

The origins of



The origins of Age Concern Liverpool & Sefton date back to 1928 through the direct intervention of the social reformer Eleanor Rathbone when the first committee in the country was formed specifically for the “care of the elderly”. The Committee a direct antecedent of Age Concern Liverpool & Sefton was set up by the Liverpool Personal Service Society. Using a special donation from the Rathbone family, the Old Folks Welfare Sub-Committee was established, with Mr Derbyshire as Chairman, Miss Eleanor Rathbone as Vice-Chairman and Miss Dorothy Keeling as Secretary. In the same year, the first social clubs for pensioners were inaugurated. Pensioners attended these centres every month for afternoon tea and entertainments and by 1938, there were twelve clubs in operation. The basis of this work was voluntary. Outings and garden parties were arranged as were holidays.

In the 1930's the Old Folks Welfare Sub-Committee expanded its work to visiting institutions for old people at Belmont Road and Kirkdale, this was long before the Friends of the Hospital movement.

In her book, “The Crowded Stairs”, Dorothy Keeling writes about this early work. *“Liverpool was, undoubtedly, thanks largely to Miss Rathbone’s initiative and inspiration, a pioneer in the work for the elderly.”* When the National Old People’s Welfare Committee, (later to become Age Concern England), was set up in 1940, Miss Rathbone was its first Chair and Dorothy Keeling its Secretary.

By 1958 there were 65 clubs for the elderly, all affiliated to the Liverpool Council of Clubs. The Old Folks Welfare Sub-Committee and the Liverpool Council of Clubs came together, in 1958, to form a separate charity, the Liverpool Old Peoples Welfare Council, under the auspices of the Liverpool Council for Social Service. This charity took on the name of Age Concern during 1972.

Because of its rapid growth, both in workload and financial responsibilities, Age Concern Liverpool was incorporated as a private company, limited by guarantee and re-registered as a charity in 1986.

Unfortunately some of the problems of 1928 are still present today. Dorothy Keeling writes, *“We learnt a great deal from our experimental work for old people.....We realised the great monotony of the lives of the elderly, especially those living alone, and the total absence of any colourful occupation. Not only, too, were many of them desperately lonely, but the feeling that they were no longer wanted was very common, as was the constant dread of having to be moved to the ‘House’, from which it was very unlikely that there would be any return”*.

The problem of loneliness, being unwanted, lack of motivation and the fear, not so much of being sent to the workhouse, but of going into residential care homes, remain.

The wealth of voluntary effort also still remains along with the local initiative on which our work rests. Volunteers within Age Concern Liverpool & Sefton give of that most precious commodity, their time. Without them, the Charity would be unable to deliver its vision of ‘Improving the quality of life of older people.’ Their roles are wide and diverse; they work within every part of the organisation bringing with them the life skills that make Age Concern Liverpool & Sefton a highly respected Organisation.

We have a lot to be proud of from our beginnings, of the enthusiasm, dedication and pioneering spirit which is still reflected in our work today.

Making the difference to older people's lives

TIMELINE –

1928

- Liverpool Personal Service Society set up the first committee in the country specifically for older people.

1940

- The National Old People's Welfare Committee (later to become Age Concern England) was set up.

1958

- There were now 65 clubs in operation all affiliated to the Liverpool Council of Clubs.
- The Old Folk's Welfare Sub-Committee and the Liverpool Council of Clubs came together to form the Liverpool Old People's Welfare Council.
- Toxteth District Council held its first meeting

1960

- Toxteth Day Centre opened.
- First newsletter of services for older people produced and distributed.

1961

- A comprehensive information and advice service established.

1962

- Distribution of coal, food, clothing and bedding was made to older people badly hit by the cold spell.

1963

- The Woolton Centre opened. It was the first purpose built centre for pensioners in Liverpool.

1964

- Liverpool Older People's Welfare Committee was appointed co-ordinating body for older people's welfare by the Local Authority.

1966

- 1,600 people made contact for information or advice.
- 7 day centres catering for housebound people.

1968

- 3 day centres organised a 'Holiday for the Housebound' scheme, and the success exceeded all expectations. One lady aged 82 was asked how long it had been since she had had a holiday, to which her reply was "Eh; bless you; I've never had a holiday in my life".

1969

- The Extra-Mural Department of Liverpool University in co-operation with 'The Old People's Welfare Council' mounted a course for 6 weeks entitled "Old People in Society" and over 60 students enrolled.

1970

- Good Neighbour Scheme suggested by Dr Meredith Davies.
- There were now 41 lunch clubs, with 3,000 lunches being served each week.
- Retirement courses introduced.

1972

- The name Age Concern was adopted to replace the National Older People's Welfare Council.
- A pilot Good Neighbour scheme was launched, with 50 good neighbour volunteers giving 15 hours per week looking after 500 vulnerable older people.

1973

- 'Continuing Care' project began at Broadgreen and Sefton Hospitals, hoping to improve hospital aftercare services that sometimes did not arrive on time and often not at all.

1975

- 4,047 enquiries dealt with a wide range of issues affecting older people.
- 3 Good Neighbour schemes established.
- 200 afternoon clubs.
- 14 centres for housebound people.

1981\1983

- The beginning of a 2 year pilot scheme of Intensive Domiciliary Care for the Elderly Mentally Infirm.
- A keep fit project was launched in the city, termed 'Fitness Fun for the Elderly'; our day centres ran especially modified keep fit classes (chair based).

1984

- Age Concern Liverpool in conjunction with the Health Education Council, planned to introduce a wide range of Health giving activities for pensioners, including classes on how to “Look After Yourself”, sports and dancing.

1985

- Age Concern Liverpool administered a course titled ‘The Liverpool Project; A Basic Course in Caring for Elderly People’ aiming to challenge the attitudes of the young towards the old.
- Age Concern Liverpool in conjunction with Old Swan Technical College developed courses for older people including, creative writing, history and geography scoping future courses for computing and woodwork.

1986

- The organisation moved from Stanley Street to Sir Thomas Street. A Charity Shop and Coffee Bar were opened in the building.

1987

- The distribution of EEC food surpluses was an experience with butter and cheese being distributed to 3,000 people a day.
- Age Concern Liverpool (Services) Ltd was formed to separate the trading activities from the Charity.

1987

- The pilot of the Dark Horse Venture commenced, the venture was based on the Duke of Edinburgh Award and aimed at the over 60s.

1988

- Age Concern Liverpool opened a 6 bedded residential home for older people with a functional mental illness. This was part of the Care in the Community strategy to close long stay hospitals.

1989\1990

- Launch of Grapevine Newspaper, a free paper providing information and news to older people.
- A 12 bedded nursing home was opened in Aigburth for older people with a mental health diagnosis.
- Liverpool Chinese Good Neighbour Service established.
- Somali Day Centre opened.

1992\1993

- A weekly legal advice clinic was introduced at Head Office proving extremely popular.
- Launch of the Housing Support Centre, a citywide service for advice, consultancy and support for Liverpool's older people and for professionals on the whole range of housing issues.

1994

- Rally held at St George's Hall to demand an end to pensioners being short-changed. An increase in the level of the basic pension was the main demand. This Rally formed a part of Age Concern's national campaign about the effect of poverty on older people.

1995

- Launch of Active Age Information, providing information and advice on enjoying the positive aspects of growing older – from holidays, sport and leisure to art, entertainment and volunteering.

1996

- Distribution of 21,000 free low energy light bulbs to older people.

1997

- Liverpool Sheltered Housing Project was launched. Instead of having to complete 17 different forms to apply to City Council and Housing Associations for sheltered housing. Age Concern Liverpool acted as a single clearing-house.

1997

- Major fundraising event of the year – Christmas Crackers held at St George's Hall in partnership with Research into Ageing.

1998

- Age Concern Liverpool was asked by Liverpool Health Authority to convene and chair a multi-agency task group to draw up a citywide Active Ageing Strategy. 30 organisations contributed to the Task Group.
- Initiated a Black History Project, which aims to record and value the experiences of black elders in Liverpool.

1999

- Active Age Centre opened, a flagship facility offering a wide range of social learning and leisure opportunities.
- Launch of Liverpool Senior Citizens Forum.
- Launch of the Alliance Against Ageism took place at Liverpool Town Hall, this was instigated by Age Concern Liverpool and Southern Community Health Council to combat ageism.

2000

- Age Concern Liverpool became members of Age Concern the federation.
- Launch of HABIT (Health Advice Benefits Initiative Team) to maximise access to benefits and services for vulnerable, hard to reach people aged over 75 years.

2003

- Fit4Life Fitness Suite opened at the Active Age Centre.

2003\2004

- 6 Patient and Public Involvement in Health Forums established.
- Launch of the Active Age Fitness Suite for over-50s at the Active Age Centre.
- Club 60+ is launched.
- Direct Payments service established.
- Over 50's Art Festival enabling elders from the Arab and Yemeni, West African, Pakistan, Chinese and Hindu communities to share their diverse culture with the wider community.

2004

- The LOOP is launched a subscription based club providing opportunities for pursuing new interests, activities and creating opportunities for developing new friendships, new skills and knowledge, and most of all to have fun.
- As part of Age Concern Liverpool's 75th anniversary celebrations, children at an Intergenerational School Arts Project were invited to look forward 75 years and demonstrate their vision of Liverpool in 2078.

2006

- Awarded Investors in People accreditation.

2007

- Awarded ISO9001 quality accreditation.
- The Liverpool NHS Personal Health Trainer Service was assigned to Age Concern Liverpool and PSS to provide support and help people make positive lifestyle changes.

2008

- Age Concern Liverpool and Age Concern Sefton merge, creating a larger charity, covering a larger geographical area.
- Initiation of the 800 Group Partnership; a consortium of seven leading health and social care charities. The partners, Age Concern Liverpool, Bradbury Fields, Henshaws, Imagine, Merseyside Society for Deaf People, Nugent Care and PSS, work together to improve services for vulnerable members of the community.
- Working in partnership with the Capital of Culture Company, premiered a short film 'Out of the Shadows' at the FACT Cinema during the Outsiders Film Festival in November 2008. The film was part of a bigger reminiscence project gathering the memories of those older people who have been treated differently because of race, faith, sexuality, physical or mental disability.

2009

- Silver Pride has been Age Concern Liverpool's first concerted effort in endeavouring to ensure its services are accessible to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT) older people. First pride event in Liverpool for twelve years. More than 70 older LGBT people attended a social afternoon with forty agreeing to become members of a forum that can help Age Concern Liverpool & Sefton be more accessible.
- In partnership with PSS, assigned contract by Liverpool PCT to deliver Community Health Ambassador Team (CHAT) complimenting Health Trainer service.
- Recognition by World Health Organisation (WHO) of our Active Ageing Programme.

2010

- Through its range of Information & Advice services, a total of £1,401,688 was generated for older people by means of benefits and grants through income maximisation.
- Achieved ISO14001 environmental management system accreditation.

2011

- Age Concern Liverpool and Sefton elects not to join AgeUK but to remain a local independent Charity providing services to local people.
- NHS Sefton awarded a grant to enable us to initiate a befriending and re-ablement service in Sefton to reduce social isolation amongst local older people and to help older people recover more quickly after illness or a spell in hospital.

