

Halton OPEN

External Survey

December 2014

Report compiled by Clare Lightfoot Forum Development Officer

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1. INTRODUCTION

Halton OPEN has been operational since 2001 and is inspirational in forging and influencing the development of services that improve the quality of life and wellbeing of people that live in the Halton Borough aged over 50. As a membership organisation, the group challenges and influences areas of:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Housing
- Transport
- Care
- Finance and benefits
- Quality of later life

The group has a strong appointed board membership of local residents who are passionate about local need.

In November 2014 the Halton OPEN Committee met to plan and propose future actions for the group. It was decided at this meeting that a third survey (two previous surveys have been carried out in 2002 and 2009) would be undertaken in Widnes to provide a snapshot of the priorities and needs of people aged 50 plus and over.

2. SUMMARY

The major findings from this recent survey can be summarised as follows:

- Community transport is vital to many older people in the area
- Staying healthy and knowing that there is support should they fall ill is a real worry for many older people.
- Older people want to stay independent for as long as possible
- Older people genuinely fear the prospect of going into a care home
- Having enough money to stay healthy and enjoy a good quality of life is key
- There are issues around GP appointment availability
- Older people are concerned about care and the perceived inadequacies of our health service
- Being lonely is something that older people are genuinely concerned about
- Local press is cited as the primary source of information for many older people

It is important to note that as this is a small sample of 53 people (out of 60) that any issue or service that has been mentioned as being a priority can be extrapolated so that it clearly is a very important part of improving the health and wellbeing of people aged 50 plus and over in Halton which is why even if one person has mentioned a service or organisation it is worthy of note.

3. METHODOLOGY

Four questions (provided by Halton Borough Council) were asked that would provide feedback on priorities for people aged 50 plus and over and their quality of life in general.

The questionnaire was designed to provide information that would help to assess if services for people aged 50 plus and older are meeting their requirements in this area and to help to improve services and highlight issues where there are inadequacies. The questions were vetted and approved by Halton Borough Council, Halton OPEN's Committee and Age UK Mid Mersey's dedicated Forum Development Officer. A copy of this questionnaire can be found in the appendix (appendix 1).

53 respondents completed the survey which was conducted on a face to face basis at a "church nearly new shop" and at a "local action group" on the 4th and 8th December 2014 in Widnes by two Halton OPEN committee members Doreen Whimperley (Treasurer) and Lil Lamkin. People who come to the shop are from all over Widnes and they attend for a cup of tea and a bargain on a Thursday morning. The action group meet monthly and consist of about 30 people from the community of Halton View. This number can go up to 50 if there is a particularly contentious issue. This group has been very active and have been proactive in highlighting local issues. Projects that they have been involved in have included speed restrictions, tree lopping, grants for toilets, carpets and kitchen facilities to litter bins and car parks. Members of this group include people from all walks of life – fairly affluent to those managing on low incomes.

The survey was collated and a report produced by Halton OPEN's dedicated Forum Development Officer. The results have been collated and analysed by "theme" due to the wide range of comments and feedback.

4. FINDINGS

Section 1 – About You

All respondents completed this section. The majority of respondents within these groups were aged within the 60 – 69 age bracket. Below is a detailed breakdown of the ages of the respondents.

	2002		2009			2014	
Age	Number	%	Number	%	Age	Number	%
50-59	34	32.7%	12	18.4%	50 - 59	9	17%
60-65	23	22.1%	15	23.1%	60 - 69	19	36%
65-75	31	29.8%	19	29.2%	70 - 79	17	32%
Over 75	16	15.4%	17	26.2%	80 - 89	6	11%
No answer	0		2	3.1%	90 - 99	2	4%
Total	104		65		Total	53	

Section 2 - What Are Your Main Concerns About Growing Older?

There were around **85** concerns raised by the 53 respondents in 2014, therefore respondents had an average of **1.64** concerns about growing older. In 2009 there were a total of **217** different concerns raised by the 65 respondents, therefore respondents had an average of **3.34** concerns about growing older and in 2002 there were **259** concerns in 2002, an average of **2.49**. The number of concerns has dropped but it is difficult to say if this is, in fact, the case due to the sample size being smaller. However, the concerns do appear to be more focussed on certain issues as will be highlighted in more detail next and a level of agreement is apparent within the survey group perhaps due to those surveyed being members of an action group - this may be more valuable in terms of research in focussing service needs.

It is very clear that staying healthy and independent is a major concern for older people. This was also highlighted as a priority in the first two surveys undertaken. Interestingly, mobility has not featured quite as highly in this survey although it could be said that in order to stay independent, older people will need to remain mobile. Individual comments made were "Being home and also the ability to do certain jobs that you had no problem with when younger".

Older people are increasingly worried that they will not have enough money to manage on – comments were made about pensions "Shortage of money. Cost of living". Since the previous survey the economic climate has changed and whilst it was cited as one of the top issues in the previous surveys it may be that due to job shortages and redundancies and the changes to the pension system, this has become even more of an issue.

Various comments were made regarding access to GP appointments. Criticisms were made regarding the lack of time for GPs to really listen to patients and the lack of appointments in general. Those surveyed were also concerned about the NHS service in general and its capacity to cope with older peoples' illnesses.

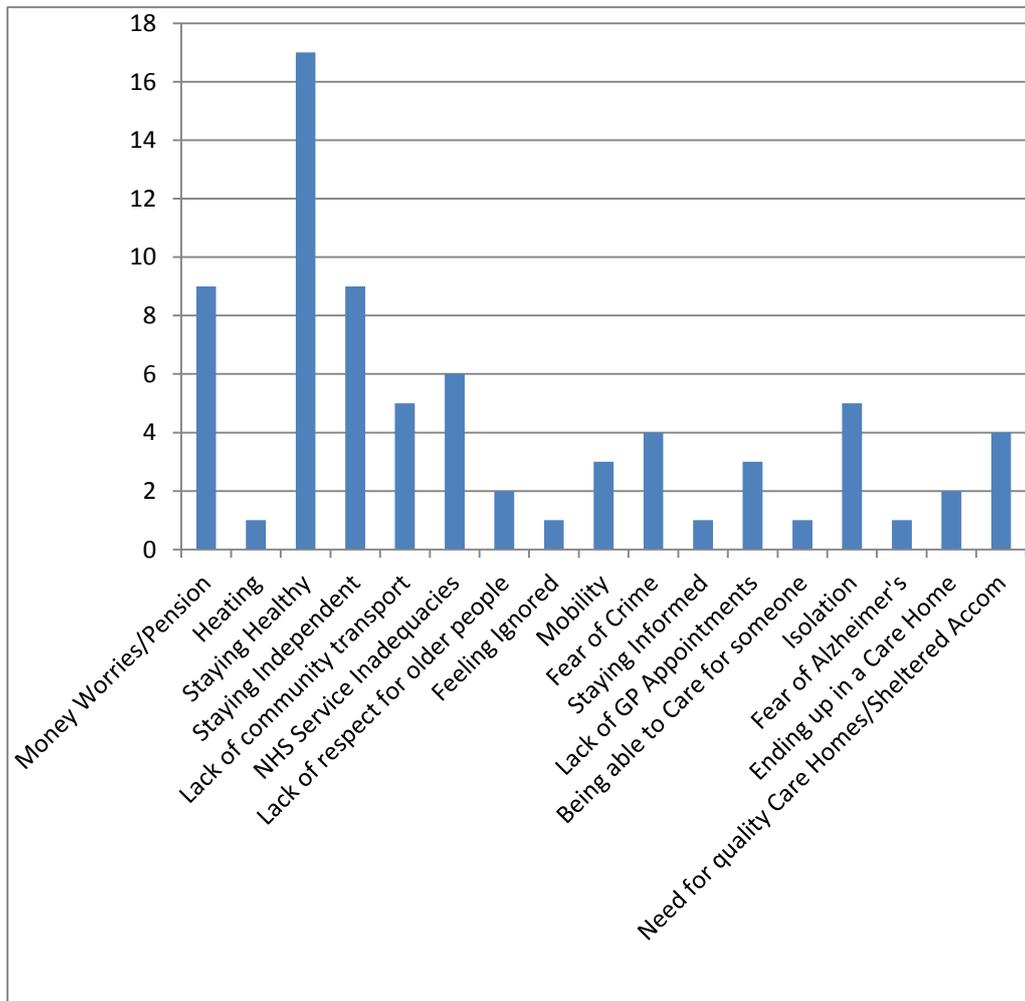
Loneliness and isolation – a real issue for many older people living in the Borough. This is reflected in the responses to Section 2 and is comparable to the results of both surveys in 2002 and 2009. Comments made were "Somewhere to go for a chat and a cup tea. If you are on your own, a way to make new friends".

Community Transport – another issue that older people are concerned about. This relates to the feeling of isolation and comments were made such as; "desperately needing a bus service from Crow Wood to Runcorn" and "live car-less and happy"

Housing Issues – the salient point here is that people do not want to go into a care home but if they do, that care homes should be "quality care homes". More work needs to be carried out in order to assess what exactly this means. Sheltered housing appears to be the preferred option generally.

One participant stated that they feel that they are "Not being recognised with authority. Being thought of as stupid". Perhaps this is something that all service providers should keep in mind.

The chart below shows the results across all participants for section 2.



Section 3 - What services for older people do you feel could be improved or introduced to include quality of life for older people in Halton?

There were around **59** concerns raised by the 53 respondents in 2014, therefore respondents had an average of **1.11** suggestions about improvements. Some participants did not respond to this question – it is difficult to ascertain if this is due to their being satisfied with services or simply that they did not feel happy to complete this question.

The key services that people felt could be improved were "Improved GP Services (in particular access to appointments), Improved Community Transport, Social Activities and More Care Workers" (Social Services).

Comments made with regard to GP services were "Not made to feel welcome. Sometimes treated like children" and "Quicker appointments at the GP and seeing the same one". Other comments focussed around being able to get an appointment and the choice of GPs available.

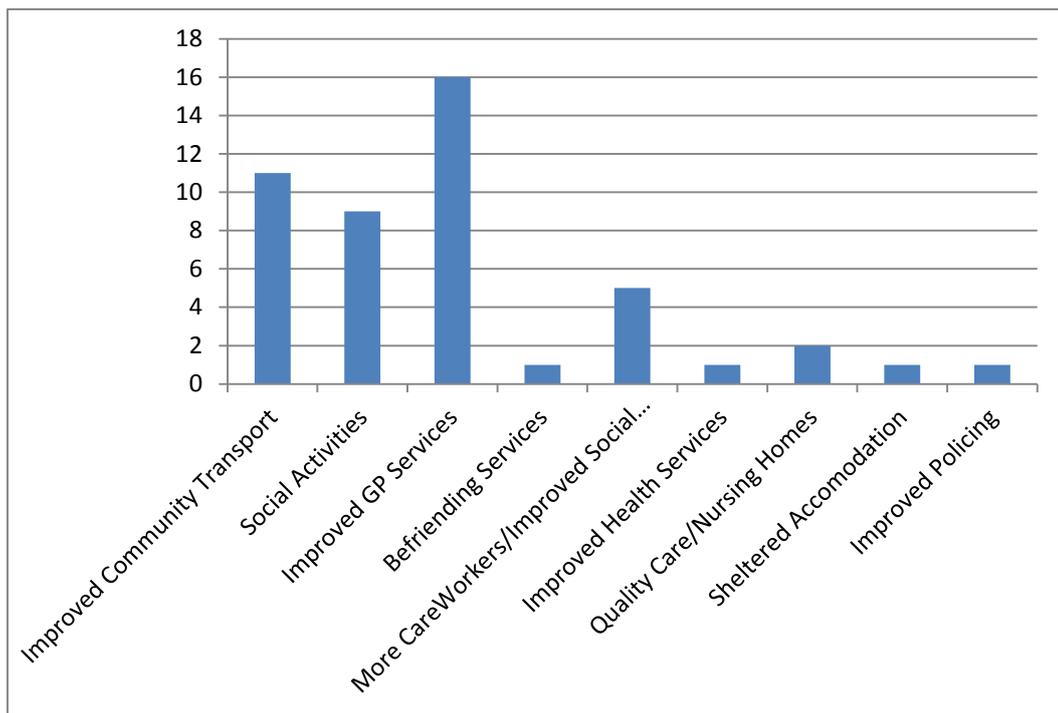
With reference to Community Transport, the Crow Wood/Runcorn route was mentioned again as well as certain bus services finishing early in the evening. Another comment was made which illustrates the importance of transport to older people – "Dial a ride to include all over 65. I am 80, friend 88 but we have a friend 86 who is frail and we can't all go out together because we can't get on a bus".

As highlighted in Section 2, Isolation is still very much an issue. There are older people who would like to be able to socialise with like-minded individuals. They mentioned mid-week clubs, more winter activities and simply somewhere to go and have a chat and a cup of tea.

Care Workers (Social Services) – feedback regarding services provided by social services or services relating to Care Workers was another area in need of improvement. Comments received were "more time from home care services" and the need for help with shopping. This links very strongly with the desire for older people to be able to stay in their own home for as long as possible.

There were a couple of positive comments made about other issues and those were "Recently had wet room fitted through the housing trust. Excellent service" and "I feel services currently available are quite reasonable".

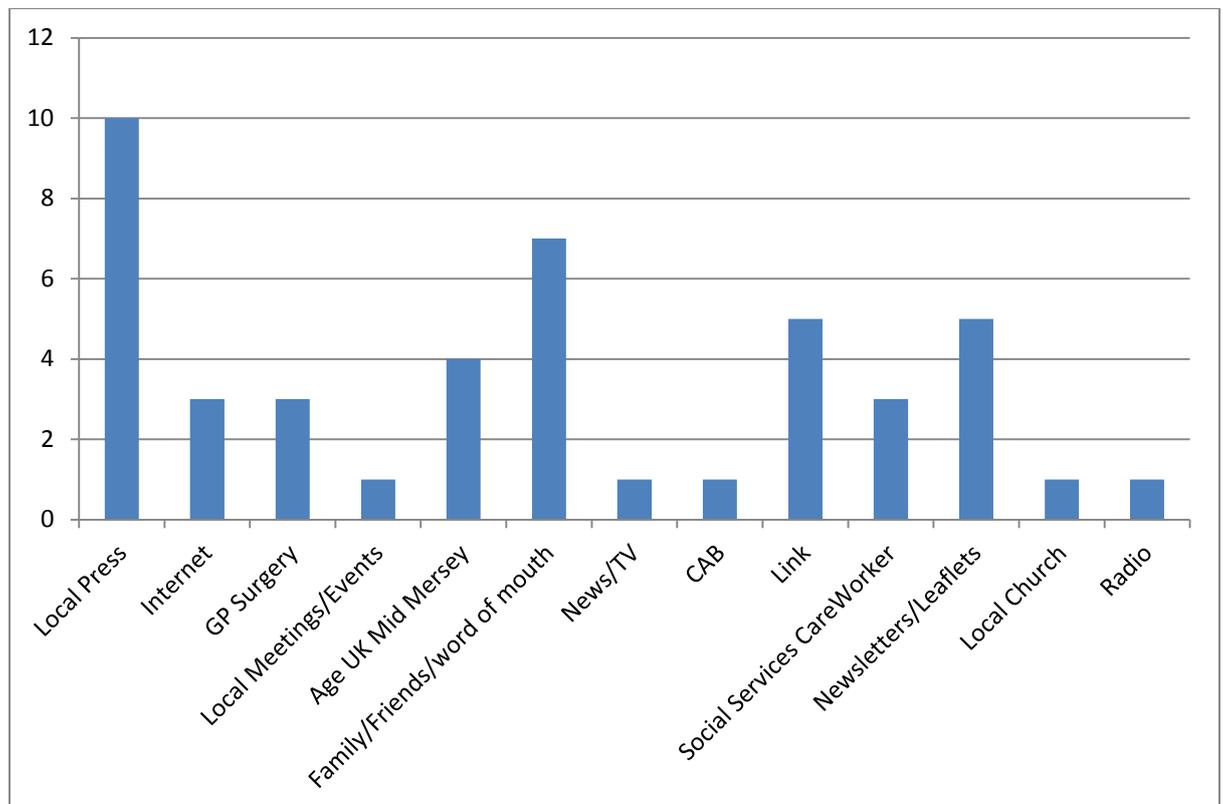
The chart below shows the results across all participants for section 3.



Section 4 - How do you currently get information about services for older people when you need it?

There were 44 responses to this question out of the 53 participants. There were approximately 13 different methods of accessing information identified – the most popular being local press. Interestingly, many people stated that they gathered information from family members and friends - this highlights the importance and power of word of mouth and the importance of ensuring that the messages being communicated are the right messages! This quite a worry as is the amount of duplication in terms of information and the need to coordinate this.

The results for this section are illustrated in the chart below.



Section 5 - Which local services are the most important and have the biggest impact on your life?

An important question. There were around 77 comments made which highlighted the importance of over 16 different services and organisations.

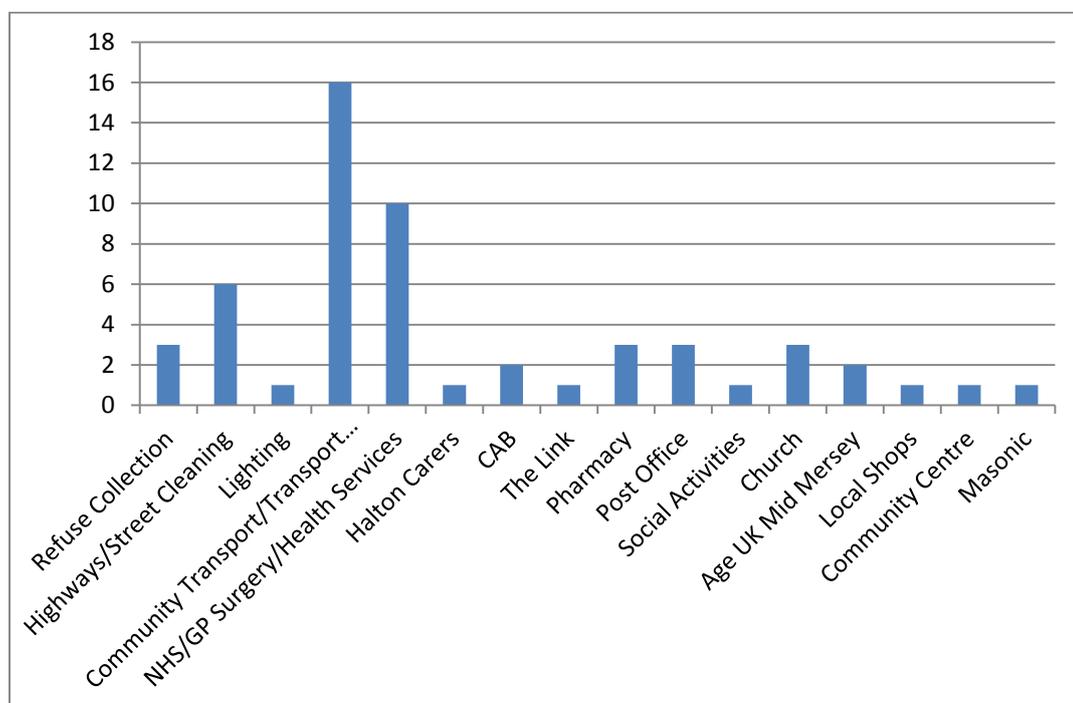
Community transport/transport services comes out as having the most impact on older people's lives. This is a recurring theme throughout this survey and there have been at least two routes that have been highlighted as not having adequate service (see appendix 2 for individual responses). Respondents have also requested that this service should remain free where possible.

Again, it is no surprise that health service inadequacies have been highlighted as an issue with mention of district nursing and GP surgeries. Participants also have mentioned the importance of their local pharmacy here.

Local Authority Environmental Services are another priority for older people. This was a surprising outcome in that of all the services that can impact on these peoples' lives many stated that having their bins emptied, streets cleaned and other highway issues such as kerbs being too high, this was so very important!

Several organisations were highlighted as being important to older people, for example – Halton Carers, CAB, Age UK Mid Mersey and their own church – more details can be found in appendix 2.

The results for this section are illustrated in the chart below.



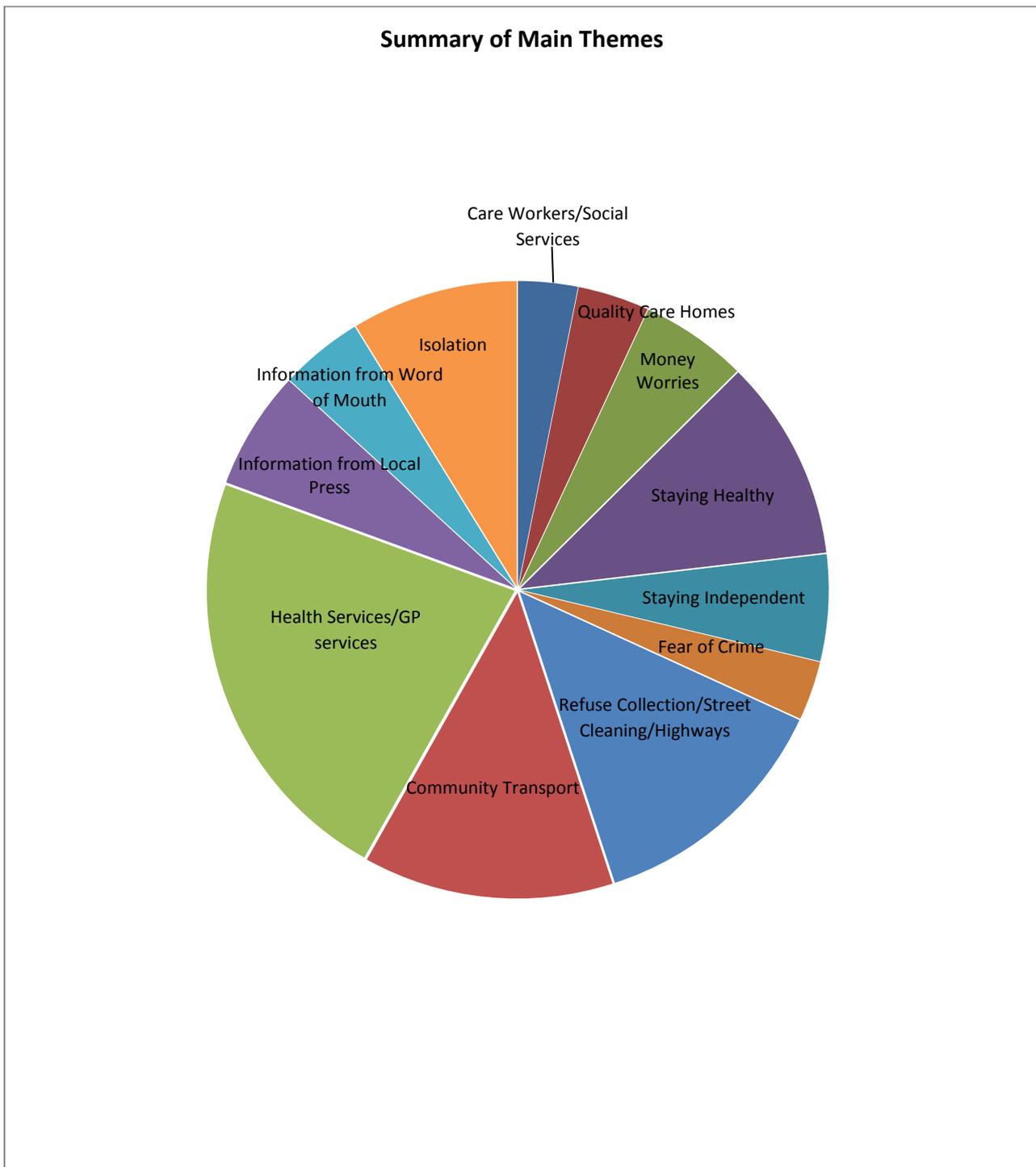
5. CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

Although this was a relatively small sample of older people living in Widnes it provides a snap-shot of how those people feel about living in this area as an older person. It has provided Halton OPEN with a training opportunity and a chance to talk to the people that it represents. This exercise can be repeated and extended. Not only this but the participants have taken part in an activity that is meaningful and that will be communicated directly to Halton OPEN's contacts at Halton Borough Council.

It is hoped now that once this survey is received by Halton Borough Council that it will enable the council to focus its services and partnerships on those areas that are important to people aged 50 plus and older. As stated in the summary those priorities are as follows:

- Community transport – looking specifically at routes not covered/funded and timings of buses
- Health for older people – specifically health education, access to GP appointments and other health services
- Helping older people to stay independent in their own homes through support from Social Services and carer organisations and support for carers within families
- Further work needs to be done around care homes in terms of more qualitative feedback from residents and inspections of current homes in order to ensure quality care
- More sheltered home provision across the Borough
- Helping older people to budget their money, access financial support through links with money advisors at Age UK Mid Mersey and to campaign for pension improvements through Halton OPEN
- Find ways to help to overcome isolation and provide information to older people on where they can meet other people in an environment they are happy with and that is truly accessible
- Reintroduce befriending services in Halton
- Through an Information Model address the issues around access to information that is inclusive of all information services providers and ensure that this is coordinated effectively

The chart below illustrates the main themes identified as priorities by this survey.



6. APPENDICES

Includes

- 1. Halton OPEN Questionnaire**
- 2. Analysis of results in detail**