

*‘All Our Futures: Planning  
for a Scotland with an  
Ageing Population’*

Older People Stakeholder  
Events

14 Nov 2008 – 3 June 2009



## ***'All Our Futures: Planning for a Scotland with an Ageing Population'* Stakeholder Events 2008-2009**

*All Our Futures: Planning for a Scotland with an Ageing Population* was published in March 2007 and deals with the issues around the demographic ageing of the population in Scotland. *All Our Futures* sets a vision for a future Scotland which values and benefits from the talents and experience of our older people.

One of the key commitments in *All Our Futures* was to hold a national stakeholder event with the intention of creating dialogue around the key issues that affect older people in Scotland. Following discussion with organisations representing older people, including through the Older People's Consultative Forum, it was agreed to hold a series of seven regional events, rather than a single national event. These took place between November 2008 and June 2009.

The extensive consultation and engagement process that led to '*All Our Futures*' identified six priority areas for action:

1. improving opportunities and removing barriers
2. forging better links between the generations
3. improving and maintaining health and well being
4. improving care, support and protection for older people
5. developing housing, transport and planning services
6. offering learning opportunities throughout life

The Scottish Government has a single overarching Purpose –

*To focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth.*

This purpose is underpinned by five Strategic Objectives –

- **a wealthier and fairer Scotland**
- **a smarter Scotland**
- **a healthier Scotland**
- **a safer and stronger Scotland**
- **a greener Scotland.**

The Scottish Government endorsed *All Our Futures* as an evidence base and a clear strategy for the future, and supports its overall conclusions. Since its publication, we have implemented its main commitments.

The structure and content of the stakeholder events was planned with this in mind. Workshops and discussions were held to gain an insight into the views of the 50 plus age group on a range of important ageing issues.

Altogether from across Scotland

- some 900 people attended these events
- many organisations were involved in one way or other, a number of which are listed in the Annex.

We want to thank all those who attended. We wanted to hear your views on the issues discussed, and what you think government and others can do for older people. Discussion at the events was free and wide ranging, and certainly very interesting. Thank you! Many ideas were shared on what we do right, wrong and how we can make changes for the future.

Events were held in

- Glasgow (14 Nov 2008, Glasgow Royal Concert Hall) – 250 attended
- Inverness (3 Dec 2008, Thistle Hotel) – 70 attended
- Galashiels (21 March 2009, Galashiels Academy) – 120 attended
- Perth (23 March 2009, Perth Concert Hall) – 130 attended
- Aberdeen (5 May 2009, Carmelite Hotel) – 100 attended
- Dumfries and Galloway (20 May 2009, Easterbrook Hall, The Crichton) – 100 attended and
- Edinburgh (3 June 2009, The Corn Exchange) – 125 attended.

They were organised locally, so the format at the events varied widely according to local issues and concerns, but it is interesting that the matters discussed were often similar.

Each event began with an presentation by John Storey, head of the Older People and Age Team at the Scottish Government. At some events a range of individuals spoke on work relating to older people, with question and answer sessions. In all cases the majority of the day was based on the workshops or round table discussions.

The focus of the workshops was spread across a range of issues and included sessions on **life long learning opportunities; activities for older people including physical activity, volunteering and work, technology, health and wellbeing, pensions and savings, intergenerational activity and safety.**

## **Improving opportunities and creating lifelong learning**

### **Strategic Objective – a smarter Scotland**

***: Expand opportunities for Scots to succeed from nurture through to lifelong learning ensuring higher and more widely shared achievements***

**Older people want to feel a part of society!** This point was raised time and time again by delegates. There are a multitude of benefits to be gained if older people are given the opportunity to take an active role in society. Benefits can range from the personal to the community, and older people make a significant contribution more widely to society and the economy.

**Employment:** Delegates expressed their concerns that a number of obstacles are standing in the way to making paid employment a realistic option for everyone. One of the main concerns was the problem of **ageism in the workplace**. Experiences were shared about **discrimination** encountered because of age and a feeling of being pushed out, not only by the default retirement age, but also by the attitudes of employers. Many participants believe that a default retirement age encourages **prejudice** against older people working and that removing this would open up opportunities, as well as helping to erode ageist attitudes.

Another barrier identified by attendees is a **lack of flexibility by employers**. Older people might want to work part time or in a different working pattern and this, it was felt, should be available to them. People also considered that more value needs to be placed on older people and the skills that they can bring to an organisation, regardless of age, and opportunities need to be available for work, whatever form this may take. Delegates were keen to point out however that not all older people want to work after the age of 65, but for those who want to or need to, more action needs to be taken to make this a reality, particularly in the current economic climate.

**Voluntary sector:** Older people make up a significant percentage of those working in the voluntary sector. Their considerable contribution makes them **indispensible**, not just to those who benefit directly from the time they give, but to society as a whole because of their huge contribution to the economy.

Many people commented on the mutual benefits that can be gained from volunteering; just as the recipients are grateful of the services they receive, so too volunteers feel a sense of **purpose** and **self worth** by being active in the community. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on the mental, social and emotional benefits for individuals, as well as the increased **employability** that such opportunities bring.

Delegates therefore felt that –

- more value needs to be placed on voluntary contributions, and
- more information should be available for people to find out about the opportunities in their community.
- support, advice and encouragement are key to increasing the numbers of older people working in this sector.

**Lifelong learning:** Aside from work, attendees pointed out that continued learning is important to older people. Most people retain a capacity to learn throughout their life and it is imperative that the opportunity to do so is not restricted by age limits. For this to become a reality however there are a number of hurdles that delegates considered had to be overcome. The main issues to arise were in relation to;

- access to advice on options
- funding
- transport
- access to buildings, and
- ways to study for those who are not computer literate.

The overwhelming consensus of people when it came to opportunities for lifelong learning and employment for older people was that it is important that employers, educators and facilitators look beyond age and work towards making these activities **inclusive of people of all ages**. At the same time however, allowances need to be made for age so that facilities, transport, funding and flexibility make these real options for older people.

## Technology in later life

### Strategic Objective – a smarter Scotland

*: Expand opportunities for Scots to succeed from nurture through to lifelong learning ensuring higher and more widely shared achievements*

The use of **information technology** can divide people into those who can and those who cannot, in general the latter comprises largely of older people. When older people access the **internet** and **e-mails**, the impact on their lives can be dramatic – opening up opportunities to contact their family, for leisure activities, friendship and access to online facilities such as banking and shopping.

Delegates felt that some older people are being left behind in the **technology 'revolution'** and that something needs to be done to address this issue. They are pleased with projects such as Age Concern Edinburgh Information Technology (ACE-IT), which had a display at the Edinburgh event and wanted to see more projects like this across Scotland.

Education and training are crucial in overcoming **fear of the unknown** and in opening up computers and the internet to older people. Many do not want, or cannot afford, computers in their own home, but access and courses are available in many public libraries and community centres.

Worries were expressed about viruses, sharing of information online, breakdown of computers or software etc. The consensus of those participating in workshops was that simple classes would alleviate these fears. Most attendees believed that older people were **enthusiastic about learning** how to use the internet and computers and would do so if these were easily accessible by public transport, with time set aside in centres for older people.

As one delegate put it, older people want 'silver surfer time.'

**Telecare** and smart housing systems were discussed at most events, enabling people to stay in their own home, instead of having to move to a care home. Most older people, given the option, would rather stay in their home and delegates pointed out that some people miss out on this opportunity because of a lack of understanding and information about these services and the benefits.

## Health, wellbeing and confidence

### Strategic Objective – a healthier Scotland

***: Help people to sustain and improve their health, especially in disadvantaged communities, ensuring better, local and faster access to health care***

A number of the workshops were based around this 'All our Futures' objective with the aim of discussing all aspects of this theme, as well as encouraging older people to learn how to manage their own ageing and the options available to them within their community.

Talks were given on issues as diverse as **dementia** and **alcohol** intake to **sports activities** and **nutrition advice** with the intention of raising awareness about issues that particularly affect older people.

Despite living longer and healthier lives, rates of long term illness and disability rise as we get older. It is important to older people that they make it to old age, and do so in good health and with the right support.

The key ingredients for **good mental and physical health in later life** are seen as

- physical activity
- good diet
- support from family and friends
- mental stimulation and
- security.

Delegates could not emphasize enough the importance of early intervention when it comes to health and wellbeing. An expression used a great deal at one event was '*prevention, not rehabilitation*'. Early and active input from health care providers was seen as vital, whether this be in the form of education on nutrition, exercise and general health or actual care for existing health conditions,.

People were keen to learn more about older people's issues, as well as having the opportunity to express their own opinions.

Particular recurring concerns raised by delegates were:

- **The cost of services and the waiting times associated with and availability of services such as chiropody.** There is a fear that many particularly frail or isolated individuals are falling off the radar when it comes to care.
- **Free swimming** for all older people would significantly improve lives, not just from a physical health perspective, but because of the social interaction that it encourages. And in terms of leisure activities in general it was felt that more focus was needed on providing activities that are 'older person friendly'.

- **Personalisation:** The importance of flexibility when it comes to care and the availability of options to suit individuals, rather than a one size fits all approach. Most older people would like to remain in their own homes, but with a little bit of extra help in order to facilitate this. There needs to be more communication with the people who receive care on what can be done to ensure that they are provided with the appropriate services. As was pointed out at the Dumfries and Galloway event: 'Choice; Information and Communication' are key to success when it comes to care.
- **Mental health** needs of older people are being neglected and not enough is done to raise awareness about the problems that many older people suffer from. Depression is the most common mental health problem in older age and it felt that this is exacerbated by loneliness and isolation. There needs to be better education and better access to resources on mental health issues and to make this more of an age neutral problem instead of focusing on younger people.
- Even if people are willing to get out and about and attend exercise classes **lack of transport** or the **cost of transport** makes this impossible, particularly in rural areas.
- **Malnutrition** in older age is aggravated by problems of getting to and from the supermarket, carrying shopping bags home, lack of choice in local shops and the lack of user friendly supermarkets. Government needs to work with supermarkets to encourage changes that will enable older people to make use of all the shopping facilities in their area.
- Older people are less aware of the dangers of **alcohol consumption** and more targeted campaigns are necessary to encourage older people to consider their drinking habits. There appears to be limited knowledge of unit sizes which results in some older people drinking over the recommended allowance without realising. Again there needs to be an age neutral focus by campaigns rather than just focusing on the young.

## Pensions, poverty and savings

### Strategic Objective – a wealthier and fairer Scotland

*:Sustainable economic growth is about: a dynamic and growing economy  
... while ensuring that future generations can enjoy a better quality of life*

When people think about planning for later life the greatest concern that they have is ensuring that they are financially stable. Focus is therefore on pensions and saving and the ways in which to optimise these. For those who do not have private pensions or savings, and instead rely on government support, **there was a strong message that the current system is confusing and overly complicated and leads to many older people missing out on help that they are entitled to receive. Older**

**people want to understand what they are able to claim – eligibility criteria need to be clear.**

**Many older people are confused by the current benefits system** – it was felt to be a major contributing factor to poverty in old age with some estimating that 1.7m people across the UK fail to claim every year.

In particular delegates focused on pension credit which many felt was unnecessarily confusing.

As one person said, *'Put things into simple English!'*

**People wanted to see pensions and benefits being paid as a right, rather than having to be claimed.**

Delegates wanted financial planning advisory services, to explain options, or to advise on the best way to be money smart in older age. They wanted help and guidance when adapting to life on a smaller, fixed or decreasing income.

There was a real concern about **poverty** in old age and what the Government was doing about addressing this problem. **Fuel poverty** is of particular concern, with most attendees believing that this is something which will continue as an issue in the future. Many agreed that the Winter Fuel Payment and Cold Weather Payment Schemes were beneficial to older people, but felt that these schemes should be broadened to include a wider range of people in need. There was also a general consensus that advice should be more readily available on how to be energy efficient in the home – e.g. suppliers, types of energy, appliances and grants for insulation.

## **Forging links between the generations**

### **Strategic Objective – a wealthier and fairer Scotland**

***:Sustainable economic growth is about:** a dynamic and growing economy  
... while ensuring that future generations can enjoy a better quality of life*

People want a society that includes people of all ages and which bridges the generational divide. Participants emphasised the importance of bringing together people of all ages, not just for the sake of older people, but because of the benefits that can be gained by younger people as well. It was felt that the prejudices that exist could only be broken down by intergenerational activity and delegates were keen for support to be given to **sporting, cultural and leisure activities** that bring people together.

People felt that there need to be

*'More intergenerational projects so we understand each other better'*

*'communication over the ages, in all areas'*

*'Sharing of skills, knowledge and hobbies'*

and that *'building respect between generations needs to be a two way process and fun'*

## Safety and protection in older age

### Strategic Objective a safer and stronger Scotland

*: Help local communities to flourish, becoming stronger, safer places to live, offering improved opportunities and a better quality of life*

The Government sees key elements to achieving this as:

- *improving housing and neighbourhoods,*
- *fighting crime, and reducing the fear of crime*

As with every other age group, older people have a right to feel **safe** and **secure** in their homes and communities. The fear of crime is an ever present and disabling issue for many older people. They want to feel safe to leave their homes during the day, but also want to have the confidence to go out in the evenings, particularly when it is dark.

Many older people are discouraged from leaving their homes by the fear of crime, but this is exacerbated by other issues. People expressed concern about –

- **the way in which streets are lit and managed**
- **broken street lights**
- (in more rural areas) **a lack of lighting altogether.**

They felt this prevents older people having the confidence to get out and about. In winter this is even more of a problem as the sun sets earlier in the day. Delegates suggested the introduction of wardens or community patrols as a way of providing a visible safeguard for older people.

When older people are victims of crime it is most likely that this will be committed by someone who knows the person, rather than a stranger. '**Elder abuse**' describes this exploitation, whether financial, physical, sexual or psychological. Older people can be more vulnerable to abuse, and delegates felt that more attention needs to be paid to this problem and solutions sought so that people do not disappear off the radar, but are accounted for and therefore protected.

Older people are also victims of crime through **fraud, scams** and **bogus callers**. Older people are easier targets for these types of schemes, and the consequences can be financially and emotionally devastating. Delegates agreed that education about these types of schemes is really helpful to minimise the risks.

Attendees overwhelmingly agreed that communities need to engage with older people, and that this is key to tackling vulnerability, isolation and victimisation. In the modern transient world people do not know their neighbours in the same way as they did in the past, and this can have serious consequences on those more vulnerable. Too many older people 'disappear' or do not feel they have support around them to get out and about. Delegates wanted **social networks** and **groups for older people** to reach out actively to those not linked to such groups, so they can become involved and safe in their community.

## Key conclusions and issues to consider

Older people from across Scotland engaged in a series of high quality discussions, gave their views on the issues that affect older people, and made suggestions for change and improvement. There was agreement on a number of key issues.

It was pointed out that there are many different activities out there for older people, but that **poor provision of information**, as well as **transport** difficulties, particularly in more rural areas, mean that older people are missing out.

There was a great deal of discussion about health care provision. Older people feel let down by the services they receive and want **more control** and **personalisation**, so that their health and care needs are fully considered.

In particular, people wanted

- **simplification** – of forms, and procedures – *‘Put things into simple English!*
- **benefits** and **pensions** – to be paid as a right, and not something that the individual has to apply for, especially when forms are often complicated
- continuing action by government to **tackle pensioner poverty**
- to **live life to the full** and in doing so have the opportunity available to them to take an **active role in the community**
- **working** and **learning opportunities** to be available
- **accessible transport** and **leisure activities**
- to live in a **safe environment**, without the fear of crime and with good lighting and pavements across all parts of Scotland.

Overwhelmingly, what emerged was a **sense of purpose** and **belonging** that is important to older people.

**Respect** was a much used word at the events; older people want to be **consulted**, **included** and **have their views taken into consideration**, not just in relation to issues that affect them, but issues that affect society as a whole.

**Scottish Government**  
**August 2009**

## **Acknowledgments**

We want to express warm thanks to the many people who gave their time to making each event a success. From event organisers, speakers, stall holders and workshop organisers, as well as the entertainment.

Thanks also to all those who attended, stated their views on the issues that affect older people, and made suggestions for change and improvement. A great deal of useful information and good feedback has been collected, and this is being passed on to the Scottish Government, local authorities and UK Government departments.

### **Event organisers:**

Glasgow: Scottish Pensioners Forum and West of Scotland Seniors Forum  
Inverness, Perth, Aberdeen and Dumfries: Age Concern and Help the Aged in Scotland  
Edinburgh: City of Edinburgh Council  
Galashiels: Scottish Borders Elder Voice

**Speakers, Stall holders, Workshops organisers and Entertainment** were many and we do not have a list of everyone but, for example, the following organisations were at:

**Dumfries:** Accessible Transport Forum, Age Concern and Help the Aged in Scotland, Alcohol Focus Scotland, Alzheimer Scotland – Action on Dementia, Benefit Maximisation Team, Care and Repair, Castle Douglas IT Centre, D&G Constabulary Community Policing Unit, D&G Disability Access Panel, D&G Fire and Rescue Service, D&G Multicultural Association, DAGCAS, Digital UK, Energy Saving Scotland Advice Centre, HandyVan Service, NHS D&G - Falls Awareness, Telecare and Carecall Services, The Food Train, The Princess Royal Trust for Carers, The Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice, University of Glasgow 040 Project, University of the Third Age, WRVS (Frozen Meals), Youth Issues Unit

**Perth:** Independent Advocacy, NHS Perth and Kinross Healthy Communities Collaborative and Local Libraries, Pensions Service, Energy Advice, Careers Scotland and Alzheimer's Scotland, Skills Development Scotland, Age Concern and Help the Aged in Scotland.

**Glasgow:** Help the Aged, DWP (Pensions), Glasgow Old People's Welfare Association, Scottish Helpline for Older People, Strathclyde Police, Strathclyde Fire Brigade, Scottish Pensioners Forum and West of Scotland Seniors Forum, Transport Scotland, Lifetime Neighbourhoods (Renfrew's experience).

**Galashiels:** Scotland's Futures Forum, Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice, Lothian & Borders Fire Dept.

**Inverness:** Moray Council, Alzheimer Scotland, Health in Later Life Regional Interest Group, Scottish Helpline for Older People, Careers Scotland, Age Concern and Help the Aged in Scotland, Highland Council, The Pension Service, Highlands

and Islands social Enterprise Zone, NHS Highland, University of Stirling, Step it Up Highland Walk Leader, Timebank, Volunteering Highland.

**Edinburgh:** Edinburgh Council, University of Edinburgh, West Lothian Council, Scottish Helpline for Older People, Lothian & Borders Police Service, CSV/ Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme Scotland, Telecare, South East Scotland Breast Screening, Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice, Care & Repair Edinburgh Ltd, Arthritis Care in Scotland, Age Concern Edinburgh: Information Technology - ACE IT, Edinburgh Leisure, Edinburgh Volunteer Centre, The City of Edinburgh Council Libraries - Access Services, Trust, Hanover (Scotland) and Bield Housing Associations, VOCAL – Voice of Carers Across Lothian.

**Aberdeen:** Grampian CareData, Grampian Police and Community Wardens, Grampian Fire Service, SCARF, Aberdeenshire Council, Pension Service, Aberdeen Volunteer Centre, Drama by Serendipity Group, Moray Council, Alzheimer Scotland.

### **Note**

This report is a summary of 7 events. Reports for Inverness, Dumfries, Aberdeen and Perth can be found on the Age Concern and Help and Aged Scotland website: [http://www.ageconcernandhelptheagedscotland.org.uk/our\\_work/community\\_work/local\\_events](http://www.ageconcernandhelptheagedscotland.org.uk/our_work/community_work/local_events).

Copies of the reports for Glasgow, Edinburgh and Galashiels are available upon request from [sarah.arthur@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.arthur@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

**August 2009**