



“All Our Futures Conference”

Wednesday 3rd June 2009

Edinburgh Corn Exchange

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Introduction

On the 3 June 2009, the City of Edinburgh Council hosted a conference on behalf of the Scottish Government to provide progress information on the national strategy “*All Our Futures: Planning for a Scotland with an Ageing Population*” and to explore what national and local government can do to support older people to maintain their independence and wellbeing into older age. The conference theme, chosen in consultation with older people, was “empowering older people in having responsibility for their future”.

The conference programme also supported the priorities set out in the A City for All Ages strategy - Edinburgh’s Plan for Older People.

The conference was attended by 125 delegates from older people’s groups in Edinburgh and the Lothians and the public, voluntary and community sectors. The event was chaired by Liz O’Neill (Chairperson of the National Mental Health & Wellbeing for Older People Steering Group) and Councillor Alastair Paisley welcomed delegates to the conference on behalf of the Lord Provost.



Presentations were followed by interactive discussions where developments and research relating to different aspects of ageing were discussed. The views contained within this report are those expressed by the delegates and not necessarily those of the Scottish Government or the City of Edinburgh Council.

July 2009

Presentations



Alex Neil MSP, Scottish Minister for Housing and Communities spoke on the National Conversation, which was launched by the Scottish Government in August 2007 with the publication of the white paper “*Choosing Scotland’s Future*”. The current phase of the National Conversation aims to ensure that the people of Scotland feel well-enough informed to exercise their choice as they go into a referendum on independence. Alex Neil highlighted some of the successes for the Scottish Government with the example of Free Personal Care and also the challenges to reduce poverty and deprivation for some children and older people. He referred to the lack of influence the Scottish Government has in a number of policy areas, including that of pensions and benefits, which are held by the Westminster Government. He added that the National Conversation aims to be inclusive of all opinions on the best way forward for Scotland and that all contributions to the debate are welcome. He thanked everyone for the opportunity to speak at the conference and invited comments and questions. Further information about the National Conversation is published on the Scottish Government website. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk>



John Storey, Head of the Scottish Government Older People and Age Team presented an update on “*All Our Futures: Planning for a Scotland with an Ageing Population*”. He reminded delegates of the statistics by stating that around 846,000 people are aged 65 and over in Scotland, 788,100 (over 95%) live at home and 58,000 get home care services. 33,700 (4%) are in care homes, 3,200 (0.4%) are in long stay hospital care and 72,000 are working beyond state pension ages. He further stated that life expectancy in Scotland is increasing by roughly 2 months a year for females and at slightly faster rate for males. Healthy life expectancy has been increasing over the long term, but at a slower rate than overall life expectancy. The gap between life expectancy and health life expectancy is greater for women than for men – women spend more years in poor health. The number of people aged 65 and over is increasing and particularly the over 84s.

John highlighted the expenditure of the Scottish Government on people aged 60+ and referenced the main commitments in “*All Our Futures*” which have been delivered and asked the question – “How do we help people maintain

their independence and wellbeing into older age, in terms of housing, age friendly communities, transport, personal care, fuel and reducing poverty?"



Joyce Armstrong, Angus White, Violet Laidlaw and Betty Milton gave a personal experience of their life since retirement.

Each spoke with enthusiasm and humour as they highlighted the importance of being involved and taking opportunities for continued learning, and activity in later life. Joyce said that she retired nearly twenty years ago and since then had been committed in her church connections, visits to Africa and working with the Council to ensure the voice of older people was taken into account in policy and service development. Violet also spoke of her involvement with the Council, particularly in the areas of health and social care, and the value of regular meetings with other older people. She said that although she is not as mobile as she once was, she continues to voice her opinion whenever the opportunity arises. Angus believed that continued working, exercise and excellent role models were the key to his active, healthy lifestyle. Betty spoke of her work with the Community Council and how, as its chairperson, she was able to raise issues concerning older people. She spoke of the successful campaign against the use of underpasses in the west area of the city.

Workshop discussions and panel debate

Following the presentations, the delegates joined previously chosen discussion groups and a panel debate.

Health, wellbeing and confidence

There was discussion about keeping body and mind active, healthy ageing, nutrition and diet and ways to achieve confidence and enjoyment in later life. Delegates were surprised about growing old as they felt the same, but some were becoming more radical instead of conservative. They realised that grandchildren and great - grandchildren are growing older too. Suggested actions for local and national government to consider are in the areas of pre retirement, equity in access to transport, cost of funeral arrangements and models of early intervention. One delegate suggested there should be an improvement of and extension to current psychological services for older people.

Financial matters

Delegates looked at financial matters in retirement and for older people who have difficulty managing their affairs. Some delegates asked for clarification of eligibility for Free Personal Care across the UK, in terms of those moving from, and to, Scotland. Others suggested that the UK Government should ease access to benefits and that Council tax reductions and ending age discrimination in insurance industry are a necessity to combat poverty.

Preparing for care and support in later life

Home Care Re-ablement and Direct Payments (Self-Directed Support) were discussed. Both were used to illustrate the themes of choice, flexibility and control for service users. There was a clear view from delegates that professionals should work with older people and not for them and that re-ablement (interventions aimed at helping people acquire skills, confidence and equipment for independent living) and personalised budgets were welcomed. However, for this to have a successful implementation, national and local government must harmonise policies and provide seamless services to adults and older people to achieve equity. Delegates argued for the simplification and easy use of Direct Payments and personalised budgets while Demand Responsive Transport was thought to be a necessity to keep people at home. Above all, the existence, signposting and access to a range of services to support frail people at home would be essential.

Technology in later life

Many delegates were unaware of telecare and independence at home through the personal use of information technology. Some delegates suggested that older people are aware that telecare and telehealth are inevitable due to projected demographics. There may be fewer carers and

there will be more older people needing care as we move ahead, so interventions using technology will have to be used. It was noted too that older people do not wish to lose personal contact as a result of the use of technology. Some delegates suggested that funding for these initiatives should be secured and that companies such as Virgin and BT could develop their systems to integrate telehealth and telecare into the home.

Safety and protection

This discussion addressed self-protection against frauds, scams and bogus callers. Some delegates raised the need to acknowledge the non crime risk when families or agency interventions can cause harm and that some old people themselves create risk for a community or other people. A suggestion around balancing rights and risks and ensuring that people know about actual risks was deemed important. For example, there is more likelihood of bogus callers than assault. One delegate argued for a campaign to prevent cyclists riding on pavements and stated that pavements and streets should be “Age Friendly”.

Opportunities for volunteering, employment, self - employment and lifelong learning

There was considerable discussion about pre retirement issues and the lack of employment opportunities for older people. The close connections between employment, volunteering and lifelong learning were highlighted. The reasons that people give for working beyond retirement, other than financial, are the same as the reasons people give for volunteering in retirement. For example, doing something useful, mental stimulation and making a contribution. It was hoped that this corollary may lead to paid and unpaid work for people in retirement being given equal status. The other issue raised was that volunteering actively increases people’s employability, regardless of age. One delegate stated that the area of South Queensferry needed accessible and co-ordinated activity opportunities for older people and that the use of schools might be one way to achieve this. Suggested actions for national and local governments to consider are on promotion of pre retirement issues and equity of access to self employment, employment and lifelong learning opportunities.



Key messages

Delegates participating in the conference workshops were asked what national and local governments could do to improve the lives of older people. The key messages reflect priorities highlighted in the workshop and panel discussions and the conference evaluation responses.

- Delegates wanted the Scottish Government to improve its **listening** and to carry out more consultation, ensure that marginalised older people such as BME older people or housebound people are listened to, and enable older people to talk directly to officials and MSPs rather than using the internet or questionnaire.
- The Scottish Government is asked to **communicate** better about its achievements rather than its plans, and in a variety of formats rather than just on-line.
- Delegates requested the Scottish Government **to improve its influence at Westminster**, through better communication with MPs. The key issue was policy change to address pensioner poverty, including abolishing pension credit and creating a decent basic pension, and reviewing tax regimes, which may seriously disadvantage older people.
- **Work “with” older people** and not “for” them.
- **Older people** should “**do it**” for themselves – **get involved and take the power.**
- **Invest in older people** by funding and supporting education for older people and returning funding to older people’s volunteering programmes.
- **Promote** pre-retirement issues and equity of access to employment and self employment.
- **Continue** to challenge and change stereotypical attitudes towards older people and by older people themselves.
- **Fund and support** more comprehensive care at home packages including free access to telecare products.
- National and local government should **work with telecommunications companies** to develop and integrate telecare and telehealth into their systems to support older people to remain independently living at home.
- Improve **signposting** to local and national initiatives and activities that can support older people in managing their own health and wellbeing.
- Consider **additional funding** to support accessible community transport including Demand Responsive Transport (DRT).

- Introduce **free swimming** for older people to improve health.
- Consider ways to reduce the rising **cost of funeral arrangements**.
- Support the **abolition of age discrimination** in services and insurance products.
- Balance the **risks and rights of older people against over regulation**, which can act as a barrier to independence and quality of life.
- Improve and extend current **psychological services for older people**.
- **Harmonise policies and provide seamless services** to adults and older people to achieve equity.
- Consider the use of **schools to achieve local area co-ordinated activity opportunities** for older people.
- Consider ways to **reduce barriers in insurance and the Scottish Criminal Record checks** to helping friends, volunteering and working with young people.
- Some delegates suggested that while **Edinburgh's Plan for Older People** is gaining momentum, more people need to be aware of its existence and achievements.
- A number of delegates felt that the **quality of their own life in Edinburgh had improved** over the last ten years. A minority said their lives had got worse.
- In terms of the general quality of life for older people in Edinburgh most people who responded to this question said it was better but a minority thought it worse due to **increasing isolation of some older people, an increase in poverty for some people, loss of activity leaders in care homes, and the infrastructure of the city not being older people-friendly**.

Information fayre

Information stalls were situated in the conference area with advice on a range of topics including social care services, volunteering, information technology, library access services, health promotion, community safety and support for carers.



The conference organisers would like to thank all the various organisations for their contribution to the information fayre and also to the Lothian Schools Strathspey & Reel Society who provided the lunch time entertainment.



Suggestions for consideration and action by national and local governments

The conference theme of **empowering older people** was incorporated into all workshop discussions. Comments from the workshop and panel discussions and conference evaluation responses are amalgamated and listed below under the subject headings.

General comments

- We need to hear and see more about what is being done at the moment and less about discussion forums, plans and actions and encouraging this and that We need much more of “we have in place or we will “.
- We need more cross-party “think tanks”.
- Scottish Government needs to listen more.
- Scottish Government needs more power.
- There needs to be more profiling of good work.
- Clarify what “older people” means in terms of age.
- Encourage businesses to challenge attitudes to ageing.
- Information should be available in different formats not just on - line
- Obtain the opinions of frail older people who are using services.
- We need an older people’s parliament.
- There should be more positive campaigns on perceptions and stereotyping of older people.
- Scottish Government needs to catch up with older people – change its attitude.
- More regular positive campaigns from government on ageing.
- It seems that money is going to young people and that older people are forgotten. This is a short-sighted strategy.
- More work needed on cultural change through TV rather than policy documents and workshops.

Health and Wellbeing

- Early intervention is crucial.
- I would like to see more predictions of how the Scottish Government will manage older people with health conditions.
- Free swimming for all older people.
- Cuts to funding are having a major effect on people’s ability to keep active and get out.
- A lot of older people are falling off the radar – particularly older men.
- Funeral arrangements are becoming too expensive. Government should come up with a plan to cover this. - £1600. A lot of people don’t have this kind of money. [“You don’t pay to come into this world so why pay to leave?”]

- Stronger links between NHS and local self-help groups, voluntary organisations, etc.
- Assess and diagnose dementia much earlier.
- Equality throughout Edinburgh for accessibility to activities, etc.
- Better links and information is required on voluntary organisations engaging in health initiatives, through GPs and NHS Lothian.
- Use posters instead of leaflets.
- We need more peripatetic home support and services. For example, hairdressers etc.
- Access to free swimming for older people.
- Use 'walking models' to encourage more activities.
- Map the ageing fora in Edinburgh and pull them all together.

Financial Matters

- Increase in state pension preferred to application of means tests (savings in administration could be applied to increase overall provision).
- Need for updating/harmonisation of thresholds and allowances to reflect current circumstances.
- Better tax allowances for older people.
- Simplify the benefits system.
- Need to remove bracketing of pensions and unearned income (which is heavily taxed).
- Remove obstacles to work i.e. tax reductions.
- Use Plain English in the provision of information.
- Increase the pension so we do not need Pension Credit.
- Reducing/ending *automatic* age discrimination within insurance industry.
- Simplification/better education concerning entitlement criteria and relevant definitions (e.g. fuel poverty) – role for Scottish Government and Councils in promoting achievement of this aim.
- Consideration of additional financial support where Council Tax > 10% income.
- Reduce Council Tax.
- Clarify eligibility for Free Personal Care across the UK. For example, for those moving from, and to, Scotland.
- Provide support and assistance to complete Attendance Allowance forms.
- Attendance Allowance should be available to all senior citizens.
- The Income Support person should give information to older people.
- Better liaison should exist between Scottish Government and Westminster.

Technology in later life

- Consider allocating more funding to enable all Councils in Scotland to offer Telehealth as this service free of charge, both for capital and revenue costs.
- Inform older people that telecare and telehealth are inevitable due to projected demographics. There will be fewer carers and older people

needing care as we go into the future, so interventions using technology will have to be used.

- Make better use of the voluntary sector.
- Older people do not wish to lose personal contact as a result of the use of telecare and/or telehealth.
- Encourage large companies such as Virgin or BT to integrate this technology into the products they sell, so that everyone would have the facility to “switch on” the services when they needed them. This would remove the need for additional equipment and hence stigma.

Lifelong Learning

- Lifelong learning means “lifelong learning”.
- Encourage independence through learning.
- Some people cannot attend University of the Third Age due to a problem with transport.

Volunteering

- Higher value should be placed on volunteering.
- More advice should be available on volunteering.
- Volunteering can make a real difference to people’s lives improving employability – gaining confidence and self esteem and create social opportunities and improves mental health and well being.
- Information should exist to enable trying out a range of volunteering opportunities.
- Encourage a volunteering ethic/culture through life.
- Important to capture those who are difficult to engage are non joiners and men.
- Adequate investment and structure is required for volunteering initiatives.
- Insurance and Scottish Criminal Record checks act as barriers to helping friends and volunteering.

Employment

- Some people want to work after 65.
- Provide an incentive to businesses to integrate older people into the work place.
- Target small/medium size businesses.
- Older people have under - used potential. There is a huge opportunity to employ older people in a time of recession and this should be an integral part of an economic recovery plan.
- Work is a financial necessity for many older people.
- More advice should be available on employment.
- Need to challenge employer’s attitudes and views on older workers.
- More efforts to attract older people, how do we do this? What changes do employers need to make?
- Need to target employers.

- There should be a mind shift on attitudes towards opportunities for older people in work.
- Offer more lifestyle/retirement planning courses. Need to think earlier about retirement.
- Make links between the generations i.e. older people could provide advice to younger people starting up businesses.
- Use positive pictures of older people in terms of older people setting up new businesses.
- Employers need to be trained on how to support staff reaching retirement.
- Introduce older work buddies to support first steps of new recruits.
- Educate employers about ageism.

Pre-retirement

- The Workers Educational Association retirement classes should be accessed and operate for everyone.
- Pre-retirement training should be for everyone. Universities do run courses.
- Pre-retirement information should be available over a lengthy period.
- Better information should be available for people aged 60 -65 so they understand income maximisation and entitlements.
- We need to re-think approaches to retirement.
- Planning for retirement is a must.
- A change of culture of both employers and employee's views on retirement
- More employers should offer flexible retirement options.
- Mentoring opportunities for older people should exist.

Transport

- Do more about transport – not everyone lives on a bus route and some have difficulty getting to a bus stop.
- Support local charitable transport groups – funding keeps getting cut.
- Allocate additional funding to support Demand Responsive Transport (DRT).

Safety and protection

- Risk awareness - information should exist on how to avoid risks.
- Agency information – share information but securely; individual information needed for joint responses in some cases.
- Deal with design of streets.
- Get more older people out of their homes and engaging with the community.
- Put more money into community initiatives – grants have been cut and this is a backward move.
- Good responses first time are crucial to reduce risks.
- Personal links with communities and between practitioners are best. For example, community policing role for other practitioners too.

- Lateral responses – connect to other services if approach is to “wrong” agency, or even think of non-service based ways to support and help.
- Build up small “s” security; community activity and engagement do make people safer but use non-crime/ safety approaches (e.g. community councils, street groups) because these are non-threat related.
- Intergenerational contact crucial – not just older people helping older people but mutual involvement – NB not just young and old but working ages too, young adults in houses of multiple occupation.
- Separate housing types and lifestyles prevent “community” in the sense of understanding, respect and mutual help. Working age and young adults may be isolated too?
- Community centres and hubs are needed – use resources such as libraries.
- Non crime risk must be acknowledged – families or agency interventions can cause harm.
- Interested friends / neighbours may be mainstay of a person’s life or independence. Where confirmed by the person this non-family care needs to be recognised and involved.
- Risks from individuals can be recognised and prevented as well as more general risks.

Preparing for care and support in later life

- Recognise the potential of older people for self-help.
- Do “with” older people and not “for” them.
- Better recognition of the isolation of carers – especially minority ethnic carers. More support and education is required.
- Older people should not sell their homes to pay for care.
- Train staff in the NHS to see older people as “people” and treat them as such.
- Allocate more funding to support home care services.
- Ensure that the home care services include time for social care workers and carers to deliver a personal/individual service to clients.
- Allocate additional funding to support the voluntary sector to provide additional services, such as home shopping, domestic duties and befriending - particularly for the housebound older people.
- Provide additional support and advice on Direct Payments – to address some of the concerns about finance, employment issues and regulation.

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