

FEEDBACK FROM FIRST AGE ACTION ALLIANCE NETWORK MEETING: 2ND OCTOBER 2013 AT CAXTON HOUSE, LONDON.

On behalf of Future Years I attended this initial AAA Network meeting at the DWP offices in London. There was good representation from across the many sectors who are now “subscribers” to the AAA and plenty of opportunity to network. About 35 delegates attended.

Simon Wilkinson welcomed everyone and then he and Russell Taylor gave a brief outline of the history of the Alliance since its formation 2 years ago, its aims and its current wide range of activities across 14 themed areas. There are now over 450 members of the Alliance and the themes cover, for example, safe warm homes, attitudes to ageing, excluded groups, transport, digital inclusion and finance. For further information visit the website: www.ageactionalliance.org

Tony Watts, Chair of the South West Forum on Ageing, then spoke about the benefits and opportunities of AAA membership and the chance to influence policy development and get the voices of older people heard.

Members of the AAA were then given the opportunity to have “Three Minutes of Fame”. Eleven took up the gauntlet! A flavour below.

- **Professor Roger Mallett**, Chair of the Transport Working Group, outlined some of the current work of the group including the help being given to DfT on mobility vehicles and the draft report being progressed on barriers to access for older people.
- **Toby Williamson** spoke about the work of the Mental Health Foundation and the recent report on Baby Boomers Mental Health and Ageing Well. See www.mentalhealth.org.uk/agewell for full report.
- **Cynthia Bartley**, Director Age Inclusive Ltd, outlined the work of Newcastle University’s Campus for Ageing and Vitality.
- **Julia Burton-Jones**, Partnership and Innovation Lead, Dementia Pathfinders Community Interest Company, spoke about the support and training being given to carers of those with dementia and involving sufferers in the design of the training.
- **Karen Ferris**, Commissioning Officer, Older People’s Team, Hants CC, spoke of the work of Village Agents, volunteers working in pairs in rural areas. They work to help older people find information and services, eg transport, shopping, local activities etc.
- **Anita Pincas**, visiting Fellow at the Institute of Education, talked of the 8 million in the UK (mostly older people) still not using computers and the clear need to make the use of IT more user friendly .
- **Helen O’Shea**, Vincent de Paul Society, referred to their befriending scheme to tackle loneliness and social isolation. There are currently 10,000 volunteers spending 100,000 hours visiting older people offering practical help and support with transport, form filling, paying bills and operate food banks. To date 400,000 visits have been made to older people.

Helen Dimmock closed the formal part of the Network meeting by saying that more such meetings would be arranged outside London and already offers to host had been made by delegates from Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service and Wales.

She also said that from today's discussions and contributions there would seem to be a need for an AAA Working Group on Mental Health. Would anyone interested in joining such a Group please let her know by E mail.

John Welham
Vice-Chair Future Years
8/10/13