



Retired not Expired campaign

According to Age UK, more than a million older people say they go for over a month without speaking to a friend, neighbour or family member. Around 3,500 of Northwards tenants are over 65, so in 2016 we launched 'Retired Not Expired' with two key aims – to challenge perceptions of older people and inspire older tenants to try something new.

We signed up to the Age-Friendly Manchester Older People's Charter, pledging to "...make Manchester more age-friendly by promoting positive and inspiring stories about our older residents and help to increase awareness of the value older people add to our society".

As news of the campaign spread, we found out about some of our more adventurous residents.

Jim was homeless until social housing gave him the lifeline he needed. At 84, he was accepted onto a Master's Degree Course in fine art.

And we told the story of Graham (AKA Dame Gracy), one of Manchester's original drag queens. Graham was part of the team that launched Manchester's annual Pride event, celebrating equality and challenging discrimination against LGBT people. He still dresses in drag on special occasions.

The Campaign to End Loneliness praised our work. They said:

"We were delighted to hear about the Retired not Expired campaign which celebrates positive steps to tackle loneliness and isolation. Thank you Northwards Housing for your support in raising this issue affecting so many older people."

So, we've challenged perceptions, got people talking locally and joined a national conversation.

Even the chair of the Northwards board is one of Manchester's most inspiring older residents. Sue Abbott is 72. She retired in 2007 but hasn't stopped since. Sue is also on the board at the NFA, and has been involved with *See the Person* right from the beginning. She's even lobbied at Westminster in support of the campaign.

More recently, she's been supporting the fire service. As a volunteer she gets up to all sorts, usually doing role play during their training, which has included throwing bricks at fire engines and pretending to get stabbed.

In her own words, Sue says: "Older people are regularly stigmatised in our society – but there is so much knowledge and experience to gain from us. We aren't just nanas and grandads!

"In 2013 the BBC broadcast *People Like Us*, a fly on the wall documentary, filmed in north Manchester. They promised the series would be a heart-warming reflection of life on a council estate. What aired was very different. The programme featured a series of stereotypes illustrating everything negative about life on a council estate.

It created a huge backlash, as Sue, along with many others in north Manchester, felt the programme stigmatised her and her neighbours. Getting involved with *See The Person* was a great opportunity to challenge that.