

Regions for All Ages – The Conference

*Understanding ageing and harnessing the potential
of older people at regional level*



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Age Concern is a national federation of organisations which provides practical support, advice and assistance to older people, conducts innovative research, builds networks, and campaigns at local, regional and national levels. The English Regions Network plays a key role co-ordinating the work of the English Regional Assemblies, whose job it is to oversee the development of regional strategies across a wide variety of policy areas.

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Regions for All Ages

The Conference: Understanding ageing and harnessing the potential of older people at regional level

This conference was jointly sponsored by Age Concern and the English Regions Network. It was the culmination of the first year of a programme of activity to highlight the impact of demographic ageing on the English regions and identify and explore the policy implications. The programme is supported by a multi-stakeholder Advisory Group bringing together representatives of regional networks, leading academics from a range of disciplines and national stakeholders.

The Conference began in plenary session with background and introductory statements and keynote presentations about the demographic and political context in which the programme is being developed.

Following the plenary session the Conference broke into six themed sessions exploring the impact of ageing on key elements of the regional agenda. Each session included two presentations. Firstly, a paper which had been commissioned for the Conference explored the key issues for this theme implied by ageing. This was followed by a reply by a practitioner working in the field looking at practical responses to these issues. The main papers are available from the Age Concern website at www.ageconcern.org.uk/regionsforallages

In the afternoon, the Conference divided into nine regional groups and two groups of national stakeholders to discuss key issues for each region and practical action points.

In the final session, the Director of General of Age Concern England, Gordon Lishman OBE drew together the main themes from the day and emphasised the connections between the work of the Conference and the wider global debate on ageing.

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Background and introduction to the conference

The Chair, Professor Peter Lloyd, welcomed delegates to a 'learning and sharing experience'. He described how his career had focused on economic development and it was only when shown figures of population ageing region by region that he realised for the first time the implication of the changing demography and the new demographic pyramid for the economic development of regions.

The collaboration between Age Concern and the English Regions Network had seeded some exciting work in this area. Firstly in the Programme Advisory Group of which he was proud to be the Chair; secondly in a programme of research led by Professor Tony Warnes looking at data gaps and information gaps on ageing at regional level and thirdly in this conference which brought together professionals in the fields of ageing, demography and regional development with those in government administering the regions – and the Minister herself.

He introduced Councillor Azhar Ali, Chair of the NW Regional Assembly and representing the English Regions network. Councillor Ali welcomed delegates as co-sponsor of the event and described in detail the work of the English Regions Network in providing a forum for inclusive dialogue, regional consensus and involvement from across and beyond politics. The ERN is developing a programme of economic innovation and diversity and provides a significant regional counterweight to the centralising nature of British political life.



Councillor Azhar Ali

He emphasised the importance of alerting regions to the projected increase in the share of the older population and its implications for economic and social policies. The impression that this is a social rather than an economic issue must be overcome. Demographic ageing is not a matter only for those involved in health and social care or for central government policy on pensions. Demographic ageing is not only an issue for older people, but for all citizens, in all communities and in all regions.

Councillor Ali drew attention to the new multi-stakeholder project in the North West which is shortly to be launched as *50:50 Vision: the North West Forum on Ageing*. It is intended as an opportunity to bring together agencies involved in employment, transport, regeneration, health and housing with the threefold aim of redesigning communities, promoting productive ageing and enhancing engagement. It is not a talking shop but a Forum for collaboration on ageing at regional level.



Demographic ageing: the broad context – regional diversity

(Professor Philip Rees, University of Leeds)



Professor Philip Rees

Professor Rees began his keynote address by considering the key characteristics of an ageing population. He suggested that an ageing population shows two related characteristics: the average age of the population rises and the number of older people within it increases as a proportion of the total.

Increases in the proportion of older people (*relative ageing of a population*) may occur either as a result of increasing life expectancy or as a result of reduced fertility. Today fertility rates are below replacement levels and life expectancy is increasing. Meanwhile the impact of the baby-boom years (*1945-75*) has yet to be felt and will produce a period of 'super-ageing' from 2010 onwards. International migration is currently of little significance but what is very important within the UK and to the regional agenda is the role of migration of people within and between regions.

What then does the future hold? The Government Actuaries Department and the Office for National Statistics believe improvements in life expectancy will gradually reduce to nil whilst Jim Oeppen and Jim Vaupel believe improvements will continue indefinitely at a rate of 0.2 years per year in the UK. All improvements are, of course, reversible and new threats like that of HIV/AIDS could change the picture. Thus, in looking to the future, it is sensible to steer a middle course: the lengthening of life may not go on for ever but it may not come to a halt in the near future.

Currently just under 16% of the UK population is aged 65 and over. As a percentage of the currently defined labour force, however, the figure is 24%.

Projections based on the results of the 2001 census suggest an upwards shift in the percentage of older people as the baby boomers age. From the 2030s there will be a degree of stabilisation though the proportion of older men will increase reflecting a greater improvement in life expectancy. The greatest gains will be in the over-85 age group.

Professor Rees highlighted that the effect of these changes will not be uniform across the regions. Southern regions will experience the greatest growth, gaining from internal migration at retirement, higher life expectancies and more affluent older populations. Northern regions will age, but will have lowest growth as they lose migrants at retirement, have lower life expectancies and the poorest older populations. London will see very little growth with a large outflow on retirement to make capital gains on house sales, leaving

behind the poorer older people. Wales is in two halves – the rural retirement areas gaining population while the ex-coalfield, mining and industrial areas lose people. Scotland's population is declining and its older population is growing more slowly than the UK as a whole. However the over-85s are growing faster here than anywhere except Northern Ireland where the fast growth in older groups is due to past high fertility.

In conclusion Professor Rees identified issues for regional organisations raised by this complex picture of demographic ageing across the UK. What impact will specific regional trends have? How much sub-regional variation is concealed beneath the regional and national results? How much would the picture change if a fresh projection were implemented using less conservative assumptions about increasing life expectancy?



Government Perspectives

(Barbara Roche MP, Minister of State, Social Exclusion and Deputy Minister for Women)



The Minister welcomed the event and expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to outline Government policy on two key issues - age and regional development – in the Government's agenda.

She began by reinforcing Professor Rees's message about the ageing nature of the population highlighting the growing number of older people and the decline in the younger age groups. This shift in the age balance should be seen as an opportunity rather than a crisis, though it does present some significant challenges. It will have profound implications for the labour market, and the way people work. It will be increasingly important to harness and develop the enormous reserve of skills and experience held by older citizens. It will also require the provision of high quality services and healthcare, designed and delivered to meet individual and community requirements.

Barbara Roche MP

An ageing population will impact upon the future development of our environment, for example the planning of our towns and cities, and the provision of appropriate infrastructure.

There will be an increasing role for older people in building sustainable communities, successful neighbourhoods, and providing civic leadership.

She moved on to outline Government action in this area pointing to a sustained increase in funding for the NHS, and to the National Service Framework for Older People which addresses their specific health and care needs. The poorest pensioners will be targeted through the Minimum Income Guarantee with £2.5bn spending since 1997 on the poorest third of pensioners. From October 2003 the Pension Credit will mean that those with modest savings will be rewarded rather than penalised.

The Age Positive campaign vigorously promotes to employers the business benefits of age diversity and the implementation of the European Employment Directive by 2006 will mean that domestic legislation will outlaw age discrimination in employment and vocational training.

Safe communities are a particular concern of older people. A key target is to reduce burglaries in deprived areas by 25 per cent. Eighty-four neighbourhood warden schemes are working at ground level in some of our most deprived communities to tackle crime and the fear of crime.

She emphasised that it is not enough to simply deliver new initiatives and opportunities. Where appropriate, older people must be actively engaged in their design and implementation to ensure that their needs are met:

- The *Better Government for Older People* programme has already had an impact on how the voices of older people are heard.
- The *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* adopts an inclusive approach, by giving local citizens, including older people, the opportunity to contribute to the decision-making process.
- Older people's groups are heavily involved with a number of Local Strategic Partnerships which bring together public, private, business, community and voluntary sectors so that different initiatives and services support each other and work together.

The Minister then turned to the development of regional policy describing in some detail current and future Government initiatives to strengthen the voice of the regions in decision making. Regional Development Agencies had been created to deliver improved and sustainable economic performance in the regions and, from April 2002, they had been given increased flexibility to allocate resources according to the regional priorities they identified, in return for agreeing to meet challenging targets for economic development, regeneration and skills.

The White Paper *Your Region, Your Choice*, published in May 2002, outlined greater flexibility, decentralised powers and responsibilities for Government Offices, the Regional Development Agencies, and the Regional Chambers. For those regions that want them, elected regional assemblies will represent a further step forward, offering more accountability, efficiency and the opportunity to set priorities and take additional important decisions at the regional level.

She concluded that the key theme is partnership. The Government and Age Concern have a common agenda actively to engage all older people in our society, and to ensure that they have access to employment opportunities, high quality services and healthcare, both now and in the future. And an increasingly important partnership will be that with the key players at a regional level, including the English Regional Network. The evolving arrangements for the English regions present a unique opportunity to tackle issues such as the ageing population in a way that is strategic, comprehensive, and tailored to meet specific local needs.



Urban Issues

Ageing and Urban Regeneration

(Professor Irene Hardill, Nottingham Trent University)

Professor Hardill began her presentation by highlighting the diversity of urban areas and the experience of older adults living there. She pointed out that we are now seeing an exodus of older adults from urban areas either pre-retirement or as a retirement strategy, partly due to a perceived higher quality of life in rural areas. Not all however have the choice so there is a tendency for those remaining in cities to be amongst the most poor.

She highlighted a need to revisit the concepts of working life, working age, employability and the older worker. A growing number of older adults are outside the workforce either through redundancy or choice – Government Public Service Agreement targets aim to raise the employment rates of over 50s.

Older adults have a strong sense of belonging. Many have lived a long time in the same community and form the social glue binding together communities. They are often the 'neighbourhood keepers' who visit and care for others and who are key volunteers. However the dissipation of family networks results in more older people living alone and older adults suffer the effects of deterioration in community with broken lifts, cracked pavements, the threat of violence and racial abuse.

The wealth gap in cities is often dramatic, with the poorest neighbourhoods three times as deprived as the richest and tremendous differences in quality of life between older adults, both between and within urban areas. It is significant that not one of the indices of deprivation focuses specifically on outcomes for older people. As targets linked to the indices are a major driving force behind allocation of resources, it then becomes more likely that only limited resources will go towards addressing older peoples' needs. This needs to change and the value of unpaid 'work' carried out by older people needs to be included in economic analyses.

Older urban adult poverty may be primarily in inner urban areas and peripheral social housing, but it can also be found in owner occupied suburbs among those with low income and limited assets in terms of house equity. Many of these properties are in a state of disrepair due to lack of money and equity tied up in their property. There is an important role for home improvement agencies. Housing is inextricably linked to health and care.

Transport is an essential link with car availability declining with age. The Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions identified four barriers to mobility – accessibility, safety, affordability and availability. Surprisingly, perhaps, people living in town centres are most likely to be constrained by transport difficulties.

Urban communities have become more racially mixed with a growing metropolitan concentration. Ethnic communities have a younger age structure than the white population – only 9% of Black Caribbeans are 65 and over – but the numbers of ethnic elders requiring care is increasing and will need sensitive attention

Professor Hardill concluded that policies need to be in place to:

- Address the social inclusion of older adults in urban areas
- Counter the isolation caused by decline in family support
- Ensure that housing stock is appropriate for their needs.

Practice response (Sue Adams, Director of Care & Repair, England)

Sue Adams reinforced many of Professor Hardill's points from her perspective. She added that there had been a huge shift to owner occupation, partly fuelled by the *Right to Buy* initiative. Over half of all low income households now live in the owner occupied sector, but 92% of the state support for housing costs goes to people in the rented sector and only 8% to poor owner occupiers. There was little or no interest from the private sector in 'social lending' to those with low incomes and limited equity and therefore little possibility of equity release in regeneration areas.

Informal support networks of local neighbours and friends are very important. In Care & Repair England's recent interviews with older people who had been advised by a *'Moving On'* housing service, one of the triggers for deciding to move home was the decline in these social networks when longstanding neighbours and acquaintances died or moved away.

Policy needs to focus beyond traditional sheltered housing schemes, and lifetime homes should be an integral part of any redevelopment of housing. Supported housing should not be 'out on a limb', but designed in such a way that it can offer support and resources to older people who live in the wider community.

We have to be wary of any analysis of an ageing population which focuses on older people as economically inactive consumers of social services and healthcare, rather than active contributors to the social fabric of communities.

Of 189 successful bids for funding under the Single Regeneration Budget, only two mentioned older people.

After pension levels, transport tends to be the number one concern raised by older people as having a most significant impact on their lives. Regional transport policies must address older peoples' needs and not only focus on transport in terms of its impact on business and the economy.



Rural Issues

Demographic Ageing and Rural Areas

(Professor Philip Lowe, Director, Centre for Rural Economy, University of Newcastle upon Tyne and Board Member, Countryside Agency)

Professor Lowe began his presentation by identifying the distinctive features of demographic ageing in rural areas. Older people form a higher proportion of the population in rural areas due to outward migration by young people combined with inward migration by older age groups. For example 30% of those living in rural areas of the North West are of retirement age, whereas the figure for the region as a whole is only 18%. The migration flows are not only age-related but also socially selective, with less well-off younger adults moving out and relatively well-off older families moving in.

Demographic ageing in rural areas is linked to 'counter-urbanisation'. Not only do people retire to rural areas but they move to rural areas while still in work with the intention of staying there on retirement. Migration for work reasons may trigger a move from urban to rural dwelling. The widespread acceptance of commuting encourages this.

More significant is the ageing of historic cohorts in rural areas. Some of these are there because of earlier commuting-related or work-driven moves. This leads to different sub-regional complexions, with the local, largely residual rural working class (*and established middle class*) and those who have moved in pre-retirement or at retirement.

He explored the challenges facing older people in rural areas. Traditionally the issue of 'the elderly' in rural areas is seen in terms of problems of access to services and shortcomings in service provision. For every thousand people over 65, 81 receive help from social services to live at home in urban areas, whereas the figure drops to 63 in 'accessible' rural areas and to 59 in remote rural areas.

A village services survey found that 86% of parishes had no doctor's surgery, 58% of parishes no recreational club for the over-60s, 46% of parishes no post office and 16% of parishes no bus service.

Those most prone to social exclusion and poverty in rural areas are older people, yet there has been very little research into their circumstances and the processes by which they are included or excluded. Key issues in social exclusion of older people in rural areas are: accessibility and mobility; physical and social isolation; low take-up or low demand for support services.

However older people also present opportunities in rural areas. They can be a community resource offering volunteers and 'social capital'. There are schemes *(for example in Lincolnshire)* to get younger older people to keep an eye on the more dependent. Older people can be engaged in economic activity. For example the phenomenon of moving to the country before retirement leads to higher levels of self-employment and business start-ups in rural areas. One quarter of the rural self-employed are over 55 and 12% of the rural self-employed are in households with at least one pensioner. Older people are also consumers – the importance of the 'grey pound' is being considered in the South West.

Retirement income is important in rural household incomes. In Cumbria, less than half of the area's total household income comes from employees' wages. Pension income into the county is £1bn and is one of the key reasons why the Cumbrian economy did not melt down during the foot and mouth crisis when it lost about £400m in tourism and farming revenues.

Professor Lowe concluded that older people in rural areas have varied circumstances and needs. It is important to represent their diverse interests in policy, but also to give them a voice in service provision and to make rural services responsive to their own specific needs. A critical issue is the sensitivity of care and support services to the ageing process.

Practice response

***Best practice in building capacity amongst older people in rural areas.
(Nick Le Mesurier, Research Fellow, Birmingham University)***

Nick Le Mesurier based his response on the findings of a programme of research into the literature on the experience of ageing in the countryside.

He too looked at some of the key characteristics of older people in the countryside adding further to the arguments of Professor Lowe. Rural living can offer a high quality of life for those who have sufficient resources to enjoy it. Attention is needed to the problems of disadvantaged groups within the countryside and the processes which lead to social exclusion.

Older people are among the most likely to be disadvantaged, particularly if living alone and on low income. Factors exacerbating disadvantage are difficulty of access to transport, lack of accessible or affordable public services, shops and other facilities, and dispersed family and other support networks.

Rural populations tend to be widely scattered, and diverse. This means that disadvantaged groups and individuals are more likely to be 'hidden' within communities that may appear outwardly wealthy and active. Those who are disadvantaged are not confined to specific areas.



Older people are too often represented as a 'problem'. They are, however, more likely to take part in community activities and to hold offices within community institutions. Older people represent an important economic as well as social resource. Many older people, particularly those newly retired who have health, wealth and are mobile, represent an important potential source of labour or enterprise, and of skills and commitment to essential institutions such as voluntary and community agencies, parish councils and others.

What services are available for older people in the countryside? Although they are in fact often similar to those in urban areas, in general, 'rural' services aim to address problems of isolation in areas of sparse population or operate in a peripatetic form. They may also use a range of existing community facilities and apply broad or generalised eligibility criteria, often with a preventative focus, and work jointly with a number of small groups as well as larger statutory bodies. They often depend on volunteers in key roles.

The extent and means by which people co-operate with and help each other, often through informal relationships but also through membership of groups and organisations and participation in community roles, produces 'social capital'. This is a key feature of successful rural communities. Community initiatives and information and advice services have an obvious relationship to social capital, as do services which involve the community in research into local needs, or help older people to set up and run their own facilities.

If a service is to become part of the fabric of the community it must be 'owned' by the community. This means including key people, using existing networks and consulting local opinion. Recruiting support through local networks ensures that the service reflects local needs and reduces the danger of it closing for lack of support.

However, there are challenges to successful rural working. The corps of volunteers, on whom many services depend, is ageing. The majority of rural volunteers are women, but increased employment opportunities for women mean that the number of potential volunteers is reduced. Unless new volunteers from among 'younger' older people and those in middle age can be attracted and retained there will be a serious future shortfall.

The rural voluntary and community sector is characterised by a plethora of small or very small organisations, most with a local mission. There is little tradition of collective action or of collaboration and reliance on short-term funding often inhibits development and entrepreneurship.

Regional Governance

Regional Government: Opportunities for Stakeholder Engagement? (Lynne Humphrey and Professor John Tomaney, Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies, University of Newcastle Upon Tyne)

Lynne Humphrey began by looking at the opportunities outlined in the White paper on Regional Government for either the direct or indirect involvement of stakeholders. These included full membership of a Regional Assembly or engagement in a co-opted role. She pointed out, however, that whilst attention has been paid to the under-representation of some traditionally marginalised groups, the voice of older people is not specifically mentioned.

She described research from the North East region about the nature of involvement in regional governance.

The Economic and Social Partner's Group of the current Regional Assembly, which is made up of 22 representatives covering a wide range of interests, had argued the case for more inclusive and representative regional policy making. To respond to these concerns, the Assembly had commissioned research which identified a number of key factors in creating a successful regional 'stakeholder' body. These included: suitable induction arrangements; a system of allowances to cover stakeholder involvement; good communication; balanced representation; adequate funding.

Consideration was being given to the creation of a North East Civic Forum and she highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of two existing Civic Forums in Scotland and London, suggesting a number of issues for debate concerning the establishment of further Civic Forums.

She concluded with a number of engagement issues to consider:

- Do directly elected regional assemblies offer real opportunities for inclusive engagement?
- Can they ensure the equal input of diverse and currently marginalised voices?
- How will inclusivity be managed?
- How will stakeholders be selected or appointed to guarantee equal representation and accountability?

Those concerned with older people need to think about how they will use directly elected regional assemblies, what mechanisms need to be developed in order to be heard within regional government structures and what additional models would best ensure the voices of older people in future regional policy.



Getting to grips with governance (*Sharon Palmer, Strategy and Policy Co-ordinator, Regional Action West Midlands*)

Sharon Palmer added a perspective on regional governance from her experience of working with Regional Action West Midlands.

She argued that in order to engage with governance issues whether regional, sub-regional or local it is vital that older people's organisations understand both the organisational environment in which the work takes place and the way the wider community works. It is also important to understand the different agendas and the strategic direction of key players and funders and to get to know and understand potential partners.

The new regional environment provides golden opportunities to influence and develop strategies and services, to challenge practice and behaviour, to increase and ensure access and to address inequalities.

She urged those of her audience who were representatives of organisations, communities or networks to engage in regional government and consider issues such as accountability, resources and ownership which lie on the road to engagement. The challenge is for service deliverers, funders, network bodies and older people themselves each to determine their level of involvement and role in delivering regional governance. By addressing the issues of older people today we will not only improve the situation for older people today but also change the environment for future generations.

She highlighted some of the key targets for Regional Action West Midlands as an illustration of the work of the regional voluntary sector networks:

- Supporting the establishment of the West Midlands Chamber Social Inclusion Forum
- Developing an appropriate regional COMPACT
- Promoting greater sector engagement in regional and sub-regional forums
- Supporting ICT capacity building and launching a website
- Piloting and disseminating a Gender Impact Assessment Tool.

Regional economies and employment

Population ageing: implications for employment and the economy in the UK regions

(Dr Philip Taylor, Cambridge Interdisciplinary Research Centre on Ageing, University of Cambridge)

Dr Taylor began by stating that the changing age composition and its implications for the nature of employment and the economy are viewed as a priority issue because of current concerns about the future funding of pension systems and about labour shortages against a background of historically low levels of unemployment.

The principal features of demographic ageing provide a range of opportunities and challenges to regional economies and have profound implications for businesses. The purchasing power of the over-50s is now considerable, with significant shifts in patterns of demand from goods to services including leisure, lifelong learning, health and financial services. An increasing number of those in the Fourth Age can be viewed as a market opportunity, in particular for technological equipment which will allow older people to remain independent longer. The provision of financial services relating to investment and the better use of capital tied up in houses will become increasingly important. Present levels of early retirement will be unsustainable and it will be harder for businesses to provide adequate pension schemes.

He suggested that the UK could learn from the approach *A New Age for Business: Opportunities in the Mature Market* which has been established by the government of Western Australia.

He then moved on to discuss the ageing workforce and its characteristics. Few spheres of work now offer the security of lifelong employment. The drive for efficiency, best value and Compulsory Competitive Tendering has led to downsizing which has had a disproportionate effect on older workers. Once older workers become unemployed they are more likely to experience long periods out of work. Older workers are more likely to work part-time or to be self-employed and disability is a far more important route out of work than unemployment.

On the other hand the trend towards early retirement or early exit from the workforce is now being reversed, though early retirement remains as an aspiration for many. The long-term decline in labour force participation by older men may now have halted, or begun to reverse, although levels still remain high. Among older women on the other hand there is an upwards trend. Age discriminatory practices increase the risk of involuntary early retirement, although amongst the personnel profession awareness of this is increasing and there is evidence of a gradual change in employer policies if not in practices. It is significant that for professional



people early retirement often improves quality of life but for manual unskilled workers the opposite is the case.

Dr Taylor concluded with some comments on the developing range of public policy initiatives in this area, including Better Government for Older People, New Deal 50 plus, and the forthcoming consultation on the European Equal Treatment Directive which will prohibit age discrimination in employment and training. The Government has now set a specific target of increasing the employment rate of over-50s. The Green Paper on pensions is relevant to these discussions because of the focus within it on flexibility in retirement. He finally identified a number of principles for future policy making in this area:

- Chronological age should not be a starting point in policy making
- An approach based on age diversity is better than an age-specific approach
- Initiatives should be localised and bottom-up rather than top-down
- Policies need to be long-term, consistent and positive.
- This area should be recognised as a priority and adequately resourced

Practice response

(Barbara Watkins, Regional Consultant for the Third Age Employment Network (TAEN) and Laurie South, Executive Director of PRIME)

Barbara Watkins, a regional consultant for the Third Age Employment Network (TAEN) outlined, as a case study, the role and development of Experience Works!, an initiative funded by the East Midlands Development Agency which seeks to create opportunities for people over 45 who want to work.

Experience Works! was established in partnership with Loughborough College. It does not, however, follow the traditional delivery pattern of a college of further education and it aims to provide a wider range of services, mentoring and assistance than an outplacement service. For example it has high quality drop in facilities. Clients can work at computers at their own pace, and there is help available when they hit difficulties. Individuals are encouraged to develop essential skills to find work and remain in work and employers are helped to understand the mature workforce and the advantages of mixed age workforces.

Experience Works now has a co-ordinator working in each of the Learning and Skills Councils in the East Midlands and is seeking to expand provision. The challenge is to replicate the model in different areas. Experience Works is client centred and is not constrained by inflexible targets which prevent a customisation of services. It is therefore better able to cater for individual needs. It is also beginning to work through questions about how clients have a stake and a say in the development of the project whilst ensuring there is scope for other stakeholders to have influence.

Laurie South introduced PRIME, the organisation that promotes 50+ self-employment and enterprise. He highlighted its campaigning role to create an awareness of the self-employment option amongst people aged 50+ and to remove the barriers that many face in starting a business. PRIME works at many levels. It seeks to influence government policy. It is developing partnerships with agencies of enterprise to deliver the support and help that is needed for potential 50+ entrepreneurs - including access to start-up funds when they were not available elsewhere. It is building understanding of how this age group fits within the employment market, where the current evidence base is inadequate, and identifying and promoting best practice and new ideas.

He suggested that if we were serious about developing 50+ self-employment and enterprise, there were insufficient support agencies currently available. There were gaps in provision especially in rural areas, and where support did exist it was often ill-understood by this age-group, and frequently inaccessible by public transport. Business start-up support had made a promising start but was still at an early stage of development. It was essential to build a comprehensive support model. The tendency is to front-load support whereas a more sophisticated view of continuing mentoring was required based on an assessment of individual needs.

The plethora of different forms of business support presented a development challenge. On the one hand central command and control could have a stifling effect and would ignore regional and local differences - the strength of the present structure. On the other hand slow and erratic development would ill-serve the hundreds of thousands that looked for help. One way forward was to think through how regions and local delivery worked together within a national framework. By creating a network of PRIME Regional Development Managers, PRIME had already embarked on this course.



Promoting healthy ageing

Kath Childs

(East Midlands Public Health Group, Government Office East Midlands)

Kath Childs summarised the impact of population ageing for the health of individuals, their families and carers and for the development of care services within regions, using her own region of the East Midlands as an example. The health challenge is both to add years to life and life to years.

Over the last century, life expectancy at birth has increased by almost 3 years a decade and has now reached 80 years for women. However there are inequalities in life expectancy across and within regions. Within the East Midlands this can range from 72.4 years for a man in Corby, Northamptonshire, to 82.6 years for a woman in Blaby, Leicestershire. Like most regions cardiovascular disease and cancer are the major killers accounting for 66% of all deaths in the East Midlands. A particular challenge for the region is to reduce the accident rate, as the mortality rate for accidents is the highest in the country.

'Healthy life expectancy', the remaining number of years spent healthy, is a population health indicator combining mortality and morbidity. This has remained relatively stable over the last two decades, and when combined with an improving life expectancy would suggest that the extra years lived are ones lived in ill health. Current data would suggest that at age 75, about half of remaining life will be spent in less than good health (self reported). Particular challenges will be the estimated rise in the prevalence of dementia (an increase of 34% by 2020) and a rise in illness associated with increasing levels of obesity e.g. diabetes, stroke, heart disease, with almost 70% of over 60s in the EM being either overweight or obese. The impact of poverty on poor health is also now well documented (Acheson) and in the EM two thirds of older people have an income below £10,834. Like life expectancy, healthy life expectancy shows wide variations within the region.

Older people are the main users of health and social care services; for example two thirds of patients cared for in hospital wards are over the age of 65 and some 9 out of 10 people seen by community nurses are older people. The National Service Framework for Older People published in 2001, is a 10 year programme of action linking services to support independence and promote good health, specialized services for key conditions, and culture change so that all older people and their carers are always treated with respect, dignity and fairness.

Access to health services for older people will be a key challenge for all regions. Within the EM, the migration of older people from the cities means that by 2020 96% of the increase in numbers of people aged 75+ is estimated to be outside of the three main urban areas. Transport infrastructure will be particularly important in accessing services, as may technological developments such as telemedicine.

Addressing the health needs of older people will therefore require a partnership approach across a range of different agencies. In the EM there are strong regional partnerships, working together under the umbrella of an Integrated Regional Strategy, to develop and deliver a Regional Public Health Strategy, 'Investment for Health'. The needs of older people need to be a thread running through the sixteen policy objectives identified in the strategy (e.g. accidents, mental health, and physical activity). There is also an opportunity for older people to contribute to the delivery of the strategy. This group has been shown to be the most successful of entrepreneurs. Current health policy supports the building of capacity within the voluntary and community sector to deliver health and social care services. This provides an opportunity for the establishment of social and community enterprises, which could be led by older people.

For the future, the restructuring of health services around Primary Care Trusts, provides an opportunity for the development of local services to meet local needs. At a Regional level the co-location of Public Health Groups within Government Offices provides a real opportunity to join up policy and action within the region so that it reflects the needs of older people. To realise this potential we need to identify the champions who can enable older people to actively participate in decision-making and who can advocate on their behalf.



Practice response *(Dr Gillian Granville, Health Development Agency)*

Gillian Granville focused on the Pre-Retirement Pilots which the Health Development Agency has been managing on behalf of the Department of Health, to provide the basis for a national scheme of pre-retirement health advice and services. These services were first outlined in the NHS Plan and the National Service Framework Standard 8.

The aim of the service is to provide support to help people stay healthier in older age by engaging people in the 50 to 65 year age group to consider what they need to do to improve their health and well-being in the future.

The purpose of the pre-retirement pilot initiative is to build an evidence base in order to inform the development of a national roll-out of pre-retirement health advice and services which will aim to reduce inequalities in health. The rationale is that people are receptive to change at times of transition and that in mid-life they become more aware of ageing and of old age. If health behaviour can be changed in midlife it will result in a healthier older population in later life.

The key features of the service are the improvement of mid-life health, addressing health inequalities and recognising that a range of different approaches and settings for the service are required including the workplace, in the community and in primary care. Six of the eight pilot sites are in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas with NHS Trusts in Ashfield, Rowley and Tipton, East Devon, Guys and St Thomas' in London and Hull and East Riding. Others are within voluntary sector organisations including Hackney Age Concern, the Beth Johnson Foundation and Osteoporosis Dorset.

In these pilots the Health Development Agency is developing new ways to deliver services through multiple approaches and partnerships, enabling public participation and community engagement. It is hoped to demonstrate the central role of Primary Care Trusts and older people in NHS modernisation and to harness the practical knowledge and wisdom of practitioners, building an evidence base of 'what works'.

The initiative is being evaluated by the Institute for Applied Health and Social Policy at Kings College London, using theories of change methodology. This looks at 'what works', 'for whom' and 'why', and will inform the development of a service model. Key messages are beginning to emerge, and the final report is due in October 2003.

Equality and Diversity

Equality and Diversity

(Kurshid Ahmed, Commission for Racial Equality)

Kurshid Ahmed began his presentation by recalling the problems a Sikh friend of his had encountered some while ago when looking for culturally appropriate residential care. He wondered whether we had moved on since then. He then outlined the key issues relating to the delivery of equitable public services to older people from minority ethnic groups.

- The 2001 census shows 7.9% of the UK population are from ethnic minority groups.
- The proportion of the population over 60 years of age from the various ethnic minority communities differs, ranging from 5% to 10%.
- The figures are a significant increase on the 1991 census and projections suggest this growth will continue.
- These older people suffered much from earlier discrimination and many individuals suffer multiple discrimination because of both their age and their race.
- They are likely to be among the poorest populations of Britain.
- There is a disproportionate incidence of ill health.
- Many are not fluent in English, for example 90% of Bangladeshi women and 53% of Indian women.
- Cultural and religious differences affect the delivery of effective health and social care services – take up of services is low in relation to likely need.

The Macpherson report led to the amendment of the 1976 Race Relations Act to place a duty on all public agencies to work to eliminate racial discrimination and promote equality and good race relations. Public bodies must demonstrate an understanding of the diverse needs of the population, make effective arrangements for accessible and culturally sensitive services and consult with users and carers. They need to develop an action plan and include the additional costs in their budget planning process.

The current consultation around the document, *Towards Equality and Diversity*, is developing a wider debate about approaches to equality and diversity in the United Kingdom with Government proposals to create a Single Equality Body and the extension of equality legislation in employment to new strands. This will present issues of co-ordination at regional and local level. He concluded by suggesting that the role of Local Strategic Partnerships will be crucial to this process.



Practice response

(Paul Dunn, Equal Opportunities Advisor, South West TUC)

Paul Dunn described the equalities work in the South West with which he was involved. Current regional networks already exist for gender and race interests and there is now work underway to create networks in the new equality areas identified in Government consultation; age, disability and sexual orientation.

The age network has been meeting for 18 months with representation from both older people's and youth groups in the community involved. The intention is that the network, which held a conference in Taunton, will bring together the plethora of age-related organisations and provide opportunities for consultation on equality and diversity issues from regional agencies.

He highlighted how there are other initiatives on ageing and older people emerging in the region. The South West Regional Assembly and Age Concern initiative, 'Taking Account of Age', which promoted consultation between Regional agencies and older people is the other main programme in the South West. He highlighted the need for co-ordination and collaboration between the various agencies, whilst exploring the different roles and focus of different initiatives. He also stressed the need for the various equality networks – race, gender, disability, religion, age and sexual orientation to recognise the changing environment and to learn to work in partnership.

Regional Discussion Groups

In the final session, the Conference divided into nine regional groups and two groups of national stakeholders to discuss practical action points. Overall issues identified by the groups were that:

- 1 Regions needed to develop a strategic, 'whole systems' approach to ageing involving all the key regional stakeholders working with older people and those representing them
- 2 For regions, developing maintaining and disseminating high quality information about ageing was a key issue
- 3 Government needed to do more to ensure that it had fully analysed and that it joined up effectively to respond to the economic opportunities and social and health challenges ageing presented. Particular proposals included innovative schemes using the tax and pensions system to encourage employment in later life and the joining up of this agenda under the sustainable communities programme
- 4 Government Offices and regional agencies need a clear responsibility identified for them by Government on ageing
- 5 Good practice in responding to ageing should be identified and showcased

Region by region the priorities were identified as:

North West

- 1 The NWDA and Regional Assembly should revise the existing research publications following the 2001 census
- 2 Accurate statistical information about the region should be disseminated to all partners in all sectors through the North West Forum on Ageing and the role of the Public Health observatory raised as a source for detailed information.
- 3 Action should be taken to raise awareness of issues and stimulate culture change of key organisations, individuals and employers with particular focus on ensuring the RDA and LSC's engage in the agenda and use their influence at national level.

North East

- 1 There should be a Regional Forum on Ageing developed with funding from ONE, Europe, GONE, NERA and ACE focused on demographic ageing.
- 2 The region should initiate a major programme linked to employment and ageing based on quality research and intelligence to map current skills and advice provision, fill gaps and target employers.
- 3 Older people should be seen as an untapped resource and encouraged to engage as mentors, volunteers and equal citizens and this involvement should move forward in all sectors



Yorkshire

- 1 The region should raise awareness of the impact of demographic change across regional policy issues and emphasise the diversity and changing nature of the region's older people.
- 2 The proposal to create a strategic co-ordinating body involving regional partners should be followed through
- 3 A particular focus on the housing needs of older people should be developed by the new Regional Housing Board
- 4 Regional assessment of the skills needs of older people should be conducted by Yorkshire Forward and the Regional Assembly to ensure that the employment potential of older people is maximised

West Midlands

- 1 The Regional Observatory and Public Health Observatory should analyse the census and other data to understand how ageing will impact on the region and identify gaps in the data.
- 2 The Regional Assembly should sponsor a working group to examine the approaches to ageing of all relevant bodies in the region
- 3 There should be a strategic co-ordinating body in the region that will also look at initiatives to support the engagement of older people. The body should have a linkage to the Social Inclusion Forum of the Assembly

East Midlands

- 1 The current discussion amongst main regional stakeholders to establish a regional strategic co-ordinating body should be concluded as the key regional action.
- 2 A programme of demographic research should be pulled together and existing data interpreted to understand ageing in the region.
- 3 A tool and process for age-proofing the range of regional policies should be developed.

East of England

- 1 The proposed Regional Forum on Demographic Change should be implemented supported by EEDA
- 2 'Market intelligence' on latest resources and expertise, and local demographic analysis should be developed. Further assessment of where more intelligence is needed is required. These steps should be carried out by the Observatories and local agencies.
- 3 Following receipt and active dissemination of the current research report (*due April 2003*) a comprehensive strategy for further action should be agreed by the Ageing Population Steering Group including EEDA, EERA, ERPHO, GO and AC.

South West

- 1 There should be quality demographic projections developed by the Regional Observatory and analysis of the implications carried out by the Regional Assembly, RDA and GOSW looking at economic, social and health policy
- 2 Partnership working on ageing at the regional level should be embraced by all stakeholders
- 3 Capacity building is required within the key stakeholder bodies and regional fund-giving organisations should take a collective/collaborative view of this

South East

- 1 The findings of the survey about the employment behaviour of older people between 50 and 70 years of age should be disseminated
- 2 SEEDA's Regional Centre of the Older Workforce in South East will develop work with national relevance. This should be disseminated
- 3 An age audit of all strategies should be conducted by the Regional Assembly and it should be commissioned independently and supported by RAISE and Age Concern.
- 4 The Integrated Regional Strategy for the SE by the Assembly should look at ageing issues and GOSE should 'factor in' ageing issues into LSP development.

London

- 1 It was noted that the ageing trends in London followed a different pattern to elsewhere in England and that there were a large number of questions about ageing and London related to costs for older people, migration and immigration, patterns within minority communities and economic issues. London needed to undertake more research to understand what lies behind the figures.
- 2 This research needs to develop a baseline picture and targets for change
- 3 The Region needs to create a strategic body including all key regional partners to oversee the research, integrate it into vision and strategies and disseminate to bodies such as LSCs, LSPs and FRESA
- 4 Regional agencies such as Government Office London should engage actively with this agenda and develop an internal communications infrastructure on the issue

The national groups identified the following issues:

- 1 A clear vision on ageing and regions should be developed through the Regions for All Ages programme and disseminated through networks such as the English Regions Network, the Regional Co-ordination Unit, the RDA's network. It should be adopted by the National Council on Ageing



- 2 The programme should also ensure that known contact points are also established in each regional agency and network these contacts
- 3 Further detailed research and discussion is required on the key themes such as regeneration, volunteering, older people's economic aspirations, and benefit traps and their interrelationships to ensure that there is a 'whole-system' understanding and a reliable evidence base
- 4 Nationally work should be undertaken to ensure that within each region there is a strategic body working on ageing involving all regional agencies, but also developing strategies to engage with the voluntary and community sector and older people
- 5 Work should be done on the themes of social enterprise and social capital to develop more understanding of how older people can and do contribute economically and socially
- 6 DTI and other Government departments should develop clear statements on ageing and ensure that Government Offices and Regional Agencies are active on ageing. Treasury should adopt a clear assessment of costs and benefits of work on ageing
- 7 Work should be done to look at how other European regions are affected and responding including looking at rural and urban dimensions

Final Plenary

(Gordon Lishman OBE, Director General, Age Concern England)

Gordon Lishman began his presentation by celebrating the breadth and range of the conference and the extent of commitment and participation shown. A substantial start had been made to drawing together a number of issues and approaches that are of significance to us all and the regions in which we live.



Gordon Lishman

He argued that we are not here talking about traditional 'old people' but about a society formed and defined by profound changes in the demographic structure in which things we used to associate with old age are the norm rather than the exception. Even Beveridge in his famous report recognised that the arrangements he set out wouldn't deal with the predicted increase in longevity and the number of older people.

He posed the question: What are the implications of creating a Society for All Ages? He responded by looking at two key economic issues: the supply side and the demand side.

The supply side

This is dominated by the ageing of the working populations. Commitment was made by the European Heads of Government in Barcelona to enabling and encouraging more older people to remain in work. This could be done in a variety of ways: one strategy would be to make pension provision worse thereby forcing people to work, but this would have the effect of forcing those least able to retire to stay on without effecting those with good pensions. More appropriate strategies included investing in ways which stopped penalising those who wish to continue to work; enabling self employment; providing opportunities to counter lack of self confidence among older workers; providing more training for those who believe they have a lack of appropriate skills to find and keep a job. Employers should recognise the significant business case, with older people having lower sickness and absentee rates, better time keeping, greater commitment and longer periods working for the same employers than other employees.

The demand side

In looking at regional economies the most important element older people bring is on the demand side. Look at Cumbria which survived foot and mouth largely through the continued grey market! There is a fortune to be made for entrepreneurs who see and



grasp the opportunities. Age Concern Enterprises had been created to address a market failure largely in financial services and insurance and meet a real need amongst the older population who would otherwise not have access to these products. This could also happen in the information technology field – figures show that older people spend the longest average time using the internet but despite this IT manufacturers and stores concentrate on younger people. Universal design is important too as well as access to sporting facilities, planning, transport, all of which have implications for regional and local economies.

The European agenda on ageing includes key priorities; employment, social protection, health and anti-discrimination and inclusion. These discussions have resulted in the 2000 Framework Directive on discrimination in employment which includes age and will be in place across the EU between 2003 and 2006 and the action plan on employment. There is an opportunity to use the structural funds to address ageing issues. We have moved some way from action limited to the traditional national state and he welcomed the direct links between regional bodies and European states as a basis for continuing development.

He welcomed the Minister's comments, which drew together the various strands of her brief - equalities, the regions, regeneration and social inclusion. He also welcomed her emphasis on partnership. There are important prizes to be won if we can make connections and see the concept of a 'Society for all Ages' as being a crucial part of understanding and responding to the challenges. Age Concern is committed to this and has invested in its regional structures to ensure it can be a pro-active partner at regional level. It is delighted to be working with the English Regions Network which has had the vision to see the importance of ageing to the regions.

He posed the question, "why does any of this matter?" We all hope to be the beneficiaries of getting it right. Attlee, when asked how it felt on his 80th birthday, replied 'better than the only alternative!' Everyone needs to remember that they are all part of the same 'Society for All Ages' and all have a responsibility to contribute.

Organisations represented at the Conference

The target audience for the Regions for All Ages Conference included organisations with strategic responsibility at regional level, national organisations with an interest or responsibility in regional and sub-regional issues and organisations working with and for older people. Delegates attended from the following organisations:

Advantage West Midlands
Age Concern East Midlands
Age Concern East of England
Age Concern England
Age Concern in London
Age Concern North East
Age Concern South East
Age Concern South West
Age Concern Training
Age Concern West Midlands
Age Concern in Yorkshire
Age Matters, Ethnic Concerns
Better Government for Older People
Care and Repair England
Centre for Rural Economy, University of Newcastle upon Tyne
Centre for Urban and Rural Development Studies, University of Newcastle upon Tyne
CIRCA, University of Cambridge
Commission for Racial Equality
Countryside Agency
Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Department of Geography, University of Leeds
Department of International Studies, Nottingham Trent University
Department of Sociology, Nottingham Trent University
Department for Work and Pensions
East Midlands Regional Assembly
East of England Development Agency
English Nature
English Regions Network
Experience Works
Government Office East
Government Office East Midlands
Government Office London
Government Office North East
Government Office North West
Government Office South East



Government Office South West
Government Office West Midlands
Government Office Yorkshire and Humberside
Health Development Agency
Help the Aged
Institute of Ageing and Health, Newcastle General Hospital
London Development Agency
North East Regional Assembly
North West Regional Assembly
Northern and Yorkshire Public Health Observatory
One North East
Peter Lloyd Associates
Population Ageing Associates
PRIME
Regional Action West Midlands
Regional Assembly for Yorkshire and the Humber
Regional Co-ordination Unit, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
Regional Studies Association
South East England Development Agency
South East Regional Assembly
South West TUC
Third Age Employment Network
University of Birmingham
University of Sheffield
University of Surrey
University of Warwick
Urban Forum
West Indian Standing Conference
West Midlands Regional Assembly
West Midlands Rural Affairs Forum
Yorkshire Forward

Regions for All Ages

The Conference: Understanding ageing and harnessing the potential of older people at regional level

This conference was jointly sponsored by Age Concern and the English Regions Network. It was the culmination of the first year of a programme of activity to highlight the impact of demographic ageing on the English regions and identify and explore the policy implications. The programme is supported by a multi-stakeholder Advisory Group bringing together representatives of regional networks, leading academics from a range of disciplines and national stakeholders.