

AS TIME GOES BY

THOUGHTS ON WELL-BEING IN LATER YEARS

COLLECTED AND WRITTEN BY
A GROUP OF OLDER PEOPLE

Acknowledgements

This booklet draws on Older People and Well-being Research Project which was carried out by:

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A copy of the full research report is available at:
www.brighton.ac.uk/sass/older-people-wellbeing-and-participation

We would like to thank everyone who participated in interviews and focus groups; Age Concern Brighton, Hove and Portslade and the University of Brighton for supporting this research. Production of the booklet was supported by the University of Brighton Research and Innovation Award.

At the time of going to print Age Concern Brighton, Hove and Portslade was on the point of joining Age UK and changing its name to Age UK Brighton & Hove. Any references to Age Concern Brighton, Hove and Portslade should be understood as Age UK Brighton & Hove.



As Time Goes By... Thoughts on well-being in later years.
Collected and written by a group of older people in Brighton & Hove for their peers everywhere.

First published 2012 by the University of Brighton and Age Concern Brighton, Hove and Portslade

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A larger text of the booklet is available. For more information contact Beatrice Gahagan, Age Concern Brighton, Hove and Portslade on 01273 720603

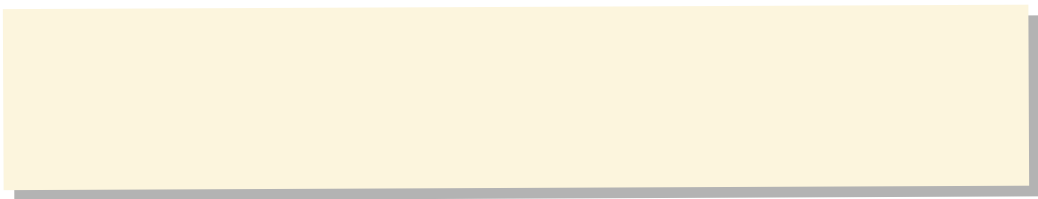
Contents

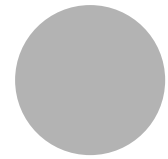
Introduction	3
Should I move?	5
Thinking ahead	7
Taking control of finances	9
Financial security	11
Security when living alone	12
Security when out and about	14
Getting your affairs in order	15
Keeping up with new developments	17
Losing loved ones	18
Getting to know your neighbours	19
Making new friends and keeping up with old ones	20
Relationships with family	21
Fear of rebuff	23
Giving and receiving care	24
Take care of your health	26
Becoming forgetful	28
Seeking medical help	29
Coping with disabilities	31
Deafness and relationships	33
Volunteering	34
Recognise your own strengths	35
List of contributors	36
List of useful organisations	36

We have tried to gather the main points raised with suggestions of possible solutions, remembering that it was older people themselves who provided the material. The sections in italics are direct quotes from the older people who were interviewed.

'...it's great that you don't have to work any more... every day is

If you do think of moving house there are several factors to take into account. When there are two of you it is not

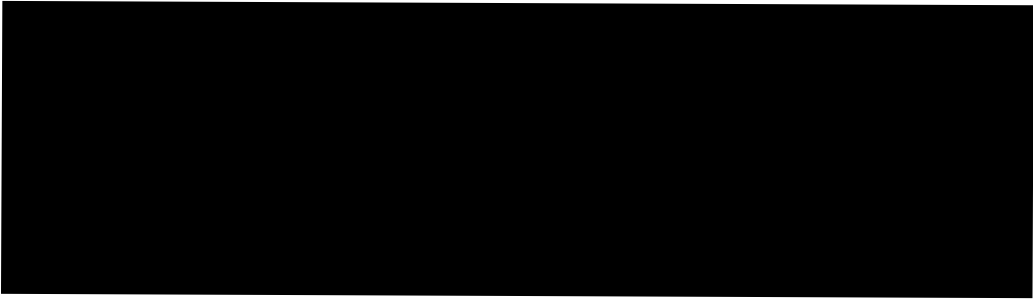


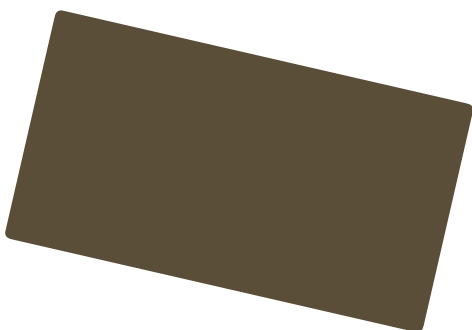



Most of us anticipate being less well off once we have stopped full-time working. As we approach retirement, or now if we have not done this recently, it is a good idea to work out how much money we spend in an average month. This will require keeping careful records of all expenditure and making allowance for irregular expenses like birthdays and the annual service on the car. This needs to be compared with the income we expect to receive after retirement, taking into account savings and any income we can expect from these. It is also prudent to consider how we use credit cards or other financial services where we may build up debts which have to be repaid. Ideally we should reach retirement debt free. If we do have any significant debts it is very important to seek advice as soon as possible to work out how best to repay them. Age UK or Citizens Advice are among the organisations that can give help with this.

If our future income is likely to exceed our expenditure, all will be well for now, although we always have to be mindful of inflation. Also, as we get older we may need to pay for help with things that we have always done ourselves such as cleaning the house, tending the garden or getting the shopping.

If the income will not cover our present expenditure, we need to consider how we can reduce our out-goings. This may involve changes such as how and where we take holidays, reducing our generosity to children and grandchildren, purchasing less expensive food items or even changing where we live. What is very important is that we do not get into debt in order to maintain our lifestyle. So if we still use credit cards we should try to ensure that they are fully paid off monthly, or perhaps we should think about changing to using a debit card?







For those of us who live alone there is the worry of what will happen if we get ill - will there be anyone who can get in to help?

For those without family living nearby, having good relationships with neighbours who will look out for you can be really helpful. Leaving keys with a trusted person can be convenient as well as reassuring. On the other hand some of us value our privacy so much that we are reluctant to leave a key for someone to get in.

One solution is to this is to have a personal alarm system. This involves wearing a small call button around your neck or on your wrist. If you should fall or get into difficulties and be unable to reach your phone you can press the call button and be put through to an emergency centre who will be able to speak to you through your call button. If you don't have a named person you can trust to be a key holder you can have a box with a code for emergency services to get in as part of the package.

s6302e soithou -1.45p2os5pm27980(m 46(feea)7(v.)d somei-n3agl)101n385Q if we get ill - will there be anyone who can get in to help?

Security when Out & About



Sometimes we feel a bit vulnerable about going out and it can be helpful to plan ahead - for example work out the route and where you can stop for a rest. If possible we should take a mobile phone (and be sure we know how to use it!). Not everyone knows of a system used by the emergency services when someone they are helping has a mobile phone. In the address book you enter a name as 'ICE' which stands for 'In Case of Emergency'. Then you add the phone number of your next of kin, or someone else you would want to be informed if you have an accident. If necessary, the emergency services will contact this number on your behalf.

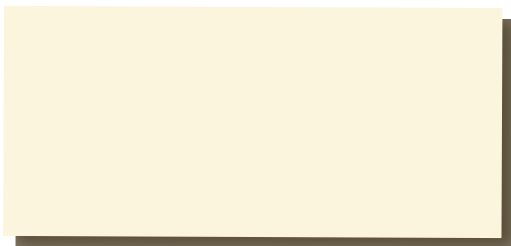
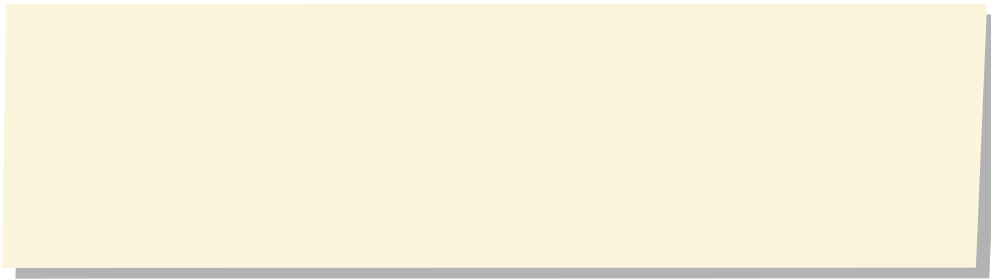
Those of us feeling a bit unsteady on our feet may find a stick or pole gives confidence. Hiking sticks have a more sporty appearance to normal walking sticks and can provide support and confidence without making us feel we look really old!

What about trying Nordic walking:

'Some time ago a group of skiers decided they did not want to stop walking. Now many walking groups are using Nordic walking poles for their walks – they are kinder on the knees, are adjustable, you can walk upright but if you use a walking frame there is a tendency to double up.

Of course using two sticks means that you will need to carry anything else in a rucksack - and don't be afraid to ask people to pack your bag for you so you can hang onto your sticks!

Some of us refuse to discuss the possibility of death and reject the idea



'...our son lives in the States and...we do communicate with him by Skype on the computer and he speaks to us on that and we see him and speak with him and his family that way... it does help that you can see them'.

The world around us changes so quickly and it is understandable to feel more comfortable with methods of doing things which have become familiar over the years. It is, however, vital to be aware of what is changing, to assess how these changes may impact on our lives and if necessary to take appropriate steps to familiarise ourselves with new gadgets and methods of working.


Currently it is becoming increasingly clear that methods of communication are changing rapidly. No longer do grandchildren send an endearing thank you note but are more likely instead to send a text message – that is if we have mobile phones and have learned to 'text'! Forms that have to be completed for all sorts of things increasingly have to be done 'on-line'. If we haven't learned how to use a computer and do not have access to one, we become dependent on others to this for us. Also, as we become less able it could be a blessing to be able to order our shopping on-line and have it delivered to the front door. Many organisations including public libraries offer free training in the use of the internet. If you do not have a computer of your own, many libraries have them available for you to use for your own purposes.

'e-mail is just wonderful, and if there was one thing that was taken away from me that I would miss most, probably it would be my e-mail...I can be in touch with people all over the world'.

Development

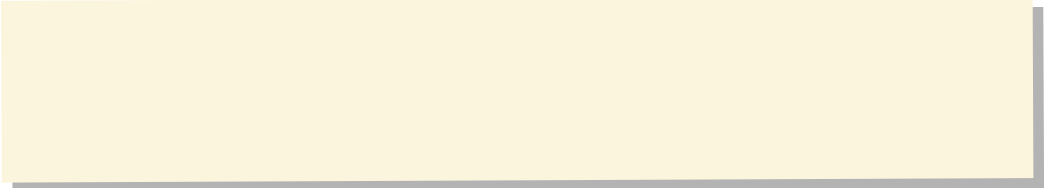


Relationships with family are often the longest of our lives but friendships can also be long lasting. As we get older our longest relationships are an important source of shared experiences and shared history. 54 -1505(.makd)]Ts it douby ared 8(d whe l g)5(eng)5(se)18meonel gehas but 0 -1.455 TD [



'It's not a place to get to know anybody...I've got someone with a... door absolutely opposite me.... and I've never seen or heard them go in or out and, presumably, they've never seen or heard me, and our doors are bang opposite... you might meet somebody down in the laundry room... but we don't know one another, just passing acquaintances really'.


We should all try to get to know our neighbours. We do not have to sit in each others pockets, but it is good to be at least on nodding terms. We should not be afraid to knock on their door and introduce ourselves - they may have been meaning to do the same, but never got round to it. Or we can at least say 'hello' when we see them around.





With life's ups and downs we can easily all lose confidence and this can



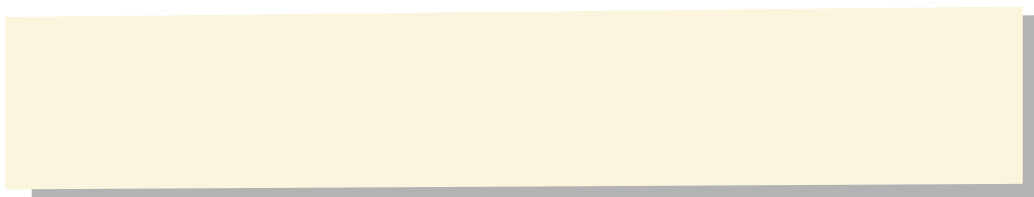


As we become more frail and perhaps less able to do everything that we used to, it is inevitable that we will have to rely on help from other people to some extent. Most of this help will be informal and will come from family, friends and neighbours. It is only when we have the very greatest needs that health and social care professionals will become involved in our everyday lives.

Giving or receiving care of any kind creates a relationship. At its best this can be both supportive and rewarding but if it doesn't work it can be very negative. Any relationship is a two way response and there are three strands that make up the important ingredients: reliability, reassurance and respect. However grateful we are, the caring relationship puts

You may have a neighbour friend or relative helping you on an informal basis and this may work perfectly well. On the other hand if you are entitled to financial help with your care, using an 'individual budget' (money that social services allocate to you direct to pay for help) can formalise and set boundaries to a previously informal 'care' role. This can sometimes be helpful if things are not working quite right or you feel uneasy about the relationship.

Giving care can be very rewarding and satisfying but can also be difficult and demanding. Being a carer can also make it very difficult to maintain old relationships or form new ones. Being a carer is such an important and difficult job and takes so much out of us that it is important to make sure we have support from other people and we must not be afraid to ask. It can be really helpful to have a network of support to boost the spirits and help us to fulfil the caring role with renewed energy. Crossroads is one of a number of organisations able to give support to carers.



Becoming



FORGETFUL

Throughout our lives we can and do forget things, especially when we are stressed and have a lot on our minds. When we are younger this is a minor irritation or can be a source of amusement. But as we become older and more forgetful it could be more serious. 'Am I getting Alzheimer's? Is this the beginning of dementia?'

So many of us have had these worries but so often we keep them to ourselves. Somehow a problem relating to our brain may seem less acceptable than a physical illness and we are reluctant to discuss it with anyone lest they agree with our fears.

Most of us lose our keys at some time or another but when we find them we are relieved and get on with our lives. It is only when we find the keys but do not know what to do with them that we may have something to worry about. This, of course, is a gross over-simplification but can be reassuring when once again we cannot find something or cannot remember the name of a book we read only last week!

If we begin seriously to fear that this is more than normal forgetfulness, it is important that we discuss it with someone we trust rather than worrying alone. The Alzheimer's Association can give valuable advice at this stage. Then, if still worried, it is best to visit the GP to discuss the symptoms that are concerning us. The GP may be reassuring or may make a referral to a consultant who can do some tests. Research is going on all the time and medication is being developed that can help delay the symptoms of dementia. As with most illnesses, the earlier we get a diagnosis the greater chance we have of receiving appropriate treatment.

Pharmacists can be a good first port of call for any queries we may have with regard to medication or minor ailments. Many offer services such as blood pressure checks or blood tests. Medical advice can also be obtained over the telephone from NHS Direct. This service is open 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

Many GP surgeries now offer telephone consultations, which can save a difficult trip to the surgery at a time when you are feeling at your worst. GPs do also do home visits to those genuinely unable to visit the surgery.

Questioning advice or treatment given by a doctor can seem daunting. Many of us have grown up revering those in the medical profession.

'...You can get help, there's an awful lot available. It makes me cross when they say there is not...'

All of us are likely to suffer problems that age can bring, some of these more severe than others. Don't be afraid to ask for help when needed. This is not a weakness, but a strength; a strength in realising your own abilities and needs.

We can talk to family, friends and others. The old adage, 'A problem shared is a problem halved', does have merit and peers may well have similar troubles. Sharing problems makes one feel less vulnerable and alone, often others' experiences and ways of coping can help.

If stairs, bathing etc are becoming increasingly dif cult for you, there

The choice is ours as to how we deal with a disability, help is available but we must take the first steps to ask for assistance:

‘... but I’ve found out unless you orchestrate it to happen it is not going to you know....’

In no way does this detract from our independence and freedom of choice. Rather we are empowering ourselves to make the most of what we have.

At a particularly lovely Flower Festival someone was at the door telling all the people who entered to go the altar to see the blind
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HSFFOFSZ 5IFZ BTLFE UIF CMJOE NBO IPX IF IBE NBO
such an interesting design without being able to see. He told them he
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PO UIF MFBWFT 5IJT IBT MFE UP B SFOFXFE JOUFSFT

20

DEAFNESS AND

relationships

Communication difficulties can really affect relationships - for example deafness can make it awkward and frustrating to try and take part in family or group discussions. Many of us don't like to admit to being deaf but this can only lead to more frustration. Hearing aids, (which are free on the National Health), have been greatly improved and often come with helpful extras such as a magnet attached to the brush for cleaning your hearing aid. This will pick up the dead battery when it needs changing and make the job much easier. It is well worth the investment of time and money to ensure that we have the equipment which can so improve our general ability to participate and be sociable which will all help to safeguard our well being.

'You have to come to terms with life... and bad things can happen at times and then life goes on, so you have to carry on and take a
E J n F S F O U Q B U I X B Z + V T U E P X I B U Z P V
that's all you can do'.

DBO BOE USZ

Retirement we are told is the beginning of a 'third age' a new page in the book of life. For some of us this can be a challenge but for others daunting. How we approach later life is a very individual thing, but we must not lose sight of what we have gained over the years. Throughout our lives we have learnt to cope, adapt and be resilient. Experience has given us many practical skills and emotional strengths which we may now need to use. It can be all too easy to focus on the things we can't do anymore. However, listing what we are able to do can be a surprise and prompt old interests that can be re-kindled or new ones to try.

Our practical skills can be used in a variety of ways be it developing pre-existing hobbies; trying something new or helping others. Often the process of supporting someone else can make us feel useful and, therefore, good about ourselves. At times, all of us can feel lonely or depressed. Over our lifetime we have acquired internal strengths and reserves, which we can now bring to the fore enabling us to cope and help overcome the problem.

There is no point dwelling on what we should or should not have done but live for today and the future. Growing old can't be learnt but accepting change and adapting to it can be. We now have time to reflect on all the positive things gained over our lifetime that we can use to enhance our well-being today.

'Because you can, you know, if you've a will'.

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(apprentice older person)!

List of **USEFUL**

Access Point, Brighton & Hove Social Services – 01273 295555

Assessments for individual care needs and for the needs of carers.

Age UK, Brighton & Hove – 01273 720603

Help and advice for over 50's.

BHT, Brighton & Hove – 01273 234737

Debt advice.

Carers Centre, Brighton & Hove – 01273 746222

Support for carers.

Carelink, Brighton & Hove – 01273 673105

Personal alarm systems.

Cinnamon Trust (national) – 01736 757900
Help caring for pets.

Citizens Advice Bureau – 0845 120 3710
Advice on a wide variety of issues.

Community Legal Service – 0845 345 4345
Free legal advice.

Concessionary Travel, Brighton & Hove – 01273 291924
Bus passes.

Crossroads, Brighton & Hove – 01273 324021
Support for carers, day & night sitting.

Cruse Bereavement Care – 0844 4779400
Counselling and support.

Daily Living Centre, Brighton & Hove – 01273 203016
Advice and trials of disability aids.

Easylink, Brighton & Hove – 01273 677559
Door to door minibus service.

Energy Efficiency Grants, Brighton & Hove – 0800 107 4100
Help with heating & insulation.

Federation of Disabled People – 01273 296747
Advice of all types of disability

First Stop, Brighton & Hove – 0800 377 7070
Housing advice for older people.

Fire & Rescue Service – 0800 177 7069
Free advice on Fire Safety/smoke alarms.

Homesafe, Brighton & Hove – 0800 313 4457
Help with small household repairs.

MACS, Brighton & Hove – 01273 664040
Money advice for older people.

Meals on Wheels, Brighton & Hove – 01273 410117

Meals delivered to your home.

Mears Home Improvement Service, Brighton & Hove – 01273 820895

Home improvements.

Neighbourhood Care Scheme, Brighton & Hove – 01273 775888

Neighbourly help.

Pals, Brighton & Hove – 0800 013 0251

Patient advice and information.

Red Cross Brighton & Hove – 01273 227814

Disability equipment.

Red Cross – 01903 207191

Transport for older and disabled people.

Warm Front – 0800 316 6011

Help with home insulation and heating.

