Annual Report

Councillor Margaret Pattison, Champion for Older People

It is with pleasure that I present my Annual Report as Member Champion for Older People. I have very much enjoyed acting as an advocate for older people and providing a link between them, the community and Lancaster City Council.

I see the role of Champion for Older People as a crucial role to help older people with a whole range of issues they have within their community.

As part of my role, I have visited a number of older people's groups to meet members and discuss any issues they may have.

I would like to tell you about some of the things I have been involved with in 2014/15.

**The Local Authority Elected Member Older People’s Champions North West of England Network**

Lancaster City Council is a member of the Local Authority Elected Member Older People’s Champions Network, which spans the north west of England.

The network was established by the Better Government for Older People Initiative to help and support older peoples' champions to develop and share good practice. The network also seeks to influence central government on key issues affecting older people; this year the network dispatched a letter to the Prime Minister, urging the Government to establish a Minister for Older People.

Over the course of 2014/15, I have attended the network’s Good Practice and Business Meetings, and Executive Meetings, across the north west on behalf of Lancaster City Council.

I was very proud to host the latest meeting of the Older People’s Network on Tuesday 17th March, here in Lancaster Town Hall, together with Councillor Eileen Blamire, Leader of the Council, and the Right Worshipful The Mayor of Lancaster, Councillor Susie Charles. We enjoyed excellent presentations from Professor Gill Baynes, Chair of the Lancaster and Morecambe University of the Third Age, Simon Denerley, Community Engagement Officer from Help Direct, and Diane Armstrong, Dementia Co-ordinator from Age UK Lancaster.

The presenters helped to stir up a lively debate amongst the delegates, and I was proud that we were able showcase some of the excellent work which is going on in support of older people in this district.

I would like to place my formal thanks on record to the presenters for coming along to share their best practice and innovation.
**Age UK Lancashire**

I continue to attend Age UK Lancashire’s Dementia Community Forum, where professionals with a special interest in dementia meet to share ideas and practices. The meetings are coordinated by the Dementia Support Co-ordinator for Age UK Lancashire, and the forum has representatives from 12 local organisations in the Lancaster and Morecambe district.

It meets on a bi-monthly with the aim of helping Lancaster to become a dementia friendly district.

As well as attending the forum on a regular basis, I completed an Age UK course to become an official Dementia Friend. Dementia Friends learn a little bit about what it's like to live with dementia and turns that understanding into action. This could be helping someone find the right bus or being patient in a queue if someone with dementia is taking longer to pay.

People with dementia really want to carry on living their normal daily lives and feeling included in the local community, but they sometimes need a helping hand. Becoming a Dementia Friend is something that anybody can sign up to do with Age UK, and I would recommend it wholeheartedly.

**Lancaster District Pensioners Campaign Group**

I have regularly attended meetings of the Lancaster District Pensioners Campaign Group over the past year, and supported the National Pensioners Convention in obtaining public opinion through consultation on the Pensioners Manifesto 2015.

You can find out more about the Pensioners Manifesto by logging onto [www.npcuk.org](http://www.npcuk.org).

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

In accordance with the agreed recommendations of the Older People’s Task Group, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is required to consider issues affecting older people on an annual basis.

As Champion for Older People, I was invited to attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s meeting on 28 January 2015, held at the Rainbow Centre, Morecambe.

We discussed numerous areas of concern for older people in the district, including carers visiting older people in their own homes and how the carers were trained, monitored and employed. I was pleased to see that this was added to the Committee’s work programme, together with the monitoring of older peoples’ homes, both in the private and public sector.

In the interests of encouraging greater public attendance and participation at this meeting in the future, it was agreed that the annual meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider older people’s issues will take place in the summer months.

**Dying Matters, Storey Institute**

In May 2014, I attended an all-day event with a variety of stakeholders, including judges, solicitors, and palliative care workers who were providing advice and guidance to help people to
make informed choices about death. It was an extremely thought provoking day, which must have helped a lot of people to talk more openly about dying, death and bereavement, and to make plans for the end of life.

Allied to the speakers was Rankin’s *Alive: In the Face of Death*, a travelling photographic exhibition documenting the personal stories of people who have faced their own death. I was very pleased to see the work of such a high profile artist in Lancaster, to promote what is a very important and extremely sensitive subject.

**Defying Dementia**

I have been proud to support the Defying Dementia campaign this year, which is being led by a team from Lancaster University who are working to develop a new drug for the treatment of Alzheimer’s disease, to the stage where it can enter human clinical trials.

Several years ago, scientists at Lancaster University developed a drug that blocks the formation of the 'senile plaques' that are found in the brains of victims of Alzheimer’s disease, or dementia. This drug blocks the plaques from forming, along with their toxic effect on brain cells. It is highly stable in the body and it has very recently been found to preserve memory.

Unfortunately, the laboratory work has reached the end of funding by Research Councils, but the drug is not developed to the standard where it could be adopted by the pharmaceutical industry.

Defying Dementia have launched a major fund-raising campaign to raise money which will hopefully get the drug into human clinical trials, and you can find out more about their work by having a look at their Facebook page.

**Radio Lancashire**

I was invited by the University of the Third Age to join a panel at the Dukes Theatre on Wednesday 18th March, which was broadcast live on BBC Radio Lancashire 11-12pm. During the programme, the panel took a wide range of questions from the audience on services for older people, and I sincerely hope the broadcast has helped to raise awareness of older peoples issues in the district and across Lancashire.

**Still Alice**

Finally, I was very recently invited to a screening of *Still Alice* at the Dukes Playhouse. The film documents the story of a successful university professor who struggles to maintain her mind and purpose after being diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer’s. I was delighted to be invited onto a panel following the film to discuss aspects of dementia and take questions from the audience.