

# Voices of the Future: Summary Report

September - November 2025  
The Trusted Reviewer Team



## Project Overview

The Voices of the Future (VOTF) research project has been developed by the Trusted Reviewer team at Community Action Network (CAN) in partnership with BCP Council to explore the lived experiences of those aged 60-75 in BCP. The research was guided by the '5 Ways to Wellbeing' framework: Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning, and Give. We also explore the role of digital technology and overall attitudes toward living a happy and healthy life.

The research responds to a time of population growth where many people are living longer, presenting a timely opportunity for service commissioners to plan how best to support emerging needs of this group.

## Research Aims

The VOTF project explored how people aged 60-75:

- connect with others
- engage in physical activity
- perceive the world around them
- participate in learning opportunities
- give to others
- view digital technology and
- advise how to live a happy and healthy life.

## Our Method

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** online and in-person.
- Complemented data with in-depth **interviews** and **observations** with individuals actively engaged in community activities.

Of the total respondents, 55% 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.



# 1. Connection

Connecting with the people around us can be central to wellbeing in later life. Our research highlighted many people valued:

- Spending time with family and friends.
- Being involved in community-based activities.
- Being active and outdoors.
- Engaging in hobbies and shared interests.
- In-person activities and ways to stay in touch with others.

Among people aged 60–75, preferred social activities tended to be community-based, low-cost, and lightly physical, with younger respondents leaning toward fitness and cultural outings.



## MOTIVATORS

- A sense of purpose, routine and companionship.
- Awareness of opportunities.
- Accessible venues and transport.
- Flexible scheduling.

## BARRIERS

- Health conditions or poor mobility.
- Available and affordable transport.
- Time due to work or caring responsibilities.
- Digital technology.

*“I enjoy spending time with family, walking, swimming, light exercises, gardening, and helping people.”*

# 2. Be Active

For many, physical activity can improve wellbeing in later life. 69% of respondents told us they are physically active, with a further 22% saying “[I am] a little”.

Common activities included:

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



*“I go to the beach regularly. I enjoy the views and will walk along the pier... It makes me feel connected to the local area and to nature.”*



## MOTIVATORS

- Taking part with friends
- Accessible opportunities
- Awareness and transport.

## BARRIERS

- Health conditions or poor mobility.
- Confidence
- Time constraints
- Available transport.

Among people aged 60–75, activity was more common and included a greater variety of options such as structured exercise and outdoor hobbies. However, many also expressed time constraints due to work commitments.

## 3. Take Notice

Taking Notice involves appreciating the world around us and being aware of the present moment, feelings and thoughts. Key themes include people valuing:

- Social connections and relationships
- Physical activity and health
- A sense of purpose and achievement
- Routine and structure
- A positive outlook and gratitude
- Mental wellbeing
- The environment and outdoors

People aged 60–75 strongly emphasised social interactions, purposeful and structured activities, and perceiving the world positively. Those aged 75+ were more likely to appreciate smaller gestures, such as a passing greeting or smile.

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

*“People showing kindness to others even if it's just to say hello to someone can make a big difference to them and you.”*



## 4. Keep Learning

For many, learning is a vital tool for maintaining cognitive health and improving overall wellbeing. 61% of respondents told us they enjoyed learning new skills, with a further 30% saying “sometimes”.

Key themes linked to learning include:

- Fostering personal growth and achievement
- Needing better awareness, opportunity, motivation, support and a personal interest.
- Creating opportunities for increased social connections.



People aged 60-75 shared learning more often is linked to work, retirement planning and future goals. With work commitments, and caring responsibilities often barriers.



*“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

Giving encourages acts of kindness to others. Examples given by respondents included:

- volunteering
- being a part of community groups
- supporting neighbours, friends and family members.

For many, this fostered feelings of purpose, social connection, and giving back to their community.

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

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



However, only 28% of respondents told us they would like to be more involved in local activities or groups.

Barriers included:

- long-term health conditions or poor mobility
- caring responsibilities
- a lack of time or confidence.

Among people aged 60–75, giving is often linked to a sense of purpose and community, with many already ‘giving’ through caring roles for neighbours, friends, or family members.

## 6. Digital Technology

As technology and digital access become more embedded in everyday life, we asked people whether they used digital technology, and if they would consider using it more to socialise.



Key themes included:

- A general dislike of online groups for structured activities.
- Technology used to stay connected or find out about local activities.
- A strong preference for platforms such as WhatsApp, email and Facebook.

Technology use among older respondents was significantly lower, with many preferring in-person or over the phone contact.

For those aged 60-75, many expressed being digitally capable but cautious about expanding online socialising. Instead, they valued purposeful engagement and personal connection over purely virtual experiences.



*“I use online groups to stay in touch with far flung friends. I also use it as a form of communication to arrange to meet up with nearby friends... However, I do not like to socialise via Zoom or Teams.”*

## 7. Happy and Healthy Lives

We asked respondents what they felt contributed to a happy, healthy life, and what advise they would give their younger selves. Themes included:

- Staying physically active and holding a positive mindset.
- Engaging in continuous learning.
- Staying connected with others.



*“Stay active and connected and never acknowledge your age - you are as old as you think you are, age is just a number”*

People aged 60-75 emphasised creating and maintaining social connections, learning and holding a positive outlook. Others mentioned being creative, having hobbies and the importance of spirituality and faith.



# 8. Conclusion & Recommendations

## INSIGHT

## RECOMMENDATION

• **Transport** is perceived as the greatest barrier to accessing local opportunities.



• Consider group locations, nearby bus routes and alternative shared travel options and online options.

• **Health conditions** and diverse needs often acted as barriers to community engagement.



• Offer inclusive and adaptable activities with the option for a carer or family member to join.

• **Time constraints** due to work or caring roles means many are unable to join social groups or activities.



• Consider flexible times for groups, such as weekends or weekday evenings.

• **Purpose** is important to people as they age, often experienced through volunteering and learning.



• Consider personalised support for different interests and goals in later life and offer home based learning.

• **Awareness** of local group and activities varies across age, with some holding little knowledge.



• Increase awareness of signposting support and ensure family and carers have access to information.

• **Digital technology** is valued for connection, but lack of confidence and skills are barriers.



• Offer digital learning support and consider alternative in-person, printed and over the phone options.

• **Faith & religion** offers many people support, guidance, company and connection.



• Consider working with religious venues and settings, raising awareness of local groups and activities.

• **High-street closures** meant many no longer engage with others or learn about local opportunities.



• Offer digital support where needed and consider alternative in-person or over the phone options.

• **Age** is often considered a concept, with many disliking the term 'older adult'.



• Ensure services do not group or stereotype people based on their age, consider personalised support.