



AGEING POSITIVELY:

A VIEW FROM THE EAST MIDLANDS



Report of the Ageing Positively Conference

19th October 2012

For more information visit
www.eastmidlandslaterlifeforum.org.uk

This report has two main aims:

1. To give decision and policy makers across the East Midlands and nationally ideas for action that will improve the lives of older people
2. To provide inspiration, ideas and information to older people and their organisations in the East Midlands

We hope to have captured the essence of the day's discussions and the key issues raised so that policy and decision makers can hear the voices of older people from across the East Midlands to make positive change happen.



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Overview

The aims of the conference were to discuss what it's like to grow older in the region now and, how by working together, older people and organisations can challenge, inform and influence locally, in the East Midlands and nationally.



Animated, humorous, spirited, personal and, occasionally, poignant, the “Ageing Positively” Conference gathered together older people from forums and 50+ networks and public sector service planners, commissioners and providers from the many different sectors and communities across the East Midlands

The conference participants celebrated the positives of getting older and began to challenge where change is needed. Conference participants set an agenda for action by working in partnership together that will benefit older people and their

organisations from five of the six counties and the three cities of the East Midlands.

The overall theme of the day was “Positive Ageing” with a particular focus on housing. The programme included a mix of speakers, roundtable discussions and a “Question Time” panel with the aim of enabling people to have a say.

What everyone had in common was a belief that by working together, we can change the lives of many people and make a difference.

Ageing positively executive summary

The East Midlands Later Life Forum (EMLLF), in partnership with ChangeAGENTS Network UK East Midlands Older People's Advisory Group, held a high profile conference on Friday 19th October 2012.

The conference was designed to promote co-operation and collaboration between partners and older people. Participants represented Central Government, Local Authorities, the Private and Public sectors, Academic Institutions, the Co-operative, Voluntary and Community Sectors. Alongside older people from across the East Midlands, the stakeholders together contributed with energy and passion to the conference theme and issues raised.

The conference theme was housing and the wider determinants that contribute to "Ageing Positively". A variety of issues which have an impact on older people were explored and ways in which ageing positively can be addressed were discussed.

The challenge now is to consider the key themes and recommendations and to determine how individuals and organisations can respond to the specific Agenda for Action contained in the report set by the conference participants.

Conference participants held in common the belief that by working together and listening to the voices of older people from across the East Midlands, positive change can be made to happen.

Liz Kendall, Shadow Minister for Social Care and Older People gave the conference Keynote Address. The main points covered included :

- Joined-up working across health, social care and housing;
- The effects of structural reorganisations;
- Lack of learning from the many Initiatives that have taken place;
- Implications of Personal Budgets;
- Prevention and how health services engage with communities and older people;
- The importance of listening to the voice of older people themselves

key messages

"Ageism isn't something that happens to others....it will affect you too"

"Older people need to take control over the decisions that affect them"

"Ageism is alive and kicking and needs to be challenged at every opportunity"

"Health, social care and housing remain disjointed and older people suffer as a result"

"To be independent, the basics have to be in place - money, housing and good health"

"People need choice to work part-time, full-time or retire. Good information is vital"

"Organisations working for older people should work, learn and act together"

"Independent living is NOT about living behind a chain on the door and an alarm pendant around your neck".

Agenda for action

Recommendations to policy makers and all stakeholders

1. Engagement and involvement of older people is vital.

The message from the conference is clear. Older people want to be listened to and their views heard and acted upon. Engagement processes must facilitate older people speaking for themselves, enabling views to be expressed directly and not through intermediaries. The recommendation from the conference is that the means exist to enable all citizens to influence the decisions that affect them, individually and collectively.

2. Attitudes to ageing and the image of older people must be positive

The image of older age is a critical factor in these challenging times. Policy makers are asked to work with older people and other stakeholders to challenge ageism and also any negative presentation of older people. We further ask that we are involved at all levels to promote positive images of ageing and older people.

3. The ageing agenda needs to be addressed across government

The needs and aspirations of an ageing society should be addressed at an all Party Parliamentary level wherever possible and practical. Government is asked to consider the appointment of an Older People's Commissioner to champion, across all departments, the views and rights of older people at the highest level.

4. Appropriate good quality housing is critical to enable older people to remain independent, with improved health and well-being, dignity and self-respect.

The conference asks that the Government looks again at the issue of Lifetime Home standards. In the long term, such a move would reduce costs. At the present time, new homes are being built at less than lifetime standards. Over time they will need adaptation incurring additional expense. Please build homes that are suitable for all. There needs to be greater collaboration between housing, health and social care to ensure a whole system approach to age and ageing.

5. Employment of older people and the nature of retirement needs to be addressed by all stakeholders.

Individuals, Government and employers all need to examine fresh ways of looking at retirement. Benefits to the economy and society brought by older workers and volunteers must be recognised and encouraged. The conference asks for a facility, such as the National Careers Service, to inform and advise on preparing for transition from work, including opportunities for flexible working, working for longer and support to better understand finances in later life with pensions made clearer.

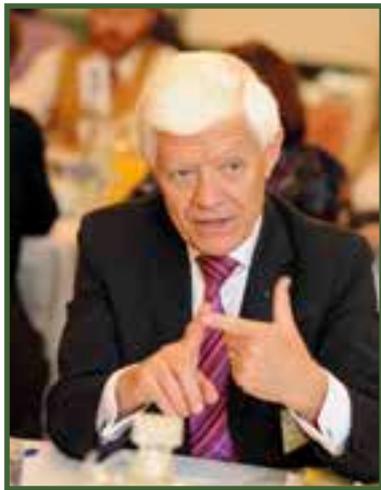
6. Sufficiency of income is seen as critical to sustaining "positive ageing"

In addition, there remains a need for accurate, trusted information and advice on key financial issues throughout life, including as people age.

1. Personal reflections of the opening speakers

The conference began with presentations by Liz Mandeville, John Simmons and Barry Wilford. This session was introduced by John Aldridge, and all shared, sometimes, very personal thoughts and experiences to set the scene and raise issues from their perspective.

'It's not difficult to be old, it happens to all of us if we're lucky'



John Aldridge started the day with his presentation focusing in on the positives of getting older. Never busier now he is older, whether it be enjoying life playing squash or being deputy Lord Lieutenant for Leicestershire, John stated that he was trying to “live as though in his mid 40s”!

But for some there are challenges - pensions are under pressure partly due to the fact that more men are living longer. And he felt that people may hit a ‘wall’ where they need support. Quoting John Donne’s “No Man Is An Island” – older people, their friends and families need to know where to go and how to get support.

Liz Mandeville, Chair of the East Midlands Later Life Forum, began by describing what the Forum is and what it could do. The Forum is a strategic partnership and seeks to

- Highlight and disseminate information on the key issues facing the ageing population both nationally and in the East Midlands;
- Champion and challenge the policy makers and service providers in the area
- Ensure that the voice of older people is reflected at Forum meetings and helps to shape its actions.
- Respond to Government consultations to give a perspective from the East Midlands on age and ageing.

Above all, it seeks to avoid duplication and to present a positive view of age and ageing. Striking a note with everyone in the room Liz described how it felt the day her mother with dementia, called Liz “mum”. She felt that this simple word described how relationships can change as people age and, from her mother’s view, she may have started to see Liz doing things “for her” as a caring mother would rather than “with her”. From being independent, her mother had become dependent on others for her care.

“The East Midlands Later Life Forum has a key role to bring partners together to respond to (this) demographic change and help people age positively”.

John Simmons, representing ChangeAGENTS, spoke about how older people are always somebody else regardless of how old you are! Many years experience of working in the statutory sector and being an active volunteer has seen John identify four key issues for older people which he felt still stand:-

- Independence – continue to live as independently as you can for as long as possible
- Safety – feeling and being safe are critical to us all and it is no different when you get older

- Health – having access to advice about your health and how to stay healthy is important, and
- Quality of life - do what you enjoy doing and that enables you to contribute – play golf, learn new skills, keep working or stay active in your community as a volunteer.

Housing is one of the keys to enabling older people to meet all four points with dignity and self-respect. This was summed up by a woman he met in the Peak District:

“there ain’t much dignity living in a mucky house duck”

Barry Wilford talked optimistically about how the voices of older people need to be heard and how they can be effective. He has been able to represent older people in Europe and has seen that the issues there are very similar to those in the UK. This work has brought home to him the importance of working together rather than campaigning as a lone voice.

Barry felt that the older we get, the more important the services are that affect our lives. By being a part of the decision-making processes,

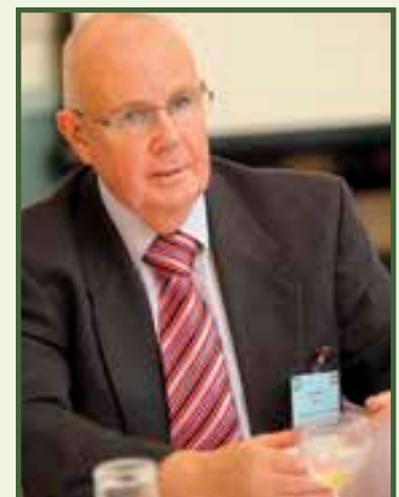
via proper consultation, we can influence change. Part of getting our voices heard is our responsibility to keep active and “with the times”, with mental good health being as important as physical health.

Having lobbied for so long for our voices to be heard, we are being respected more than we were and local authorities and others hearing as well as listening.

“don’t do things to us, involve us and do things with us”



John Simmons



Barry Wilford

2. Key note speech – **Liz Kendall MP**, shadow minister of state for care and older people

■ **Joined-up working** – Liz believes that there remains little joined-up thinking across health, social care and housing in government both centrally and locally. She had seen this first hand when her father-in-law needed help. Too many structural reorganisations had and were happening to health and social care services. Bringing health and social care services together with one commissioning budget would provide better services and save money. She felt that personal budgets have their place as service users wanted more control over the services that enable them to live their lives independently, their own way. However, support was needed to enable personal budgets to be used well and not become onerous for older people and their families and friends.

Critically, Liz stated that joined up working was also about policy people in government not assuming that the main issue for older people was pensions and little else. Liz described how the lessons of initiatives such as POPPS (Partnerships for Older People Projects) has disappeared; work on standards and Lifetime Homes has vanished; and the media continues to present a stereotypical view of ageing and older people. The danger is losing what has been learnt and not building upon the good foundations that exist.

■ **Prevention** – Liz stated that health is such a big part of people's quality of life, yet engaging with medical professionals remains a challenge. Medical professionals are missing a trick if they don't engage with older people and the voluntary and community sector.

■ **Say and Control** – “How can we get more local authorities to sit down with older people's representatives?” was a question posed to Liz. She responded with a challenge to the Later Life

Forum - many older people's groups are seen as unrepresentative. How can the EMLLF show it is representative of diverse older communities? Local forums have an important role to reach out to isolated people to share information and support and enable their voices to be heard.

‘a voice is needed and if you don't have a voice you have nothing’

A participant suggested that a way forward was for forums to use MPs more and not focus on Ministers. Combining a national ambassador for older people with the ability to promote and liaise with the press and media, with a higher social media profile for older people could be very powerful.



3. Round table discussions

Five questions were posed to the conference with each table discussing two questions in detail. Each table listed key messages and made recommendations for action summarised below.

3.1 Ageing Well - what is meant by ‘ageing positively’ and what is required to achieve ‘positive ageing’?



What is meant by ‘Ageing Positively’?

On the one hand, the discussions centred on ageing positively being about society accepting and looking forward to ageing in a culture of intergenerational inclusivity and support.

But most of the discussions looked at it from the perspective of taking personal responsibility for our own ageing process.

The comments from four discussion groups are in the graphic below:



Groups listed the signs that people were ageing positively:

- Having good health
- Being independent
- Having adequate income
- Feeling you have a good quality of life
- Doing things you enjoy with people you like
- Making a contribution

One group proposed that a ‘national charter’ could help give clear direction to what ‘ageing positively’ should look like – giving some consistency.

What is required to achieve ‘positive ageing’?

Attitude

Having a personal commitment and attitude to wanting to age positively was seen as critical; if you don't want to try to live and age positively, it will be a challenge to do so.

Where you live

Living in areas where neighbourhoods are made up of a mix of all ages was seen as very positive, as was being able to stay in your choice of home as you age. However, fundamental to this happening was houses being kept in a good state of repair and adapting with you and your changing needs.

Address social isolation

There are barriers to being able to age positively even if you want to. It is easy to become socially isolated if you are old and if you are not connected to your community; it can become a self fulfilling prophesy that you can start to age less positively. People want opportunities to meet

other people, but sometimes encouragement and help is needed, whether someone to take you out in the evening or better transport facilities. Whilst charities have historically provided some of these services, this isn't always possible in times of funding cuts and not everyone likes to be seen as getting help from a charity.

It was suggested that the internet provides a huge opportunity to develop links and increase mental stimulation, but many people over 70 don't use the internet for a range of reasons.

Health

Good health is an important factor to help ensure a sense of positive ageing. The need for prevention and health education from a young age was recognised as this would help retain good health into older age. But there is a need for personal responsibility too.



At a time when health policy is changing, the service needs of older people are being considered by Health and Well Being Boards with HealthWatch a key participant in these Boards, Public health is soon to be part of the

local authority's responsibilities, older people need to mobilise effectively to influence, challenge and engage with the debate about future health services. Older people's organisations have a role to facilitate this to ensure it happens.

3.2 Health, care and housing

Over 75% of older people live in owner occupied properties. As dependency levels change people may wish to move house. If there is a lack of suitable properties, how do you think this may be addressed?

The consensus from the discussions was that:

- As people age, their needs change and the house that might have been suitable for them for many years may no longer remain appropriate for whatever reason;
- There is a risk that people will move to a care-setting before they need to, purely because suitable housing is not available for them to move to
- People may also want to down-size to a smaller and more manageable property. This should be made as easy as possible with choices of smaller, accessible properties available
- The current “flat” housing market means that people cannot sell their home at the price they need
- Alternatives such as house sharing with someone who will help and support you for free accommodation is emerging as an housing option, though not everyone would be comfortable with this
- “Older people are a diverse group and one size fits all solutions are not acceptable”
- Good housing is a cross-cutting issue that helps determine a good quality of life
- Handyperson/gardening schemes can reduce the worry and stress some older people feel when they are finding some of their day-to-day tasks a challenge

A popular point was that houses should be designed using Lifetime guidelines so that they remained accessible and/or adaptable as people’s needs change. As house building increases following the recession, now is the time to make sure those guidelines become law. Statutory planning guidance, building on the Life Time homes guidelines, would create industry standards which would reduce the costs that builders state stop them from adapting homes now.

.....
“I want to live with people of all ages as part of the community”

Other ideas included a state run equity release scheme to allow people to take out capital from their houses without the risk of being ripped off by the finance industry.

Life Times
Standards

Handyperson
services

Equity release

All age
communities

Adaptations

Downsize

Share your house

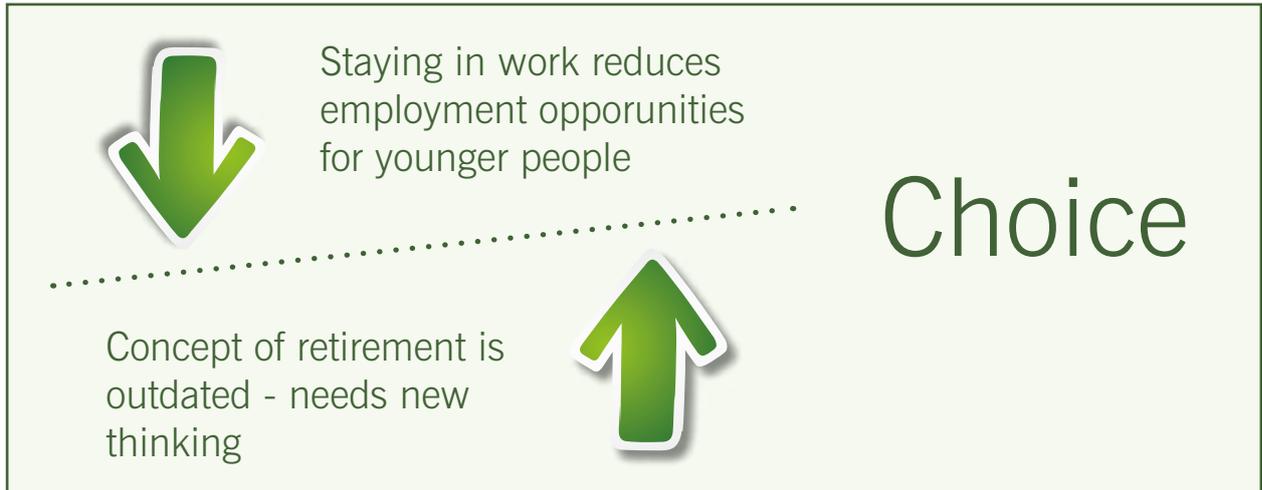
one size fits all
solutions don’t work



3.3 Employment and volunteering

What should individuals, employers and government do to enable older workers to sustain productive employment?

The discussion revealed two broad camps.



There were concerns that older people remaining in traditional work were reducing opportunities for younger workers who could not find jobs. However, participants felt the concept of retirement was dated and a new way of looking at work and employment was needed.

The key concept was choice; people shouldn't be forced to stop working after a specific age, but should have the choice to make changes to their work e.g. people with predominantly manual jobs should be able to reduce their hours and go part time.

Some particular problems affecting specific groups were highlighted:

- The impact on women was felt to be relevant and should be considered. Women were

particularly disadvantaged if they had gaps in their national insurance or pension contributions because of time spent on child care or other caring responsibilities.

- People who separated or divorced later in life are often facing severe financial problems and having the opportunity to retain paid employment for as long as they wish is very important.

The role and importance of volunteering as part of a transition process when moving from full time to part time work was seen as important. For some, leaving work was desirable, but for others a real challenge. Sometimes this was linked to financial pressures and potential poverty and sometimes about a sense of personal identity that work can bring.

Individual

- Choice
- Different for everyone
- Personal responsibility
- Pensions made clearer

Employers

- Flexible working
- Positives of employing older people
- Preparation for retirement

Government

- Government should lead but not dictate
- Legislation needed to protect older workers

3.4 Independent living

Independent living is highlighted as one of the answers to present and future care needs. What needs to be in place to secure such a move?

The key points from the discussions were:

- The need for affordable housing to assist independent living
- Good quality and independent information and advice services to help people make choices about their future living needs and where they can get support
- More choice in types of housing
- Innovative and creative care services to be available in a person's home
- Older people need to be consulted and their views taken seriously when making decisions about their housing and their home
- Choices about food and nutrition are key to successful independent living. Where there are older people living in relative isolation with perhaps only the corner shop to visit, choice may be limited. If money is tight, then choice may also be restricted. Support with transport, helpers to undertake shopping or on-line shopping could all be part of linking the community together.
- A major current issue identified was fuel poverty. The conference suggested recruiting fuel energy champions in local communities with older people as the trainers.

Critical to independent living was creating and stimulating communities. Investment was needed to create opportunities for linking members of a community together so that people who are vulnerable receive low level support as 'neighbours' and friends and not as the result of an assessment or statutory service. Engaging older people as a resource to help and support other older people in communities was proposed so they could:

- Share experiences
- Provide information there and then
- Signpost people to the best information services
- Ensuring cultural differences are seen and addressed



Groups proposed that personalised budgets should have a role in increasing independent living; there should be choice and accessibility in the services available. However, the reality is it can be difficult to manage your own care and you can be limited as to how you spend your money. Older people need to be more involved in the decision making of panels that agree Personal Budgets to provide the experience and realism that those on the panel may not have, they need to be consulted. One group noted the specific requirements of carers who have their own needs. These must be included in the whole assessment of need since they play a key role in providing support to older partners, parents or friends.

The groups recognised that older people are sometimes their own worst enemies, continuing to postpone their thinking about their own later life choices. Whether that is about financial planning or where they are going to live in their later years, the earlier the issues are recognised and discussed the better.

3.5 How could pensioner poverty be addressed?

The discussions reflected that poverty needs a definition if society is to work out how to address it. There are many different types (fuel, food, financial) and there are different views as to what poverty is, often different from one generation to the next. For some it is not being able to afford a DVD and for others it is about being able to afford a meal or heat your house. Not being able to support your children or grandchildren is a challenge for some pensioners.

'It's going to get worse before it gets better'

Discussions varied between issues related to current pensioners and future ones, with research showing that nearly 50 per cent of workers between 30 and 50 years of age are not saving enough, with a fifth saving absolutely nothing!

Current pension increases are not linked to the retail price index, but groups agreed that they should be, particularly as food and fuel are increasing faster than this, and the Basic State Pension is one of the lowest in Europe.

- A radical proposal was a tax to enable redistribution of wealth.
- Stopping tax subsidies for wealthy people's pensions
- Addressing tax avoidance
- Increasing tax for the wealthy was the view of some of the conference participants.
- The need to plan and prepare for an adequate pension.
- Some of the younger generation will be walking into a world of real poverty.
- Good pensions will be limited to a few
- Lack of savings and reduced state support will be commonplace.

A sobering message from the discussions was that there is pensioner poverty now and there will be in the future. Pensions need to be compulsory and even those on a newly enhanced minimum wage should have a proportion going towards a pension fund to start individual responsibility.

4. Housing

A particular focus for the conference was housing. After lunch, Jane Minter (Care and Repair England) and Spencer Cooke (Radical Routes) presented on the issues.

Jane gave an overview of current housing policy and Spencer took a specific look at co-operatives. Jane's presentation overheads are in Appendix 5. From the presentations, themes came through which overlapped the morning's discussions:

- Housing gets more important the older we get
- Staying in control of your options is critical
- Older people are people who happen to be older and not anything more
- Communities are key to the quality of life of older people
- There are alternatives to owning and living in your own home, possibly on your own. These include co-operatives which are relatively easy to set up and run.



5. Question time

The panel was made up of:

Cheryl Barrott, Co-Director, ChangeAGENTS Network UK Ltd.

Cllr David Sprason, Chair Adult Social Care for East Midlands Councils

Lucia Smith, Steering Group Member, East Midlands Later Life Forum

Jane Minter, Care and Repair England

Spencer Cooke, Radical Routes

John Aldridge chaired the panel and all the questions came from the roundtable discussions.

Retirement is challenging – it means different things to different people. How can it be made easier?

- There should be no retirement age
- It's not good to see retirement as a full stop and an end
- Individuals are different and for some it is a time to stop and a chance to do other things with your life in older age
- Retirement is just a label and, in fact, we should be retiring a bit earlier than we are
- To assist better retirement the tax system needs to change
- The reality is that people will have to work for longer
- Choice and/or planning for your older age is important
- Don't sit back and do nothing; use what is in your heart to decide what you want to do
- Take a different path from your career path

How can we encourage people to plan earlier for old age and do something about it?

- Try to plan for later life in your 50's
- Need to harness the media to help push positive ageing – the press and radio still have an important role and can be influential
- Widespread access to information and advice on retirement planning needed
- Implications of not planning should be highlighted
- There is a role for schools – by promoting intergenerational opportunities there will be greater understanding over time about ageing and old age
- Positive older role models for younger people to look to
- The media can be a negative force, with stereotypes portraying older people as incapable and victims
- The pension industry has a poor image and people distrust giving money to them

Does statutory legislation work when planning homes?

- Yes to make change happen there needs to be statutory regulations
- Where recommendations for Lifetime homes have not been implemented or ignored by the house builders demonstrates the need for legislation
- Legislation won't work and it is better to have effective lobbying
- Legislation won't work. Local builders need to be pushed. Local government has to deliver better
- Lobbying needs to happen of planning authorities and housing associations
- Don't know if good or bad
- Ask older people what they want. Let us have a say in planning
- We need to be consulted
- We have to inform the need and identify it
- Building regulations already in place that everyone has to conform to
- Use of spare bedrooms – pay people for it and pay if not use them
- Older people are often alone in a family home – still their home.
- Little choice to remain there if no suitable housing as an alternative
- Better advice on options would be useful

How on earth are hard pressed people and families supposed to save anything for retirement?

- Dual pensions. Employers have to make pensions available sooner
- Pensions are still the long-term solution to a worry free retirement
- Planning for your pension. Children need to understand your pension. Open up a debate with them
- Home ownership – current lynchpin of savings and it is going to change radically as house prices fall or remain static
- Alternatives to traditional finances getting more popular – credit unions to play a role
- Pensions are locked up and it is a gamble

Unemployment is a major issue for us all. Are there opportunities for intergenerational job sharing?

- Do believe that there should be intergenerational working e.g. a project in Sheffield where older people mentoring younger people looking after children
- Qualifications and apprenticeships needed
- Top down won't work. Needs to be community led
- Manpower Services Commission type opportunities needed
- Need to re-look at work across our lives
- Need to change the way we work
- Social care apprenticeships are good news Job sharing – hard to make happen financially so both benefit
- Use existing experience and pass it on. Older people can learn from younger people too

6. Themes running through the conference

Ageing is something that happens to others....

The truth is that most people make it to older age. Many of the decisions that the conference thought need to be made to make later life comfortable and which enable older people to continue to contribute, are not made when younger. There are a variety of reasons for this, but denial was a word that was used. Even people attending the conference, when asked about their own thoughts of ageing positively, quite often gave answers that referred to other people and not their own experiences.

Media and ageism

Linked to ageing happening to someone else was the conference views on the media, which were seen as continuing to portray older people in stereotypical ways. Ageism was alive and kicking and needed to be challenged at every opportunity. Sometimes the ageism was more discrete – with the media focusing more on the negatives of getting older than the positives of older age. It ignored the significant contribution made by older people to our society, families and communities.

Consultation and voices

The conference discussed how important it is for older people to take control and make decisions that affect them. No one in the room felt that consultation shouldn't take place, but there was a sense that decision and policy makers continued to play "lip-service" to it, with decisions being made before older people's views were sought

There was also the challenge of making forums representative of the diversity of older people.

Finances

The conference didn't shy away from looking at the wide ranging issues related to finance and ageing. Examples included pensioner poverty, stopping universal benefits for wealthier older people, personal budgets or necessarily carrying on in a job past retirement age. Having an income was seen as a critical part of Positive Ageing as was the lack of accurate, trusted information and advice on key financial issues.

Housing and your home

Housing was seen as one of the key issues that enables older people to live positively with dignity and self-respect. Society was not keeping up with the housing needs of older people. Housing design seems to have forgotten the needs of today's older generation, as well as considering the needs of the future generation. New homes cannot be adapted with ease to enable people to carry on living there. The formal planning and other systems were lacking or obstructive. Keeping a house in good repair was difficult and costly and the financial sector doesn't see a house as someone's home, but as a financial asset.

Independence

A strong theme of the day was older people wanting to keep as independent as possible for as long as possible. The older people get, the more important are the services that affect

their lives. The lack of joined up working and shared funding between housing, health and social care only makes continuing to be independent more difficult.

Health

Seen by the discussion groups as one of the signs that people were ageing positively, maintaining good mental and physical health was an important theme of the day. Worries were expressed about the ever changing structures and systems of the health service. Medical professionals continue not to engage with their patients in a meaningful way or with voluntary and community groups. Prevention continues to be a challenge.

Contribution made by older people

The conference stated that the contribution made by older people to their communities and society was often taken for granted or ignored. Most people who volunteered – formally or informally – didn't want recognition. The contribution made by older people was seldom used to highlight the positives of older age.

Care system

People don't know the care system until they need to use it. Often it is not for them, but for someone they care for – which can be the most stressful time to have to learn fast.

Employment and retirement

Two broad camps were revealed by the discussions – those that wanted to stay in work for as long as possible and those that felt that this reduced the opportunities for

younger people. The consensus between the two arguments centred on people having choice – choice to work flexi or part time or not at all. Compulsory retirement was seen as out-dated and ageist.

Opposites attract....

The roundtable discussions in particular highlighted that, although themes could be drawn out, people held differing views on the same issue and how that issue could be addressed. This particularly focused on personal responsibility versus government intervention.

Collaboration is power

When resources are as tight as they are now and knowing that they will get tighter, working collaboratively makes sense. The conference was keen for organisational differences to be put to one side. Older people's organisations can and should work together, learn together and act together.

Information means choice

Accurate and independent information and advice is central to positive ageing. It enables older people to make informed choices about their lives and also means that they can have a stronger voice either individually with their GP or collectively when being consulted by a local authority or government.

7. Going forward

The investment in time and money in organising this conference demonstrates value and impact; the comments and feedback are positive and meet the aims of the organisers. What actually changes as a result is always harder to measure however.

People came to meet others, share ideas, learn about issues relating to older people and ageing and left motivated and re-enthused for the future. From a regional event like this, people return to their local communities, local groups and forums and bring not only a message of hope, but also knowledge and information. What it proved is that there are, across the East Midlands, people from all sectors including older people themselves who care about older people and their lives, both now and in the future.

There were many positive comments from participants about the passion and messages that Liz Kendall MP gave in her keynote speech. She demonstrated an understanding of not only the issues, but also ideas for solutions. Some argue that older people's services both now and into the future are too important to be left to the government of the day and there needs to be a cross-party effort to address the challenges.

That is also a challenge for the East Midlands Later Life Forum as it looks to its future and the Older People's Advisory Group as it goes forward. How can they be as effective as possible and be viewed as resources for older people and for decision makers and policy development?

Appendix 1 – Conference Programme

- 10.00** Welcome
John Aldridge OBE, DL. Past President of the Newspaper Society
.....
- 10.15** Ageing Positively:
■ Liz Mandeville, East Midlands Later Life Forum
■ John Simmons, ChangeAGEnts East Midlands Older People’s Advisory Group
.....
- 10.30** A Voice of Older People: Barry Wilford, East Midlands Later Life Form and East Midlands Older People’s Advisory Group
.....
- 11.15** Round Table Discussions
.....
- 12.00** Liz Kendall, MP Shadow Minister of State for Care and Older People

Lunch and Exhibitions

- 1.45** Housing: An Overview - Jane Minter Head of Programmes,
Care and Repair England
Housing: Co-operative and Mutual Solutions – Spencer Cooke, Radical Routes
.....
- 2.15** Round Table Discussions
.....
- 2.45** Question Time and Debate
Chair: John Aldridge
■ Cheryl Barrott, Co-Director, ChangeAGEnts Network UK Ltd.
■ Cllr David Sprason, Chair, Adult Social Care for East Midlands Councils
■ Lucia Smith, Steering Group Member, East Midlands Later Life Forum
■ Jane Minter, Care and Repair England
■ Spencer Cooke, Radical Routes

Closing remarks and observations - Liz Mandeville, John Simmons

Appendix 2 - Biographies of speakers

John Aldridge

John is the former Chairman and Managing Director of the Leicester Mercury Group. He was also a Director of Northcliffe Newspapers (the parent group) and he is a past President of the Newspaper Society. Now retired, he is still the Chairman of the Methodist Recorder, a Lay Preacher and a member of Trinity Methodist Church, Oadby.

In addition to being President of the Leicester Philharmonic Choir, he is an active Rotarian, a Trustee of the Sir Andrew Martin Trust for Young People, a Member of the Institute of Marketing, a Fellow of the Chartered Management Institute, a Patron of the National Forest Charitable Trust and of the Leicestershire Victoria County History Trust.

A family man, John is married to June and has two children and four grandchildren. He was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant of Leicestershire in 1999 and received an OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours in 2000.

Elizabeth Mandeville

Elizabeth Mandeville is currently the Chair of the East Midlands Later Life Forum and an Associate with ChangeAGENTS Network UK. She retired from paid employment in 2011 after a career during which she worked in the Public, Private, Voluntary and Community Sectors. She spent 19 years working in a Shire Local Authority, during which she gained extensive experience of complex partnership working at a strategic level and in communities across all sectors.

Elizabeth led on the Cabinet Office Programme "Better Government for Older People" within Nottinghamshire County Council and during this time was seconded to the National Programme.

Elizabeth has worked with Central Government Departments on policy development and whole system working, for example "SureStart to Later Life" and "Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods." She was appointed as a Specialist Advisor on Age by the Department of Communities and Local Government for the Beacon Round 10 theme on the Engagement of Older People. This theme was sponsored by the Department for Work and Pensions.

Whilst working the voluntary sector, Elizabeth established a network of Village Care Schemes in

Nottinghamshire and gained much knowledge and experience working in rural areas.

Elizabeth volunteers in her local community and is a Trustee of a Nottinghamshire Charity and a School Governor of a local Primary School in Leicestershire where she now lives. Elizabeth is married with two children and enjoys time with her two grandchildren. She also enjoys reading and swimming when time permits!

John Simmons

John retired from the post of Deputy Director of Social Services and Head of Adult Care in Derbyshire in 2004. John has continued to be involved in looking at how older people can be involved in issues which impact on their lives. He is Acting Chair of East Midlands OPAG, a member of the executive of the UK Older People's Advisory Group, Vice-Chair of The Beth Johnson Foundation and Vice-Chair of Care and Repair England.

Barry W. Wilford

Barry was actively involved with the Scout movement for over 25 years, but upon approaching retirement he decided the time had come to look into what being an 'older person' really meant. He joined a local carers and users group which rapidly devolved into the Leicestershire Older Persons Engagement Network (or OPEN as it is known), and is now their Treasurer.

Prior to retirement, he was the Senior Auditor for a Local Authority, and being qualified, has always been in great demand as a Treasurer or Independent Examiner for numerous charitable organisations, as well as being a Trustee and Minute Secretary of the Leicestershire Historic Churches Trust. Barry serves on several committees relating to those matters appertaining to older people, including both of the forums sponsoring this Conference, plus the United Kingdom Advisory Forum for Ageing. However, he firmly believes in practice rather than just theory. He is an 'Older Person's Champion' and has been active with regard to such matters as the 'Dignity in Care Project' and the DALE Project (Decisions At Life's End).

A family man, Barry is married to Janice and he has two children but as yet no grandchildren! His interests include gardening, theatre, music, reading, swimming, and when the weather is fine – walking.

Liz Kendall MP

Liz Kendall is a Labour Member of Parliament for Leicester West and a Shadow Minister for Care and Older People.

Prior to becoming an MP, Ms Kendall held a number of high-profile positions in the think-tank and charities sector. She was Director of The Maternity Alliance (now Maternity Action), a national charity that promotes the health and well-being of pregnant women, their partners and young children. In this role, she campaigned for improved maternity and paternity rights, and more rights to flexible working. She has also been Director of the Ambulance Service Network, for whom she worked alongside patients' groups and NHS staff to ensure full access to good emergency care services.

Ms Kendall has also held the position of Associate Director of the Institute for Public Policy Research where she led on health, social care and children's early years, and she was also a researcher at the King's Fund where she focused on measures aimed at tackling local health inequalities.

Ms Kendall was an adviser to two members of the cabinet when Labour was in Government. Between 2004 and 2007, she was a special adviser to Patricia Hewitt, who then held the positions of Secretary of State for Trade & Industry, Minister for Women and Secretary of State for Health. Prior to this, Ms Kendall advised Harriet Harman MP when the latter was appointed Secretary of State for Social Security and Minister for Women after the 1997 general election.

Jane Minter

Jane is Head of Programmes (part time) at Care & Repair England, an independent charitable organisation which aims to improve older people's housing. Its vision is that all older people have decent living conditions in a home of their own choosing.

Previously she was Head of Intelligence and External Affairs at Housing 21, has been seconded to the Department of Health promoting the role of housing in social care and health and has worked for Housing Associations Charitable Trust, the National Housing Federation and Age Concern England (now Age UK) in the field of older people's housing.

She has been on the Board of the Elderly Accommodation Counsel and the UK Inquiry into Mental Health in Later Life. She is currently a Board member of Ability Housing which provides housing and support services that enable people to live more independent lives.

Cheryl Barrott

Cheryl Barrott is a Co-founder and Co-director of Change AGENTS Network UK Ltd. She has been involved in the practice of Older People's participation since 1998, initially as part of the Better Government for Older People programme, (BGOP).

Cheryl has worked with Older People, other stakeholders and partners, at a local, regional and national level to promote age equality and facilitate the co-production of age friendly public policy, service design, and delivery, an example being the DH POPPs programme.

Cheryl was the first Mental Health Social Worker specifically for the Irish and Travelling Community, based in the Sheffield Transcultural Mental Health Team. A former Director of the Sheffield Irish People's Forum, She has been active in the community for over 30 years in Eire and the UK.

A Community Worker for over thirty years, she has worked with diverse communities and groups, on a broad range of issues such as female genital mutilation, men in childcare, post traumatic stress disorder within refugee communities and lunch clubs for isolated elders.

In her early years Cheryl was a professional singer, still a passionate musician and voice coach, she is a strong advocate for performance art in public participation practice.

Councillor David Sprason

David was Deputy Leader for Leicestershire County Council and the Cabinet Lead Member for Adults and Communities until late 2012.

David was Cabinet Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health Services (ASCH) since 2003 and in February 2010 became Cabinet Lead Member for Adults and Communities with responsibility for adult social care, Library Services and areas of Environment and Heritage, until late 2012.

In his first year, he put into place the policies needed to transform his department into one of the best performing ASCH services in the country - achieving the maximum possible 3 stars. Leicestershire County Council is the only County Council authority to achieve this standard nationally in the independent CPA assessments of adult social care for six years.

David has developed specialist knowledge of ASCH issues since 2003 and will be able to apply this knowledge in the development of future public policy on adult social care issues.

David was a peer member at the Local Government Improvement Department (LGID) and has mentored other local authorities as they seek to improve their standard of service delivery in adult social care to that of Leicestershire's 3 stars.

David has a Post Graduate Certificate with Distinction in Local Governance for Councillors from London Southbank University.

David Sprason was the lead on Adult Social Care through the East Midlands Councils Regional Improvement Efficiency Board (RIEP).

Her participation at County, Regional and National conferences has helped to update her on changes, in particular to services for older people, which have a profound impact on their daily lives and allows her to have an input in on-going discussions.

Lucia feels that her experience with people and service providers gives her the ability to communicate at all levels. As an older person and an accredited Dignity Champion she believes it is vital that an ageing population receives high quality services which are appropriate to their needs and effective engagement at all levels is of paramount importance.

Lucia Smith

Since her retirement as a Tutor and her subsequent involvement in Community groups and forums Lucia has gained the following experience:-

- Chair of her local District Older People's forum
- Chair of the Leicestershire Older People's Engagement Network.
- Member of the County Integrated Partnership for Older People.
- Member of East Midlands OPAG.
- Member of the East Midlands Later Life forum and Steering Group
- Facilitator at National AGEUK conference.
- Member of the national AGEUK Overview and Scrutiny Panel
- Member on the Leicestershire Ageing Well Steering Board.
- Member of the Age Action Alliance sub-group "Attitudes to Ageing.
- Member of the Leicester Mercury Patient Panel

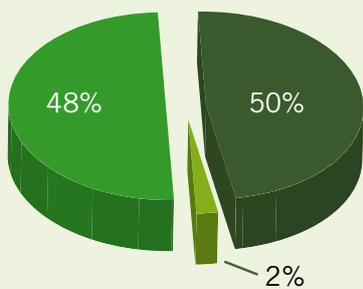
Appendix 3 – Evaluation

In total there were 48 forms returned by participants (most speakers and steering groups members did not complete a form). As the charts and figures show below, the overall ratings were very good. To get a 98% 'Good – Excellent' rating is difficult to exceed and a real achievement for everyone involved. Not everybody answered every question, but the percentage figures give the picture of those that did. There were numerous additional and unprompted points made about how well organised it was, the positive feel of the day and the excellent facilities provided by the venue.

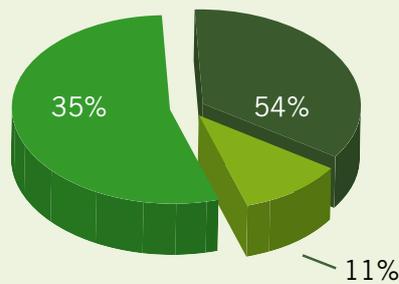
There are always lessons to be learned from organising days like these. The nature of the audience would perhaps suggest that sound quality was something that people really felt strongly about and there were a number of comments about the lack of a loop system, and the need for better use of microphones.

Put in general the positives can be celebrated and it provides an excellent basis to build on any future events.

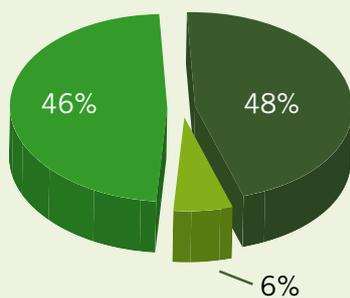
Overall rating of the day



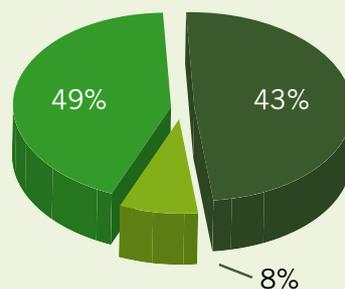
View on speakers



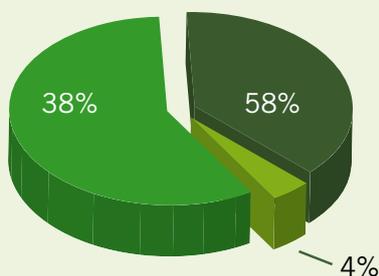
Round table discussions



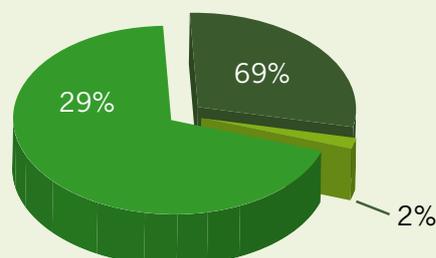
Question time



Venue



Refreshments



Appendix 4 – Jane Minter - Care and Repair England - Presentation

Home is...an overview

Jane Minter
Care & Repair England

Care and Repair England

- To improve older people's housing
- All older people to have decent living conditions in a home of their own choosing
- Practical projects, policy and practice
- Particular concern about older people in poor/unsuitable private sector housing

Summary

- What 'home is...'
- Why is housing so important?
- Where older people live
- What are the issues for housing
- What needs to be done

Home is...

- 'having your own front door'
- 'sleeping in your own bed'
- 'entertaining friends'
- 'sitting in your favourite chair'
- 'doing what you want'
- Home is not.... just 'a unit of accommodation'

The importance of housing

- For better health
- For independence
- For the right choice
- For a better life
- For staying in touch
- For comfort and security
- For 'ever' or as long as you want...

The success of ageing

- Life expectancy is increasing
 - 82 years (women)
 - 78 years (men)
- Huge contributors
- Numbers set to rise

Where older people live

- A third of ALL households
- 90% live in 'ordinary homes'
- 75% home owners (higher in some areas)
- Many live on their own
- Aspiration: to live independently and stay in control

Housing: key issues

- Over 75's more likely to live in poor housing – (home owners)
- Housing conditions are linked to health conditions
- Many older people need home adaptations
- Older people want small repairs and practical help in the home

Housing: key issues

- Access to advice on housing, care and support is patchy
- There is a shortage of housing options
- Older people are not seen as crucial to housing planning and provision and are not consulted
- Housing is still seen as the 'poor relation' in health and social care

What should be done

- Access to fast, affordable help with home repairs and adaptations
- ...and to impartial information, advice and support on housing, care and support options
- Homes and neighbourhoods to be 'age friendly'
- Variety of housing options with older peoples views central

What needs to change

- Housing's role in health and care recognised – and funded
- Older people's needs and aspirations in housing planning
- Change in attitudes: a home not a unit
- Advice and information resources everywhere
- Older people 'part of' not 'apart from' decision making



Care & Repair England
The Renewal Trust Business Centre
3 Hewkorth Street
Nottingham
NG3 2EG
Tel: 0115 950 6500
Email: info@careandrepair-england.org.uk
www.careandrepair-england.org.uk



The East Midlands Later Life Forum

We have EMLLF has an extensive network of member organisations and older people are nominated by their Local Authorities to contribute a local perspective on the Forum's agenda.

The EMLLF objectives are to:

- Highlight and disseminate information on the key issues facing the ageing population both nationally and in the East Midlands;
- Champion and challenge the policy makers and service providers in the area;
- Ensure that the voice of older people is reflected at Forum meetings and helps to shape its actions;
- Respond to Government consultations to give a perspective from the East Midlands on age and ageing.



ChangeAGEnts Network UK Ltd.

Change AGEnts Network UK Ltd (Change Agents) is an IPS-Charitable Society for the Benefit of the Community. (Charitable Ben Comm)

The Society operates as a multi-stakeholder co-operative, incorporating East Midlands OPAG as part of the community of interest within it.

- To act as a powerful catalyst to engagement;
- To bring people together, creating the space for collective decision making;
- To contribute to personal and community empowerment;
- To communicate and develop the values that underpin democracy, such as mutuality and respect,
- To promote democratic processes, influencing policy and legislation,
- To ensure that older people have a direct voice in local, regional and national government by speaking for themselves.

For further information or for copies of the report, please contact the Chair of EMLLF

Liz.mandeville123@btinternet.com.

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