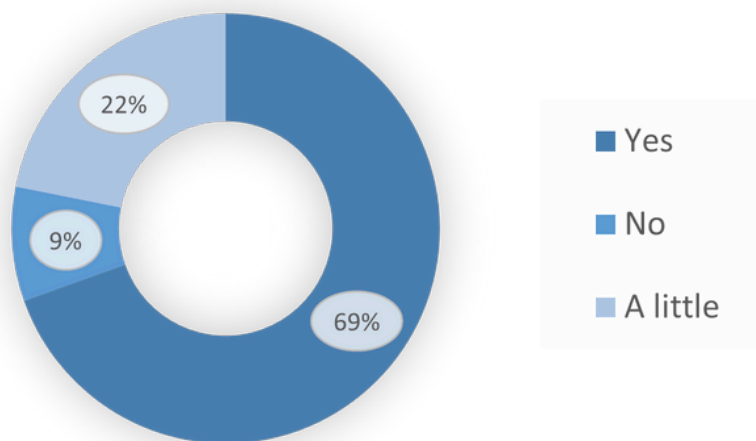
The ‘Digital’ section later on in the report explores these themes in more detail.

2. Be Active

For many, taking part in physical activity can improve wellbeing in later life. We explored what types of activities people liked to engage in, and how this influenced their wellbeing.

When asked: “Do you feel that you are a physically active person?”, overwhelmingly, participants, across all age groups, showed a high level of physical activity. Only 11 (of the 128 who answered this section) said ‘No’, they weren’t active.

Do you feel that you are a physically active person?



Common Activities:

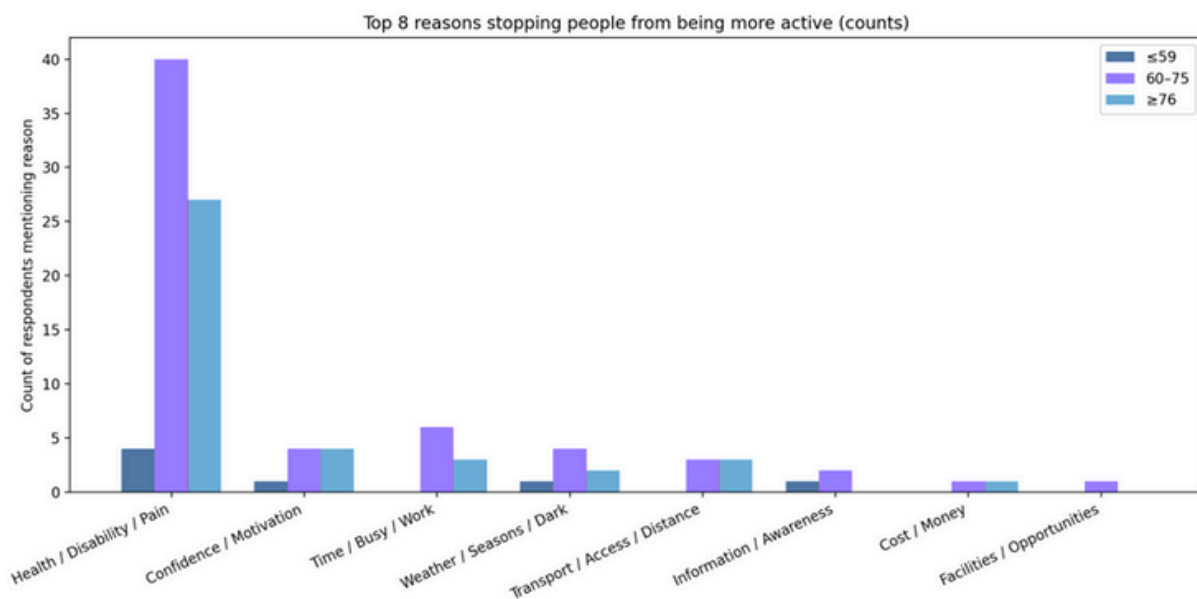
Across all age groups, **walking** in some form (either organised walks, with friends or with a dog) was the most common activity mentioned. Other frequent activities included:

- gardening
- housework
- swimming, gym or yoga
- cycling.

Common Barriers:

- Health conditions such as arthritis and joint pain
- Time constraints, with many still working
- Limitations in available transport for non-drivers and those with poor mobility.

Main Barriers Recorded:



Being Active: Comparison by Age Group

AGED BELOW 60

- Work-related time pressures were mentioned often, resulting in an ability to be active regularly,
- However, many enjoyed activities such as going to the gym and cycling.

AGED 75+

- Common activities shifted more toward walking, gardening, and seated exercises.
- Barriers often comprised of mobility issues, caring responsibilities, and a lack of motivation.

Ages 60-75:

- Our findings showed there was a greater variety of physical activities compared to other age groups.
- Activity was more common among this age group, often due to good health and mobility.
- Higher engagement in structured exercise (gym, yoga) and outdoor hobbies.
- However, people from this age group were more likely to have limited time to be active due to work commitments.

Be Active: Key Insights

- **High interest:** Our findings highlight a clear enthusiasm for keeping active in later life, with the majority of respondents saying they were already physically active.
- **Types of Activities:** Across all age groups, walking (whether organised, with friends, or alone) was the most common activity mentioned. There was also higher engagement in structured exercise, such as the gym and yoga, as well as outdoor hobbies.
- **Barriers:** Health conditions, time constraints, and transport limitations were all common barriers to being active.

Implications

Activity and exercise are key components for maintaining health and strength as we age. As an area, BCP has a high number of frail older people aged 50+ (51,800). Of these, almost two thirds have mild frailty, 23% moderate and 12% severe frailty (Source: Public Health Fingertips & DiiS March 2024).

Future Interventions could focus on key areas such as accessible fitness classes (i.e. yoga, pilates), affordable transport solutions, and health support for arthritis and joint care.

3. Take Notice

Taking Notice is about making time to appreciate the world around us. Being aware of the present moment, feelings and thoughts, can help people to positively change how they feel about life. To capture this, we asked people:

“What makes a positive difference or matters most in your day?”

KEY THEME	INSIGHT
Social Connections & Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spending time with family, friends, and loved ones.• Talking to others, meeting people, and feeling part of a community.• Acts of kindness and helping others.
Physical Activity & Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Walking, gardening, swimming, keep-fit classes.• Staying active and maintaining mobility.• Overcoming health challenges to remain engaged.
Sense of Purpose & Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Having a reason to get up and plan the day.• Achieving daily goals or tasks.• Volunteering and contributing to others.
Routine & Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regular activities like cooking, shopping, or hobbies.• Having something planned to look forward to.
Positive Outlook & Gratitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being grateful for what we have.• Maintaining a positive attitude and resilience.• Enjoying simple pleasures (e.g., sunshine, nature, music).
Mental Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feeling happy, motivated, and avoiding loneliness.• Engaging in hobbies (reading, crafting, music).• Spiritual or reflective practices (prayer, mindfulness).
Environment & Outdoors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fresh air, sunshine, nature walks, beach visits.• Enjoying beauty in surroundings.

Take Notice: Key Insights

- **Social Connections:** Being connected with family and friends was emphasised as one of the most common contributors to appreciating the world around us.
- **Perceived Benefits:** Many felt they were more likely to hold a positive outlook on life while maintaining active and appreciate small moments with others.
- **Barriers:** Poor weather conditions, a lack of social engagement, and not having things to do were all highlighted as barriers to taking notice.

Participant Quotes:

“Contact with loved ones, days of better health, dry weather, sunshine, getting out to the beach or countryside.”

“Trying to get out, weather permitting!”

“Getting up in the morning and being grateful that I can. Talking and spending time with others.”

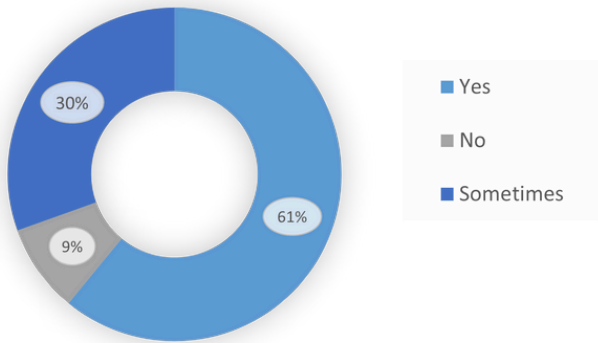
4. Keep Learning

For many older adults, learning is a vital tool for maintaining cognitive health, fostering social connections, and improving overall wellbeing. We asked respondents a series of questions to understand how people view learning opportunities in later life.

When asked: “Do you enjoy learning new skills or taking on a challenge?”:

- **61%** answered ‘yes’
- A further **30%** answered ‘sometimes’
- And only **9%** answered ‘no’.

Do you enjoy learning new skills or taking on a challenge?



KEY THEME

INSIGHT

Personal Growth & Achievement

- Many respondents linked opportunities to learn with motivators such as personal growth and a sense of achievement.

Awareness & Opportunity

- Some respondents mentioned they would be more interested to learn or try something new if there were better awareness and promotion of opportunities.

Motivation & Inspiration

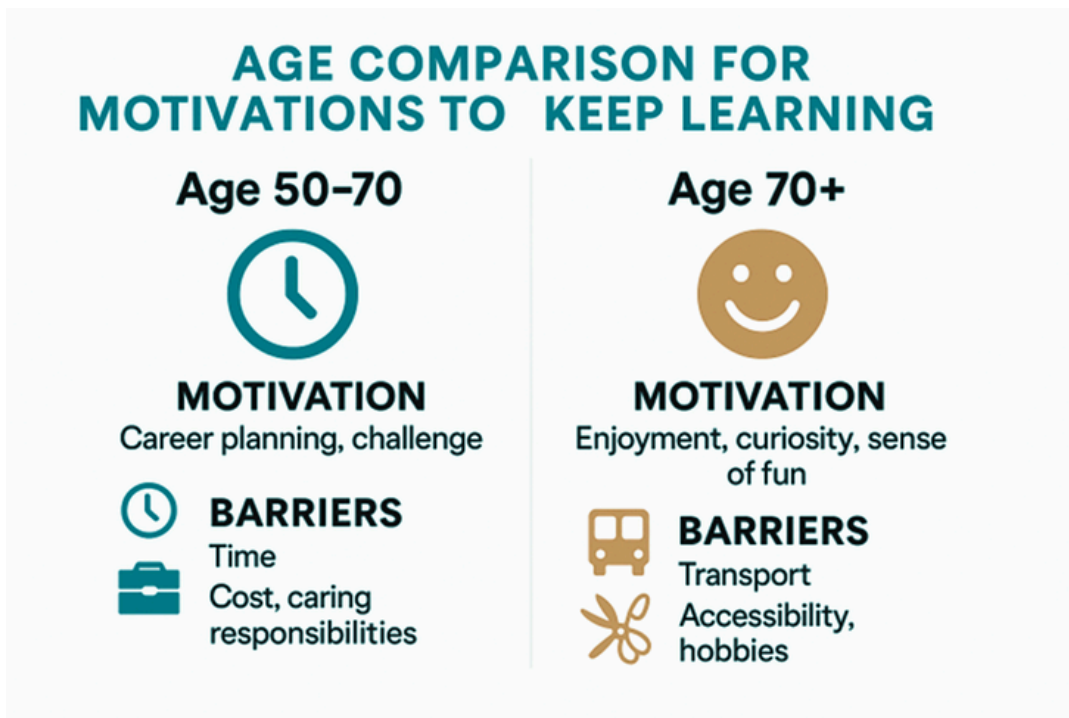
- Motivators to engage in learning opportunities were often linked to being inspired by others.

Social Connections

- Many expressed an interest to meet new people through learning opportunities, and were more likely to engage if friends were participating.

Differences Across the Age Range

While enthusiasm for learning was evident across all ages, subtle differences emerged between younger respondents (aged 50-70) and older respondents (70+).



AGES 50-70

- Learning linked to work, retirement planning, and future goals.
- Barriers included work commitments, caring responsibilities, and a lack of time.

AGES 70+

- Learning more prominently focussed on personal challenges, enjoyment, and social interactions.
- Barriers were linked to transport, accessibility, and hobbies.

Keep Learning: Key Insights

- **Enthusiasm:** Our findings highlight a clear enthusiasm for learning opportunities for older adults, linking to increased wellbeing.
- **Perceived Benefits:** Many valued the idea of challenging themselves through learning, as well as increasing their social connections.
- **Practical Barriers:** Cost, time, transport, and a lack of awareness often prevent people from acting on their interest to keep learning.
- **Need:** To support older people to engage in opportunities to keep learning, there is a need for affordable and accessible programmes, flexible scheduling, and better promotion of available resources.

Participant Quotes:

“I enjoy the idea of challenging myself and proving that I can learn something new, having that sense of achievement.”

“You’re never too old to learn whatever takes your fancy.”

5. Give

‘Give’ encourages acts of kindness to others, and can foster a sense of purpose, belonging, and improved wellbeing for many. Our research asked people what they do to ‘give’ to others, and how this makes them feel.

Volunteering

When asked: *“Have you ever volunteered? If so, tell us about it”*, key themes emerged including:

- Charity shops,
- Community venues,
- Local groups,
- Supporting neighbours, friends, and family members.



The benefits reported included: A sense of purpose, social interaction, enjoyment and fulfilment. Participant insights included:

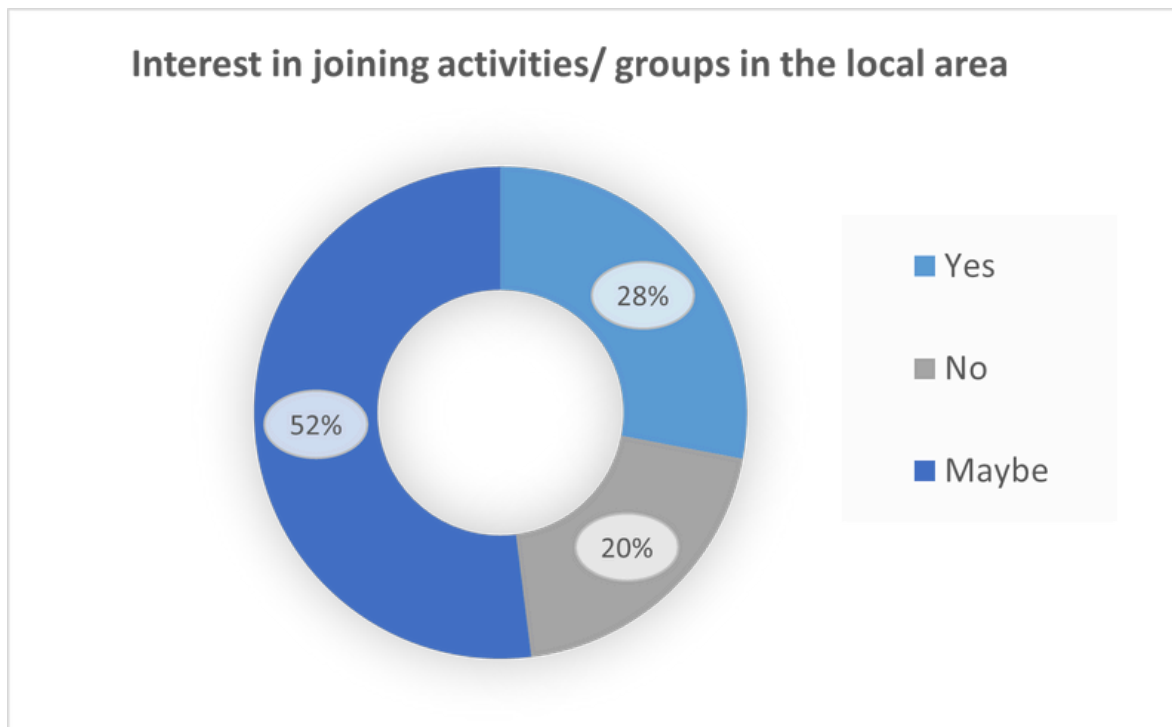
“I wanted to feel purposeful, give back to my community.”

“I do it because I love it. It’s a great way to meet and talk with people.”

Community Involvement

When asked: “Would you like to be more involved in activities or groups in your local area?”:

- 28% answered ‘yes’
- 52% said ‘maybe’
- and 20% answered ‘no’.



These findings indicate that while interest in joining new groups was somewhat high, and many associated this with positive benefits, the majority felt unsure as to whether this was something they could commit to on a regular basis.



Differences Across the Age Range

Subtle differences emerged between respondents aged 60-75 and those older (75+). The following table outlines key themes between the two age groups:

AGES 60-75	AGES 75+
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Giving often tied to a sense of purpose and community.• Work commitments often acted as barriers due to time constraints.• Many ‘gave’ already, through caring roles for neighbours, friends, or family members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Willingness to give was expressed, but often cited transport, health, and caring responsibilities as barriers.• Poor health played a key role, with many lacking the mobility or confidence to commit to regular giving roles.

Give: Key Insights

Wellbeing: Our findings showed that the majority of respondents associated giving with positive wellbeing, such as a sense of purpose, increased social connections, and overall happiness.

Common Barriers: Many cited poor health, limited transport, and time as key barriers to giving.

Need: To support people through flexible scheduling, accessible transport, and better promotion of local activities.

Digital Inclusion

As technology and digital access become more embedded in everyday life, it is becoming increasingly important that groups of people who are not confident, or regular users, don't become isolated or marginalised from support services.

A 2023 BCP Resident Survey showed internet use declined with age, especially for those aged 75 or over. To explore current attitudes toward technology, we asked people whether they used digital technology, and if they would consider using it more to socialise.

Key Findings: Differences Across the Age Range

AGES 60-75

- General dislike of online groups for structured activities.
- However, many used technology for messaging.
- Around 70-75% of respondents used technology regularly for socialising and keeping in touch with others.
- There was a strong preference for platforms such as email, WhatsApp, and Facebook.
- Many used multiple devices, such as a phone, tablet, and computer.
- 25.8% were willing to use more online groups if they were available.

AGES UNDER 60 & 75+

- The use of technology was significantly lower than those aged 60-75.
- Many respondents mentioned relying on phone calls only, and avoided using technology entirely.
- There was very low interest from older respondents in joining online groups to socialise with others.
- Many stated this was due to a lack of digital skills, and/ or confidence.
- Below 60, Almost universal tech use, including all social media platforms and video calls.

Key Insights for Ages 60-75:

- Many expressed being digitally capable but cautious about expanding online socialising.
- They valued purposeful engagement and personal connection over purely virtual experiences.
- Engaging this group effectively means blending digital convenience with real-world connection, ensuring inclusivity while respecting their preferences.

Digital Inclusion: Recommendations

THEME	RECOMMENDATION
Build on Existing Digital Comfort	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use familiar tools (WhatsApp, Facebook) for updates and coordination and offer simple guides for video calls and group chats.
Offer Hybrid Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Combine in-person activities with digital complements (e.g., photo sharing, event reminders) and avoid replacing physical meetups with online-only options.
Make Online Groups Purposeful	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create interest-based communities (gardening, walking, volunteering). Ensure groups are local and relevant to people's lifestyles.
Provide Easy Access and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organise digital help sessions at community venues and promote through trusted channels (newsletters, word of mouth).
Emphasise Social Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Position online tools as a way to extend friendships, not replace them.• Encourage small, familiar groups for comfort and trust.
Address Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer short, flexible sessions to fit around health and time constraints and integrate digital engagement into existing routines.

Happy and Healthy Life

At the end of the questionnaires, we asked respondents what they felt contributed to a happy, healthy life. An analysis of the responses presented the following key findings:

Key Findings: Differences Across the Age Range

AGES 60-75

- The majority of advice given emphasised creating and maintaining social connections.
- There was also mention of physical activity, gratitude, and holding a positive outlook.
- Others mentioned financial wellbeing, be creative and having hobbies, and the importance of spirituality and faith.
- Interpretation: this age group leans into staying connected and active, with a practical thread around routine and occasional nods to financial stability.

AGES 75+

- The importance of being social connected remained very strong.
- Physical activity had the highest emphasis, with many respondents advising people to stay active while in good health and mobility.
- An emphasis on spirituality and faith was more strong for this group, although present among all ages.
- Interpretation: strong focus on keeping active, staying connected, and maintaining a positive outlook - often framed within faith.

AGES <60

- Many younger respondents mentioned the importance of a healthy diet and nutrition.
- Others mentioned being outdoors and in nature.
- Some advised voluntary roles, linking this to a sense of purpose and meaning.
- Similar to the other age groups, many mentioned the importance of staying socially connected.
- Interpretation: younger respondents valued healthy eating, spending time outdoors, giving back, and connection.

What people said mattered to them:

Connect

- Good support network of friends and family, trying to stay positive.
- Walking, smiling at people, talking to those who want to engage.
- Having good friends and continuing to develop these.
- Belonging to community groups, family, church.
- Meeting people, chatting with friends, spending time with family.
- Feeling as if you are a part of something and are valued.
- Staying in the loop about activities in the community & a choice of what to do.

Be Active

- Keep active even though you may not be very mobile.
- Always keep active and get a dog.
- Always make time every week to exercise.
- A walk, even around the local rec ground, is uplifting.
- Keep moving, don't just sit at home doing nothing.

Take Notice

- Practice gratitude, give back. There are always things to be grateful for.
- Developing an attitude of being grateful. See beauty in our surroundings.
- Simple enjoyments such as sitting in a park, people/dog watching.
- Being reflective, there is always someone worse off than you.
- Have a sense of humour and don't be afraid to laugh at yourself.

Keep Learning

- Try something new and keep connected with others. Join in when you can.
- Good education, diet and lifestyle.
- Staying up to date with free training such as digital training.
- Being open to learning new things and having a 'can do' attitude.
- Hobbies: music, photography, reading, crafting.

Give

- Definitely volunteer somewhere where you feel valued.
- Help others if you can, being kind, it's good for the soul.
- I like to do good deeds quietly, I like to put smiles on people's faces.
- Giving to others is not purely a selfless act, the rewards you receive back are so much more than you give.

Advice to Younger Self

We asked participants to reflect on the advice they would give their younger selves to help us understand what older adults value and why.

When asked: *“What advice would you give to a younger version of yourself?”*, the following themes were identified:

KEY THEME	INSIGHT
Staying Active	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many respondents framed keeping active and prioritising good health as an investment to start early and maintain, associating this with happiness and independence.
Having a Positive Mindset	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Several respondents urged their younger selves to adopt optimism and kindness as powerful determinants of wellbeing.
Keep Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Often, respondents valued trying new things and wished they had continued to engage in education, language, or communication skills.
Value Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many respondents urged their younger selves to make the most of their youth, doing things while they can in good health and mobility.
Staying Socially Connected	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many respondents highlighted the benefits of staying socially connected, linking this to positive wellbeing.

Key Findings: Differences Across the Age Range

AGES 60-75

- Advice to younger self was more practical and forward looking.
- Common themes were linked to social connections, keeping active, and learning new things.

AGES 75+

- Advice shifted more toward mindset and relationship.
- The most common theme was keeping a positive mindset and enjoyment, followed by connection, giving and keeping active.

Summary: Gaps in Provision

AGE-FRIENDLY DOMAIN

DESKTOP REVIEW INSIGHT

GAPS IDENTIFIED

Social Participation

- BCP provides community-based initiatives promoting inclusion, connection and wellbeing for older adults, such as activity groups, befriending, community hubs and tailored support to reduce isolation, and maintain independence.

- **Transport:** many struggle to find suitable and affordable transport to access community-based groups.
- **Cost:** many saw cost as a barrier to participation.
- **Time:** many, particularly younger respondents, struggled to find time due to work commitments or caring responsibilities.
- **Confidence:** many lacked confidence in trying new activities.

Communication & Information

- Mixed approaches are used to ensure accessibility and effective communication, such as printed materials, in-person engagement, as well as IT support to build confidence and inclusion.

- **Travel:** many struggle to find suitable and affordable transport to access community-based schemes, such as library-based IT support.
- **Access to Information:** many rely on carers or family through word of mouth, or social media platforms, but most wanted to easier ways to find activities.

Community Support & Health Services

- Local services provide personalised health and wellbeing coaching, social prescribing, and NHS health checks to help older adults manage long-term conditions, improve lifestyle choices, and connect with local opportunities.

- **Awareness:** while many cited health and mobility as barriers to community engagement, there was limited knowledge of support services available.
- **Access:** many referenced travel and limited digital literacy as barriers to community participation.

Respect & Social Isolation

- BCP prioritises dignity and inclusion through:
- Dementia support such as Memory Lane Groups and advice services.
- Infrastructure support for ethnically diverse communities.
- Digital skills and inclusion programmes.

- Closures of shops, post offices, and other high-street providers has increased many people's risk of isolation, and less opportunities to access information via word of mouth or flyers.
- For many struggling to find accessible transport, there are limited home-based services available.

Transportation

- Schemes like SEDCAT, community transport services, and the Older Person's Bus Pass are available to help address mobility challenges and reduce isolation.

- Many would benefit from support such as awareness of schemes, cost, support with navigating routes, feeling safe and confident.

Housing

- Initiatives including the Supportive Living Framework, Handyvan home maintenance service, and energy efficiency programmes are available to support ageing in place and reduce health risks linked to poor housing.

- There was little mention of home-based support services throughout the responses suggesting there is a lack of awareness among older people.
- Residential accommodations often provide their own activities or groups and could benefit from in-house support.

Civic Participation & Employment

- BCP promotes inclusivity through age-friendly employment practices, such as dementia awareness sessions, and volunteering opportunities to help people maintain purpose and engagement in later life.

- There was a like of awareness for flexible volunteering opportunities outside of work commitments or for those with long-term health conditions.
- Many expressed challenges of working later in life with health issues or caring responsibilities.

Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

- Projects like Parks in Mind and beach accessibility improvements reflect BCP's commitment to inclusive and accessible outdoor environments.

- Many expressed enjoyment of outdoor activities, especially younger respondents.
- Others perceived health/ mobility issues as barriers and held concerns regarding physical access i.e., wheelchair.

Conclusion:

Summary of Findings



WAY TO WELLBEING

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Connect

- **Accessibility:** Transport is a recurring barrier, with many wanting closer activities or improved bus routes.
- **Health:** Poor health limits involvement for many.
- **Information Gaps:** Many rely on word of mouth and lack accessible information.
- **Wellbeing:** Strong association between social connection with happiness and purpose.
- **Cost:** Many preferred low-cost options.

Be Active

- **High Interest:** A clear enthusiasm was shown for keeping active in later life, with walking, structured exercise, and outdoor hobbies prominent themes.
- **Common Barriers:** Health conditions, time constraints, and transport limitations acted as common barriers.

Take Notice

- **Social Connections:** Connecting with family and friends was one of the most common contributors to appreciating the world around us and holding a positive outlook.
- **Common Barriers:** Poor weather conditions, reduced social engagement, and not having options were listed as key barriers.

Conclusion:

Summary of Findings Continued

WAY TO WELLBEING

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Keep Learning

- **Enthusiasm to Learn:** We found a clear enthusiasm for learning opportunities which were often linked to increased wellbeing and social connections.
- **Common Barriers:** Cost, time, transport, and a lack of awareness were listed as key barriers to learn or try something new.

Give

- **Increased Wellbeing:** We found most respondents associated giving with a sense of purpose, increased social connections, and overall happiness.
- **Common Barriers:** Many cited poor health, limited transport, and a lack of time as key barriers to giving.

Digital Access

- **Engagement & Connection:** Many respondents valued technology for purposeful engagement and personal connection, using platforms such as email, WhatsApp, and Facebook.
- **Common Barriers:** A lack of digital literacy and awareness were common barriers, with many relying on phone calls instead.

Overall Wellbeing

- **Staying Active & Positive:** Many respondents valued staying physically active and holding a positive mindset, associating this with increased wellbeing in later life.
- **Learning & Connections:** Others valued the opportunity to learn and advised to stay connected with others.



Conclusion: Further Insights

KEY THEME

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Age as a Concept

- Almost everyone we spoke to didn't consider themselves to be in 'old age, or an 'older adult'.
- This applied from 50 years olds to those in their 90s. The title of the research – mentioning 'younger older adults', was generally not liked.

Faith & Religion

- Most respondents valued their family and religion as important for ageing well.
- A few people mentioned the importance of religion for spiritual guidance, company, and also in a practical way, with lots of churches running social/ lunch spaces.

Finding Information

- Many respondents said they would take part in more activities if they knew about them, highlighting there was limited accessible information available.
- Many listed community venues and posters in shops or libraries as ways of promoting information.
- Across all respondents, not one person mentioned finding out about local opportunities through their GP or a social prescriber.

Conclusion:

Further Insights Continued

KEY THEME

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

'Death' of the Highstreet

- A few respondents mentioned how changes in their local high-street impacted their involvement in the community.
- Closures of local shops such as bakers, post offices and fishmongers meant many no longer visited their local high-street.
- This meant many missed the relationships they had built with shopkeepers and general interactions the trips had produced.
- Many also missed opportunities to learn about local events and activities as a consequence.

Younger Older Adults

- 60-year-olds were far more likely to be at work (until age 65/67) which took up most of their time for leisure activities.
- Those who are retired tend to have more free time/opportunity for social groups.

Additional Needs

- There was some mention of difficulties finding suitable opportunities for older people with learning disabilities.
 - This meant some felt excluded from certain groups and activities as they didn't feel they could support with their needs.
-

Recommendations

1. Improved Access to Information

- Organisations should offer a mixture of printed and online information across local community venues and networks.
- Increase awareness of support services offering bespoke signposting and social prescribing support.
- Ensure family members and carers have access to information that can be shared through word of mouth.
- Build on existing digital skills by using familiar tools such as WhatsApp or Facebook to share information about local opportunities.

2. Accessible & Affordable Transport

- Ensure the group or activity offered is within a suitable distance of nearby transport options, such as a bus or train station.
- When supporting someone to access new opportunities, consider the location of the group in comparison to their place of residence.
- Increase awareness of local transport schemes.

3. Support for Health Conditions

- Provide inclusive and adaptable activities that support those with long-term health conditions such as arthritis or dementia, or learning disabilities.
- Consider offering the option for a carer or family member to join the group in addition.
- Discuss with the person prior to attending the group any health issues or concerns they may have.

4. Flexible Scheduling

- To ensure equal access to opportunities, offer flexible scheduling outside of working hours such as week-day evenings or weekends.
- Be aware that many older people may decide whether they wish to join the group or activity last minute or on the day.

Limitations & Future Research

The Voices of the Future research project spoke with over 130 respondents from across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. However, it is important to address the limitations of the study which are outlined below:

- **Diversity of Participants:** The majority of those who answered questionnaires were contacted through community groups and local venues. Although this provided a range of respondents across different ages, it meant we were unable to access those unable to leave their home or experiencing social isolation. Future studies could specifically target this group of people, to provide insight into how experiences with ageing differ to those already engaged in the community.
- **Social Demographics:** The VOTF project's primary focus surrounded how experiences with ageing and wellbeing differed across age. Future studies could examine how this varies among people with additional different social demographics, such as income, ethnicity, religion, or gender, to support equal access to community opportunities.
- **Place-Based Support:** Although the study had almost equal number of respondents across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, future research could compare support services and structures across each of the different areas. For example, a comparison of population growth and ratio of older to younger adults could provide insight as to how initiatives could vary geographically.
- **Sample Size:** The number of respondents under 60 was limited to n=6. Therefore feedback from this group may not be a strong representation of the views of this cohort and should be interpreted with caution.

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References & Useful Links

- Access Wellbeing: <https://www.dorsetaccesswellbeing.co.uk/>
- BCP Council Age Friendly Action Plan (2023 - 2025): <https://www.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/documents/communities/Age-Friendly-Community-action-plan.pdf>
- BCP Council Age Friendly Network: <https://www.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/communities/age-friendly-community>
- BCP Council Fulfilled Lives Transformation Programme: <https://democracy.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=859>
- BCP Council State of Ageing Report (2024): <https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/State-of-Ageing-in-BCP-report-Autumn-2024.pdf>
- Community Action Network (CAN): <https://can100.org/about-us/>
- Centre for Ageing Better: Handbook of Principles: https://ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-04/AFC_handbook.pdf
- Christchurch Community Partnership: <https://www.christchurchcommunitypartnership.org.uk/>
- Help & Care: <https://www.helpandcare.org.uk/>
- LiveWell Dorset: <https://www.livewellDorset.co.uk/>
- PramaLife: <https://prama.org.uk/pramalife/>
- Trusted Reviewer Team: <https://can100.org/connecting-communities/trusted-reviewers/>
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