

Search Project

Is Benwell Older Person Friendly?



The Older Person Friendly Benwell Project

During Summer and Autumn of 2006 more than 50 older people took part in discussions about what makes Benwell a good place for older people to live in and what aspects of life in the area are not so good.

The project was led by Search – a locally-managed community-based project working with older people in the west end of Newcastle.

“Older Person Friendly Neighbourhoods” workshop held at West End Health Resource Centre.



Benwell Library group



Shafto Court Residents



Space for Age Group

Special “Older person friendly neighbourhoods” workshops were held in different places in Benwell to try to ensure that older people with different needs, abilities and interests could participate.

These were held in:

- West End Health Resource Centre
- Space for Age (Search’s meeting and activities room)
- Shafto Court (sheltered accommodation)
- Riverview Lodge (sheltered accommodation)
- Benwell Library (people with mobility difficulties)
- Good Neighbour Project (Pendower residents)

The Older Person Friendly Benwell Project was part of a bigger initiative launched by the Newcastle Quality of Life Partnership to look at what makes a local neighbourhood friendly for older people to live in. This work culminated in a big event at St James Park in November 2006.



A week later, on November 24th, Search held a local event for older residents at Benwell library, where our Older Person Friendly Benwell photographic exhibition was on display and a DVD of the project had its world premier. More than 70 local older residents came to this event which featured information and advice stalls and activities. One of the highlights of the event was the knitted teddy competition. The teddies - produced by members of Search's Knit and Natter groups which meet across the area - illustrated different aspects of life in Benwell for older people.

Living in Benwell

The images displayed here are a selection of those chosen by the older people who participated in the project to illustrate those aspects of their everyday experience that contribute to making Benwell a more or less "older person friendly neighbourhood"

In addition to the workshops, two Benwell residents - Sylvia Wood and Dorothy O'Shea - each took a series of photographs to illustrate their own personal views of how older person friendly their area is.

These pages combine all these different activities to present a collective view of Benwell from the experience of its older residents.

"Everyone knows everyone in Benwell, and if you don't know them, you soon get to know them."

"Benwell has a nice village atmosphere."



"I lived in Scotswood all my life until I took ill and had to get off the banks. I've got a flat in Tynedale House. It's lovely - very friendly. I live on the sixth floor. We have had double-glazing and a fitted kitchen recently. I wouldn't like to leave."

"In our residence at Shafto Court we have a lovely bowling green, garden and plenty of trees. Easy access to buses. Security. Bingo, social occasions, dinner club, coffee mornings, visits from the mobile library."



"Downstairs in Adelaide House - our building. We are all pensioners."
(Halloween party.)





"Adelaide House is friendly. It was built originally for families - nowadays you have to be 50+ to live there."



"Bilborough Gardens where I lived for 39 years. Moved because of the banks. Very sad to leave but the steep banks and deterioration of the area got me down."



"I live in Clennel House now and I feel safe and secure. The warden keeps a close watch on everything so it makes you feel more secure."



Housing

Older Person Friendly

“Sheltered housing in a country setting - right in the middle of Benwell/Scotswood.”



“Pendower Practical Help for Pensioners makes outside steps safe while waiting for more suitable housing to be built and helps tackle unmanageable garden wilderness”.

“In Pendower we want Bungalows built on this flat safe site which is on a bus route with a stop at the entrance. Then we could stay in our community and could call our neighbourhood older people friendly.”



Older Person unfriendly



"This pensioner has just admitted that she can't cope with her garden anymore. A smaller garden isn't on offer on this estate."

"Steps - these are by no means the steepest"
(Pendower)



"More steps" (Pendower)

Local Facilities

Older Person Friendly



"West End Health Resource Centre - exercise, and you can go to parties there - this is their 10th birthday party. You can do all sorts there, so that's good."



Benwell Library

"The Library is a lifeline. Friendly atmosphere. They make you feel welcome."

"Once a month the library picks us up. We can manage that."



"Cornerstone is a church as well as community hall. Very friendly. Always made welcome. Always willing to help you - you can come in and do whatever it is you want to do as long as it makes you happy."



Local Doctors



"If you look for it, there's plenty going on."

Adelaide Medical Centre



"Search is unbelievable"

"Search do a lot for pensioners. They sort out your pension. They help you with groups, go on trips, computers and massage, and lots of things."



Local churches



"Information board put up to give us information. Our craft group did a lot of work on it. Seats are quite helpful if you're halfway through shopping."

Getting Around

Older Person Friendly



"You can have a seat on the way."

Everyone agreed that the bus service into town was one of the good things about living in Benwell.

"There is plenty of buses to take you to town and along to the shops in Benwell."

"You can get into town easily from here."

"The bus service is okay. Sometimes they come in bunches like bananas."



"Lo-liner. They put the steps down for you. Sometimes you have to ask and they don't hear you."



"The rent office has a ramp."

Older Person unfriendly



"Many paths and pavements are damaged or uneven"

"Several times I have nearly tripped because the pavement outside here is uneven. One person has had 3 or 4 falls just outside by the bus stop."

"The way the buses drive - for example round the corner of Pendower Way - like the Hoppings,"



"When you only have one every half hour, they should be able to keep time."

"A lady here waited two hours for a bus to the RVI."



"The recent changes to the buses caused chaos. They should have notices up in advance and timetables on bus stops - they still have the old timetables up."

"It comes through two traffic calming things and has to swerve through the traffic lights and then swerve sharply in. So it's throwing you from side to side when you are standing wanting to get off. If you're alone on the bus, you're afraid of missing your stop."

"The number 1 buses are horrible. I'm sure they keep all the horrible buses for the Number 1. You can hear grinding on the twists and turns. I was on the Number 1 the other week and I thought the bus was going to conk out. It kept stopping and going backwards."



"Block paving on the corner is a problem - It's all loose."

"I don't like the lane behind Adelaide Terrace. The road surface is very bad."



"Make pavements safe in the first place instead of waiting until something goes wrong."

"The pavement at the junction of Delaval Road and Benwell Lane is in need of repair."



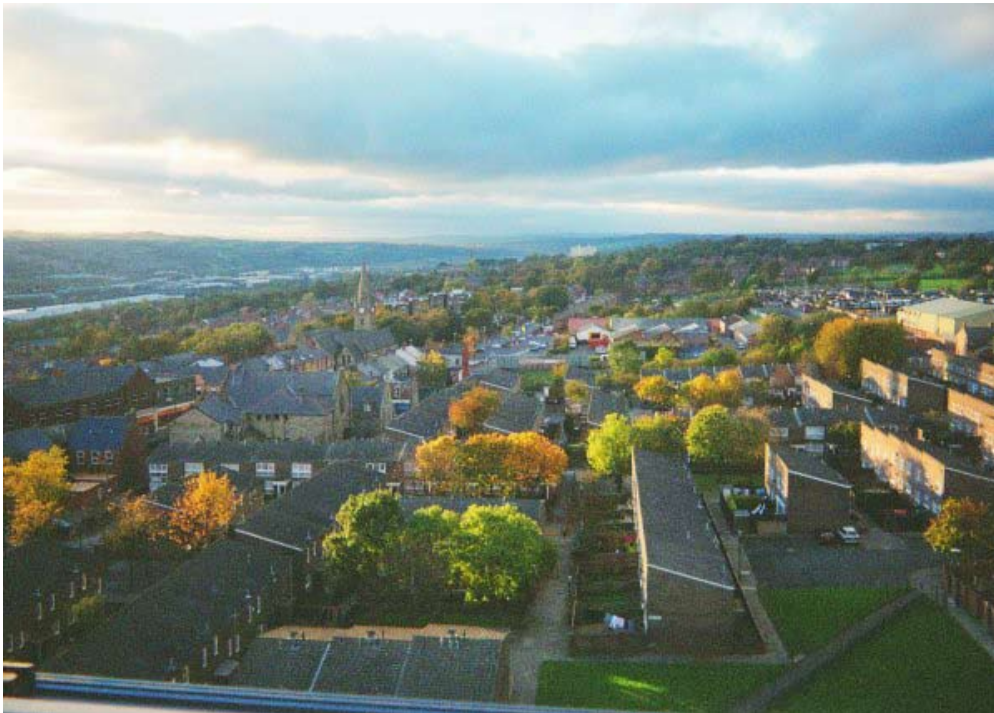
"A lorry parks on the grass verge making the pavement approach to the house slippery and dangerous.",

Environment

Older Person Friendly



"My little plants in Clennel House. They benefit everyone and keep me out of trouble."



"This is the view from my window in Adelaide House looking west. I have great pleasure looking out there and seeing the skies and the colours. I can see the river, the two bridges, the local church. I can see the rain coming and the snow and the sunshine, and I can see all the beautiful gorgeous sunsets."



"Autumn trees on the business park - an area I love to go for walks with my grandchildren."



Older Person unfriendly



"How can you have a green area if you get your bins stolen and you've got to pay £10 for another one? Also they charge you for heavy rubbish collection. You have to pay to empty rubbish - and this is meant to be green."

"The bus stop is directly outside and we get continuous noise and rubbish thrown over our fencing."



"The back lanes are disgusting, I live looking at them."

"I'm afraid to use the parks. There's a lot of wasted green spaces."



Shopping

Older Person Friendly



The shopping area on Adelaide Terrace was generally agreed to be one of the older person friendly things about Benwell.

"Very good shopping facilities."

"Benwell's a good shopping centre. There's two supermarkets, a cake shop, a fruit shop - you have everything."



"Fish and fruit shop. They are friendly - very good with pensioners. You don't have to trail inside with your trolley if you're a pensioner."



"Post office - that's where you get your pension - that's friendly."



"Chemist right next to doctors."



"Shopping centre - right on the doorstep. All on the flat. Not miles and miles to go."

Older Person unfriendly

The local shopping area near to Shafto Court has suffered a sharp decline recently as a result of the impact of *Going for Growth*.



"The Delaval Road shops have gone. There's no post office or little shops now."

"Shafto Court is a good place to live. Pity it is not near shopping areas."



"No shops or newsagents"

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Contact us:

Search
74 Adelaide Terrace
Benwell
Newcastle Upon Tyne
NE4 9JN
email: searchprojectuk@yahoo.co.uk
tel: 0191 273 7443



Search is part of the West End Community Development Consortium. The West End Community Development Consortium is a network of voluntary organisations based in the west end who are working together to look at ways of bringing about more co-ordinated, broad-based community participation in regeneration activities by bringing together existing networks in the inner west and supporting the development of new ones. It is funded by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.