

Voice of Older People

Annual Report 2008/09



Dame Joan Bakewell

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“Joan is a champion in the fight against discrimination against older people and a role model for active and positive senior citizens; so I’m delighted that she’s going to contribute to the equalities agenda and be a voice for older people.”

Harriet Harman on the appointment of
Dame Joan Bakewell as Voice of Older People



The Rt Hon Harriet Harman QC MP
Minister for Women and Equality

Foreword

The Government is, and has always been, the champion of equality in public policy and in our democratic institutions. Equality is not just right in principle, it is necessary for:

- **Individuals:** everyone has the right to be treated fairly and the opportunity to fulfill their potential. To achieve this we must tackle inequality and root out discrimination;
- **The economy:** a competitive economy draws on all the talents and ability of all – it is not blinkered by prejudice or discrimination; and
- **Society:** a more equal society is more cohesive and at ease with itself.

With the number of people over 85 set to double in the next 20 years, it is essential that older people are not written off because of their age. That is why the Government's Equality Bill will ban age discrimination outside the workplace, ensuring older people are treated fairly and can play a full role in society. It is also why we asked Dame Joan Bakewell to act as an independent voice for older people.

I'd like to thank Joan for her excellent work in championing the fight against discrimination against older people.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Harriet Harman'.

The Rt Hon Harriet Harman QC MP
Minister for Women and Equality



Dame Joan Bakewell
Voice of Older People

Introduction

I had no idea what a bombshell this job would prove to be. After my initial discussions with the Government Equalities Office, I felt I knew exactly what to expect and so did they. The Government's equality agenda, which I fully support, would be rolled out and I would speak up for older people, promote their interests in the legislation and, when the occasion arose, address the issues in the media. As she left an early meeting I had with her, Harriet Harman offered wise words: "We're in uncharted waters here." And so it proved.

Within hours of the announcement being made the response began and has gone on ever since. Letters, encounters, meetings and seminars have shown me what a tremendous need older people feel to talk, to be heard, and to have their concerns dealt with in ways that answer their needs. I have received hundreds of letters and met with many people across the country. I speak up whenever I can to further the interests of older people worried about all manner of issues.

The equality agenda has remained the focus of my commitment, but I have found myself swept into arguments about care homes, housing, public loos, pension funds, ex-pat dilemmas, and end of life treatment. All these matters are relevant for the simple reason that older people are as diverse as any other group.

"But who exactly do you speak for?" I have been asked. And even told in no uncertain terms "I never asked you to speak for me!" The term 'older people' is self-defining. I believe that if you consider yourself to be 'older' then you are. It might be in your early fifties, it certainly applies to the over eighties.

But it is for people themselves to decide where they are situated on their path through life. As for the second remark, I have no qualifications for this specific job other than being in my mid-seventies. It is indeed uncharted waters and I enjoy the range of subjects that are relevant and the scope of new and important matters now arising for the old.

This is an informal report, setting out the most important issues that have reached me in my year as the Government's Voice of Older People. It also outlines my response to them, and indicates the many ways the Government is moving to improve the situation.

As agreed from the start, I undertook this position at the same time as continuing with my work as a writer and broadcaster. I have not been in the Government's employ and thus been entirely free with my activities and comments. This has left me independent in a way that reassures people of my political neutrality and personal involvement. The report exists to help assess the success of the role so far and consider how it should go forward into the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joan Bakewell." The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Dame Joan Bakewell
Voice of Older People

What Older People Are Saying

The correspondence sent to me has been crucial in formulating the objectives of the role. Without people taking the time to communicate their concerns, the issues that most needed a voice would have been more difficult to uncover.

I read all the correspondence that comes through the Government Equalities Office which includes emails sent to the Voice of Older People inbox. It is through this correspondence that I am able to understand what the older people of Britain are really concerned about. There have been consistent themes arising from the correspondence which are outlined in the table below.

Main Issues

- Domiciliary Care
- Council Tax and Local Government: closing down of public loos
- Modern Technology
- NHS: treatment of the old and end-of-life care
- Retirement Age
- Pensions – For both UK residents and expatriates
- Sheltered Housing and Care Homes

Am a healthy lady of 67 with no medical problems.
Do not understand why insurance companies can charge me extra for travel insurance.
Is this simply age discrimination.

In my opinion wardens are money well spent.

My granddad spent his last few years in a warden control place in Kent and it was comforting for us to know there was someone there keeping an eye on him and letting us know when we arrived how he had been and what her concerns were.

I WAS A VOLUNTEER IN 2 CHARITY SHOPS FOR OVER 11 YEARS. I NEVER CONSIDERED MYSELF OLD, BUT RECENTLY I WAS FIRED FOR BEING TOO OLD, BECAUSE OF THAT I SUDDENLY FELT ANCIENT, SOUNDS SILLY, BUT I CAN'T RECOVER.

Gateshead Older People's Assembly is one of Britain's largest forums for older people, with almost 2000 members, and a very loud 'Voice' in the borough. We work in close partnership with the Local Authority and other statutory organisations as well as countless other organisations and groups, both large and small.

I shall be 81 years of age on the day they inaugurate Barack Obama
I still tap-dance in the kitchen when the mood takes me, and because I can I don't usually bandy my age about - what does it matter anyway!
My philosophy has always been -
If you can do it - get on with it.

We are absolutely amazed at the number and range of community groups within which older people are involved. Many of these are intergenerational. Older people are engaged as volunteers alongside their family roles as carers of, grandchildren, spouses, neighbours and other family members. Our study celebrates their contribution to sustaining the social fabric of our society.

I am only one small voice but I would like to contribute to this cause & Raise my voice.

Age - is - mmm

I met a man from Kyrgyzstan
Who wore his years so lightly
He seemed no more than half his span.
"How come?" I begged, politely.
"The trick with age", replied the sage
"Is - have no business with it.
Try not to ask how long life lasts
But how you mean to live it."

Jean Hayes November 1995

The one real drawback has been the almost total absence of usable public toilets. From the

"Ultimately we need to get rid of this stigma that Care work is mainly for those not skilled enough to do much more, it needs to be recognised as a job that carries a lot of responsibility and therefore great care needs to be taken when employing staff and it needs to offer the right incentive for those who would make very good, very professional carers. If this was the case I would go back to full time care in an instance as like I say I loved it, ideally I would like a contract with set hours thereabouts and a guarantee of salary, however until such a time I will have to continue with care as purely a weekend hobby." Via Email

Consistent Themes and My Response

In analysing the correspondence that has been sent to me, it is clear that there are certain common issues throughout the country.

Housing

A large proportion of letters that come through to me fall under this category. There are several concerns: the widespread worry about the removal of wardens in sheltered housing; the threat of having to sell one's home to pay for nursing home fees; and wanting the independence and the means to be able to stay in one's own home.

The removal of wardens has become a particular problem across the country and I have received many distressing letters and emails detailing the concern and anxiety that this Local Government initiative is causing. The general background, in most cases, is that people decide to move from their home into sheltered accommodation to benefit from the security and comfort of having a warden live there full-time. If anything should happen to them in their own apartment the warden would be there to check on them and get help within a reasonable time frame. The security of knowing that someone else is on hand to help in scary situations is very comforting indeed, especially when so many are without friends or family close by.

Response

As this is a Local Government responsibility, I have urged all of those who have written to me about it to write to their local council and explain the personal implications that this decision will have on them.

I also, along with an organised group of protestors from around the country, handed a petition to Number 10, detailing the number of people who are against the removal or reduced hours of wardens. Prior to handing in the petition, I appeared on GMTV to talk about this problem and also spoke on London radio and news stations voicing my concern on the outcome of such a move. I was also on a Panorama programme about the subject on the 24th of August 2009. The matter is now something I believe the general public is aware of.

Health and Social Care

Currently in Britain there are more pensioners than there are children under the age of 16, and 1 in 4 babies born today will live to be a hundred. This is certainly something to be celebrated but younger generations need to consider what standards they would expect in their old age. It is important for society as a whole that these changes are conveyed to the wider public: it will be their turn one day soon.

The issue of care has presented a vast amount of correspondence with three main themes: Domiciliary Care, Care Homes and the NHS.

Domiciliary Care

This was the first main issue I decided to champion in my role as Voice of Older People. It was becoming clear to me through the amount of letters I was receiving, and through my own personal experience and research, that domiciliary care was a real concern among older people in Britain. Letter after letter was coming in, describing horrendous experiences of neglect by independent domiciliary care providers. I contributed to a major Panorama documentary investigating the matter and, for the purposes of this report, followed up with Panorama's producer Murdoch Rodgers to find out what the ramifications of the programme's findings were.

Mr Rogers said, "Following the transmission of *Britain's Homecare Scandal* on 9 April 2009, 19 of the clients of Domiciliary Care (Scotland), one of the companies under investigation, were transferred by South Lanarkshire Council to other care providers. The Council also announced that it was ending its use of "reverse e-auctions" for elderly care contracts. This issue was also investigated and condemned by the Local Government Committee at the Scottish Parliament. The film was screened for MSPs in the Scottish Parliament and also for MPs and Members of the House of Lords at Westminster. It won the Bafta Scotland award for the best current affairs film of the year on Sunday 8th November and received a Special Commendation at the Prix Europa ceremony in Berlin two weeks prior to this."

The question remains though, why are carers undervalued and under paid? With the right training and pay, there would be more carers, allowing those in the industry to have enough time to take care of their clients properly. As this will undoubtedly be a sector of employment growth in the future, it would be sensible to set up a career path for young recruits. Older people seeking to return to the workforce might be an ideal recruitment pool.

It is important to point out that this problem of care in the home, or at a care home, is not representative of all care homes and carers in the UK. The majority of professionals do an honourable job. Beyond that a great army of volunteer carers, many of them older people themselves, are doing fantastic work often without support and without their efforts being recognised. They are saving the country huge sums of money. The issue of resources is one that will grow more urgent in future. The Government is addressing this issue in their Carers Strategy where more information is provided in chapter 5.

Care Homes

I have been inundated with a great many booklets and information packs from a whole range of care homes around the country. They all feature happy, smiling faces of people attractively dressed and enjoying each others company.

This is, of course, the marketing face of these institutions and I am sure many of them strive to achieve exactly the facilities and good humour their brochures display. Many of them, no doubt do so.

What concerns me is the correspondence that tells me of cases where these standards are failing. It is clear that many people do not know what recourses they have when there are lapses, what redress they can expect and, indeed, many fear that they will be victimised if they are known to complain. There is clearly a problem of monitoring the service being provided.

NHS

Many people really value the care they receive through the NHS but I receive a steady flow of correspondence complaining of ageism. This varies from comments that a GP is not taking their complaint as seriously as they would a younger person, to neglect in hospital wards. Many of the complaints concern attitude and respect. Older people can object to the casual informality of nursing staff, and are confused by the numbers of people responsible for their needs. Some are unaware of the difference between health and social care they are getting.

Many visiting families feel that older patients do not have enough attention paid to their eating regularly and nutritionally. There are complaints about the dirtiness of wards. I have been stopped in the street and beseeched to “go and see for yourself” to a hospital near to my home. When things go wrong, there is an urgency and desperation to peoples’ complaints. In specific cases, they feel if something isn’t done it will be too late. The Department of Health are currently addressing these issues through their Green paper on the reform of the care and support system which was published in July 2009 and their current consultation of the commissioned review entitled “Achieving age equality in health and social care.” More information can be found on these initiatives in chapter 5.

Response

I have used my contacts as a journalist and broadcaster to highlight these problems. There have been an increasing number of opportunities for me to write of such matters and speak of them on television. One of the problems I have encountered is that the media industry is primarily staffed by the young (90% of the workforce is under 50 years of age) so it has sometimes been hard making the issues immediate and critical for them. But I think the media are increasingly conscious that the country has major problems to tackle and are seeking to reflect that in numerous ways. And, after all, most have ageing parents to care about. I have written articles about this serious issue in national newspapers (see table on page 19) and spoken with various Government Ministers and Home Care Directors on the matter. I spoke at a Home Care conference on the 30th September 2009 to raise awareness among its stakeholders.

In relation to care in general, I appeared on Politics Today on BBC2 to discuss the Department of Health’s Green paper on the reform of the care and support system and attended a combined Guardian and Department of Health Roundtable discussion with Phil Hope MP, Minister of State for Care Services.

I have also spoken with Professor Keri Thomas about the National Gold Standards Framework. This is an NHS programme designed to develop frameworks and training programmes to enable generic care providers to deliver a gold standard of care for all people nearing the end of life. As this is a project I believe needs to be encouraged, I will be attending their awards ceremony in early 2010 to hand out well deserved awards to those who practice this high standard of care. I have also spoken at various NHS events including the South West Social and Health Care Awards on 10th September 2009.



Speaking at Foundations Home Improvement Agency Conference

The conferences I am able to attend always bring me valuable insight into the particular arena of activity with which they are concerned: it may be the NHS, Home Improvement Agencies, or the design and production of goods to help the old. It is always informative and has made me aware of how much good work is currently being done, and with little public acknowledgement.

Within this remit I have also had meetings with Baroness Barbara Young who is the Care Quality Commissioner and was the guest speaker at their launch of Voices into Action on the 24th June 2009.

About Voices into Action

Care home residents, hospital patients and people who receive care at home will have more say in improving the quality of care services than ever before. The Commission published Voices into Action, a charter for involving people in its work as the regulatory body for health and adult social care in England. It also intends to make sure that the providers and commissioners of health and adult social care services ask for people's views and that they respond to what they say.

I believe it is an important principle that people who need to use health and social care services should be given the means to make their views known and to influence the way these vital services are delivered. This is particularly important for older people, and those who are disadvantaged for other reasons, who often go unheard in our society.

Financial

Managing one's pension and financial security can be a worrying factor when working out how to make the best of your situation. I have read and heard many older people's views on this complicated matter and understand that there are varying degrees of concern. The few consistent issues are: the level of the State Pension, Council Tax and knowing your entitlements. The situation of married women who didn't pay the full National Insurance stamp is one that calls for urgent attention. I encourage people to seek out their legitimate claims and, if issues are complex, refer them for help to their local Citizens Advice Bureaux and Age Concern/Help the Aged.

Another contentious issue is travel insurance for the over 65's. A lot of people have real problems with finding and buying a suitable policy and do not see why the premiums are more expensive.

The Government Equalities Office commissioned independent research into this issue. Based on the research findings, the Government has proposed that insurers should be legally required to use age in a way that is linked to how likely people are to claim and what the costs of those claims are likely to be, with better information on where older people can find insurance and without affecting organisations who specialise in insurance for older people. The Government is currently considering responses to its consultation.

Response

Along with writing articles in the national press on the topic I have met with the former Minister of State for Pensions and the Ageing Society, Rosie Winterton MP, as well as the current Minister, Angela Eagle MP. I have also met with Ruth Marks, Older People's Commissioner for Wales and on each occasion I have relayed the issues mentioned in the letters I have received.

It is important to keep in mind that my main objective is to raise public awareness on these matters but I also make sure that I relate these important issues to the relevant Government Departments wherever there is a collective concern.

Employment

Although there is technically a ban on age discrimination in the workplace, employers still have the power to retire their employees at 65. There is a growing voice for this default retirement age to be abolished and for older people to be more valued and considered in the workplace. With an ageing population, this can no longer be ignored.

I have received many letters and emails detailing accounts where people feel they have experienced age discrimination when applying for jobs or who feel they have been pushed out because of their age. The Government has recognised this problem so have brought forward its review of the default retirement age to 2010.

I have received a small number of letters from employers who actively employ older people in the workplace such as Pimlico Plumbers and McDonalds. Such companies recognise the huge benefits, skills and commitment of older people and their contribution was acknowledged with an award from the Employers Forum on Age, which I was pleased to present.

Unfortunately these commendable employers are in the minority. At the moment there aren't enough employers, nor a social momentum, to support the majority of older people who want to continue in work. The prospect of the pensionable age being raised will surely make this a more urgent matter to address.

Response

As I still work full time as a writer, broadcaster and public speaker at the age of 76, this is a cause I am passionate about. It has also become clear that not only are older people discriminated against in the work place but that gender appears to play a role as well. I have spoken out against this in relation to the BBC and its lack of older women presenters. I am delighted the BBC has recognised the problem and plans to appoint a woman newsreader who is over 50.

Other Campaigns

While the above issues have made up the majority of correspondence they by no means define it all. There have been several letters on the lack of public toilets in the UK and I have spoken about this delicate issue when the opportunity occurs. I also spoke out when the idea of revoking free bus passes for older people was floated, making the front page of the Daily Mail. I have met with a very active group of campaigners in Manchester, fighting for the right for free swimming for the over 60's. I am also raising the profile of Grandparents as carers and encouraging public debate on the importance of further education being available and affordable to both older men and woman.

Positive Attitudes

There are a great many positive messages telling me of events and activities that have a really productive outcome for older people. There are also many individuals who are contributing to society through organising events, volunteering, writing books or setting up websites to help others. This is greatly encouraging and I am constantly urging older people to help each other.

I recently had a perfect chance to highlight all of these wonderful things on Older People's Day, held annually on the 1st October 2009. Older People's Day was first celebrated across the UK in 2007 and is a national celebration of the contribution that older people make to society. It mirrors the UN's International Day of Older Persons, which has been celebrated on this date since 1991.

This year the interest from the media was really encouraging. I was able to do 11 radio broadcasts across the country, encouraging everyone to get involved in one way or another. There were a vast number of activities organised throughout Britain, specifically tailored to the interests and needs of older people, to celebrate this fantastic day. It was also a great opportunity for me to speak out against the stereotypes surrounding us older people – they are just not true! One in six councillors in England are over 70. The over 60s own 80% of UK wealth, with a fifth of that in liquid assets. Grandparents do almost two thirds of our childcare and an army of volunteers clock up an estimated 18 million hours a week. This day is also a great way for younger people to recognise the amazing contributions of so many older people to society. It is a cause to celebrate!

I attended the Department of Work and Pension's 'Age, Snapped' exhibition to celebrate Older People's Day. The 'Age, Snapped' exhibition was a collection of images which challenged stereotypes and showed 'old age' from a positive point of view. The exhibition showcased photographs taken by secondary school children of the inspirational older people in their lives, and images from key stakeholders that also seek to challenge stereotypes or show pioneering intergenerational projects set up to encourage neighbours of different generations to interact and form new bonds.



This year's winning photo (above) was taken by Georgia Frances Morris. Georgia said of her winning photo, "My grandfather has a great sense of fun and loves to get up to mischief. This photo really captures his playful spirit and challenges stereotypes too many people have that older people are dull or boring."

In regards to the general attitude towards my role, the amount of correspondence has been overwhelming in supporting my appointment as Voice of Older People. I am pleased when in collaboration with others – Age Concern/Help the Aged, The Mature Times – I can spread the message about what older people in Britain are achieving. It is important for older people to know that there are numerous networks offering different kinds of services and support, whether it is online, in a group or even through literature. There are entertainers, organisers and volunteers all positively promoting the image of older people, and by doing this they are opening up social networks to those who may feel alone.

I frequently advise people that it is worth contacting their local Age Concern/Help the Aged to find out how to join or become involved in local organisations (see page 31).

There are now hundreds of local older people's groups and forums which are really worth finding out about and joining as a way of raising your voices. Below are some current examples from people who have written to me about how they are positively contributing to society, which in turn helps to support our older generation.

Snapshot of positive contributions

- Cambridgeshire's Older Peoples Reference Group who organised an activity everyday in September to recognise and support Older People
- Kilburn Older Voices Exchange produced a booklet on all the available public toilets in their area
- The Really Caring 60+ Recruitment Company who found 46 jobs for people over 60 in 2008
- Christine Flood who produced an exercise DVD specifically designed for older people www.stayyoungexercisefsafely.co.uk
- Solicitors for the Elderly who celebrated their 10th birthday this year
- Edward Donahue collated a whole range of older people's opinions to form a booklet called A Right to be Heard
- Older People's Champion Network in Leicester which involves individuals working within care environments pledging to stand up for the interests of older people and working to improve their experiences within their NHS services there
- Lotte Moore who organises intergenerational activities in Hammersmith
- Best-care-home.co.uk founded by Debbie Harris is a website that provides those having to go into care with all of the positive information and reassurance they need
- The Silver Programme at The Sage Gateshead that has 700 members over 50 who enjoy a cross range of music based activities

Invitations

As the Voice of Older People, I am invited to visit a great many places all around the country. Unfortunately it is hard for me to accept many of these invitations. Nonetheless I am always interested to hear from the different organisations of their agenda, their seminars and their conclusions. I am always pleased when they stay in touch.



With the Rt Hon Harriet Harman QC MP on a visit to Age Concern in Camden

This is not to say that I haven't been able to accept some of these invitations. I have visited care homes, universities – even receiving an honorary degree from Staffordshire University for my contribution to older people. I have spoken to various organisations and met a wide range of people who have all helped in shaping the themes of what needs to be voiced.

Snapshot of VOOP attended Events

- University of London for the launch of their Crucible website concerned with wellbeing in old age
- Melrose in the Borders, organised by Social Services for Scottish Borders
- Voices into Action Launch with Baroness Young, Chair of the Care Quality Commission
- Department of Health and Guardian Ageing Society Roundtable
- NHS Confederation breakfast discussion on the Green paper on the reform of the care and support system

Events

Events have played a crucial role in my work. Many of the conferences that I have attended in my role as Voice of Older People have provided an excellent platform to share and gather information. These events have varied in topic and size. They range from speaking at the University of the Third Age, to debating the new Green paper on the reform of the care and support system with Members of Parliament.

The events I have attended have also been a good way for me to find out the best way to advise others on the most effective way to campaign for their issues. One which has proved important is The Department of Health's green paper on the reform of the care and support system. By attending a roundtable discussion on the topic I was then able to urge those who wrote to me on this important topic to submit their opinions in the consultation period.

Selection of Published Articles

- My Manifesto For Change (which included an online petition entitled Sign up to play a role in giving the elderly a better deal) – *The Times*
- Manifesto for Care Homes – *The Times*
- Libraries are a Precious Resource, Especially in Hard Times. Resist this Cultural Vandalism – *The Times*
- Lack of Overnight Care Adds to Fears of the Elderly – *The Times*
- A Voice for the Silent – *Saga March 2009*
- Its Meant to be About Sympathy, Not Money (in relation to domiciliary care) – *The Times*
- Three Cheers for a Bill of Rights for the Old, Gay, Disabled, Female and Taken-For-Granted – *The Times*
- Many Old People Would Get Better Conditions Living in a Zoo. Commentary on an article entitled Elderly left at risk by NHS bidding wars to find cheapest care – *The Times*
- NHS Bias Against Elderly People is Quite Outrageous – *Daily Express*
- Left Out of the Family Picture (article on grandparents as carers) – *The Times*
- It's Time the Law Caught up to us Over-65's (in relation to the default retirement age) – *The Times*
- Joan Bakewell Slates the BBC for Exiling Older Woman – *The Times*
- Cut Fuel Payments but Don't Touch our Free Travel! – *The Times*
- The Liverpool Care Pathway Brings the Subject of Dying into the Open – *The Times*

Government Action to Support Older People

As my role as Voice of Older People is independent I am not a Government spokesperson. I am, however, very supportive of any Government initiatives that will better the lives of older people. Here the current Government outlines their major initiatives for older people.

Age Equality

The Equality Bill

The aim of the Equality Bill is to fight discrimination in all its forms and help to make equality a reality for everyone. For older people the Bill will help ensure that they are treated fairly, have fulfilling lives and are able to play a full part in society.

The Equality Bill will make life fairer for older people by banning age discrimination outside the workplace. It is already unlawful to discriminate against older people at work and the Equality Bill will make this apply outside work.

The government is taking a common sense approach to the ban in the provision of services and public functions, to ensure that beneficial or justifiable age-based practices, products and services can continue. The Bill does not impose a blanket ban on age-based services as it is about tackling unjustifiable age discrimination where it has negative consequences.

By taking a proportionate approach to where age practices should be banned, older people will still be able to have their bus passes, priority flu vaccinations, receive discounts and concessions, as well as go on Saga holidays.

The Government Equalities Office issued a consultation document *"Equality Bill: Making it work – ending age discrimination in services and public functions"* on 29 June 2009, outlining proposals for the new legal ban on harmful age discrimination outside the workplace, which will make sure older people do not face unfair or substandard treatment when they are buying goods or using services, such as in shops, hospitals, or when accessing car and holiday insurance. The consultation concluded on 30 September 2009 and the responses are being considered.

The ban of age discrimination is a very big part of the drive to improve the way that health and social care services are delivered. The government intends that the new law should ensure that access to health and social care services are based on need, not on age. In April 2009, the then Secretary of State for Health asked Sir Ian Carruthers (Chief Executive of the South West Strategic Health Authority) and Jan Ormondroyd (Chief Executive of Bristol City Council) jointly to lead a national review of age discrimination in health and social care. The review was based in the South West region but addressed the implementation of the ban on age discrimination across England. The review looked at how health and social care organisations could ensure people receive high quality health and social care services, whatever their age. It published a report in October 2009 and the Government will be setting out its response to the review shortly and launching a consultation on this response.

The Equality Bill will also introduce a new single Equality Duty which will bring together the existing duties on race, gender and disability, and for the first time extend to cover 'age' along with gender reassignment, sexual orientation and religion or belief. The Duty will require public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people with these protected characteristics. This will mean that, when taking decisions, devising policies and delivering services, public bodies will need to think about how they are listening and responding to the needs of older people.

Improving Later Life

Building a Society for All Ages

As a country, we are currently living through enormous demographic change. This has reached a tipping point, with pensioners now outnumbering children for the first time. These days, a quarter of all children born today are expected to live to reach the age of 100, which represents a huge success for society as a whole, and presents many opportunities together with some challenges for Public Policy.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) co-ordinates many of the activities Government undertakes, and aims to ensure everybody has the opportunity to live the sort of later life that they aspire to. In practical terms, DWP provides thousands of people every year with information about the issues that they may need to consider when they become a pensioner, from looking after their money and making ends meet to keeping safe, warm and healthy. Pensions Service staff can also provide information and advice about matters like State Pension, Pension Credit, Attendance Allowance, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit and other pensioner entitlements and services. A full range of information can be found at www.direct.gov.uk/en/Pensionsandretirementplanning/index.htm and you can also call the Pensions Service on 0845 60 60 265 (textphone 0845 60 60 285) for help and advice.

The Government is introducing significant reforms in a number of sectors to improve public services and ensure that they respond to the needs of our ageing population. As well as taking the steps set out on other pages to end age discrimination and develop a fairer system for social care, recent reforms to our pension system will significantly increase the number of people – particularly women and carers – who will qualify for a full State Pension.

However, to help more people live longer, healthier and active later lives, a shift in attitude and behaviour is needed across society so that old age is no longer perceived as a time of dependency and exclusion. This is why the Government recently set out what more we can all do to help this happen – as individuals, employers and services providers across all sectors – in *Building a Society for All Ages*. This strategy sets out the challenges presented by demographic change and the steps the Government intends to take so that we can all make the most of our longer lives.

Key measures set out in *Building a Society for All Ages* include:

- Providing greater support to those who want to continue working longer, including promoting flexible opportunities like 50+ self-employment.
- Bringing forward a review of the **Default Retirement Age** – which allows employers to retire people at 65 even if they would like to go on working.
- Introducing a new **Active at 60** package and **all-in-one card** which will provide people with greater opportunities to stay active and involved in their later life for example by volunteering or having easier access to local leisure and sporting activities.
- Enabling different generations to have the opportunity and ability to keep in touch with one another through **digital inclusion projects**.
- Making it easier for people in their 40s and 50s to be better prepared for later life using an online planning tool to help them make decisions about financial, health, careers and other issues.
- Working with local areas to develop a **Good Place to Grow Old Programme** to promote the importance of ageing issues at a local level, and an **innovative service delivery fund**, to test new approaches to delivering services for older people.

DWP takes a leading role when it comes to ensuring older people's views on those issues that are important to them are heard by Ministers across Government and chairs the Cabinet Committee that coordinates and drives this agenda. Hundreds of people recently took part in discussions about how the ideas in *Building a Society for All Ages* should be implemented. In addition, the new UK Advisory Forum on Ageing gives older people a direct line to Government to comment on new policy ideas, services, legislation and what areas they feel the Government needs to address.

The Forum is co-chaired by the Minister of State for Pensions & the Ageing Society, Angela Eagle MP, and the Minister of State for Care Services, Phil Hope MP. It has a clear focus to help improve the well-being of older people and address the opportunities and challenges of an ageing society.

Health and Social Care

Green Paper on the Reform of the Care and Support System

The Government's new Green Paper, *'Shaping the Future of Care Together'* published on 14 July 2009, sets out a vision to build a National Care Service for all adults in England. A service that is fair, simpler and affordable for everyone underpinned by national rights and entitlements and personalised to individual needs. The proposals in this Green Paper are some of the most fundamental reforms ever in this area.

We are an ageing society. Life expectancy is going up and advances in medical science mean that people with a disability are living longer. This is worth celebrating but it does mean we need to radically change the way care is provided and paid for. The current system has its basis in the 1940s and there have been huge social changes in terms of what we value and what we want from public services.

People now want more independence, choice and control and we need to reflect these demands. We have suggested six key things that everyone should expect from a National Care Service:

Prevention services – Everyone will receive free support to stay as well and as independent as possible, this will include re-ablement (care and support to help people get back on their feet after leaving hospital for the first time.)

National Assessment – Wherever you live in England, you will have the right to have your care needs assessed in the same way. And you will have a right to have the same proportion of your costs paid for.

A joined-up service – All the services you need will work together smoothly, particularly when your needs are assessed. You will only need to have one assessment of your needs to access a whole range of care and support services.

Information and advice – There will be easy access to information about who to go to, what care you, or the person in need of care, can expect and how quickly the care will be in place.

Personalised care and support – Your care and support will be delivered around your individual needs. You will have much greater choice about how and where you receive support, and the possibility of controlling your own budget wherever appropriate.

Fair Funding – Everyone who qualifies for care and support from the state will get some help meeting the cost of their care and support needs. Your money will be spent wisely to fund a care and support system that is fair and sustainable.

How we could fund the National Care Service

We achieve this vision by making better use of taxpayers' money to give a lot of people all their care for free. But, the money in the system at the moment won't pay for all of everyone's care in the future.

We have looked at five ways in which care and support could be funded and we have ruled out two of these. We have ruled out 'Pay for yourself' because many people would not be able to afford to buy their care themselves, and 'Tax-funded' because it would put a large burden of paying for care on people who are working. We have therefore proposed three options for funding a National Care Service:

Partnership – In this system, everyone who qualified for care and support from the state would be entitled to have a set proportion – for example, a quarter or a third – of their basic care and support costs paid for by the state. People who were less well-off would have more care paid for – for example, two-thirds – while the least well-off people would continue to get all their care for free.

Insurance – In this system, everyone would be entitled to have a share of their care and support costs met, just as in the Partnership model. But this system would go further to help people cover the additional costs of their care and support through insurance, if they wanted to. The state could play different roles to enable this.

Comprehensive – In this system, everyone over retirement age who had the resources to do so would be required to pay into a State insurance scheme. Everyone who was able to pay would pay their contribution, and then everyone whose needs meant that they qualified for care and support would get all of their basic care and support for free when they needed it. We would also look at having a free care system for people of working age alongside this.

The consultation on this Green Paper closed on 13 November 2009. We are now considering the findings from this nationwide debate.

Further information can be found at www.careandsupport.direct.gov.uk

Carers Strategy

Carers at the heart of 21st century families and communities published in June 2008 is a ten-year cross-Government strategy. It aims to give carers increased choice and control, and empower them to have a life outside caring. Our vision is that, by 2018, all carers will be universally recognised, valued and supported as being fundamental to strong families and stable communities.

The strategy sets out short-term commitments for 2008 – 2011 and identified longer-term priorities for 2011 onwards. Below are details of some of the progress that the Government has made to date, as well as ongoing work and plans for the future that are relevant to older carers.

Health and social care

The Carers Grant is currently £240m a year. It enables local authorities to develop innovative and personalised outcomes reflecting the needs of their local carers. It includes £25m that councils can use to provide emergency cover for carers when they are suddenly unable to care. By 2011, we will have invested over £1.7bn in supporting carers.

The Carers Direct helpline and website were officially launched in June 2009. Carers Direct is an interactive ‘one-stop-shop’, enabling carers to access reliable information and advice on help and support.

Freephone 0808 802 0202 or go online at www.nhs.uk/carersdirect

The 'Caring with Confidence' programme was launched in May 2009 and is intended to empower carers and help them to manage the vital responsibilities that they assume. Through a combination of face-to-face and distance learning, the programme informs them of their rights, the services available to them and provides information and training that will benefit the whole family. Up to £4.6m a year is being made available to fund the programme. www.caringwithconfidence.net

Skills for Care and Skills for Health are being funded to develop training modules for professionals and others who meet carers as part of their work, so that they can better support them. The training will be embedded in workforce induction, Continuing Professional Development and general training programmes such as in NVQs.

The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) was commissioned to pilot a training workshop for GPs to help them better understand carers' needs. The workshop was delivered to GPs in locations including Rotherham, Bedfordshire and London. The training is based on an Action Guide for Primary Care developed by the RCGP and The Princess Royal Trust for Carers, the publication of which is funded by the Department of Health and is being distributed to every GP practice in the country.

25 sites (Primary Care Trusts and local authorities) are being established to demonstrate and evaluate good practice regarding health and wellbeing checks for carers, breaks for carers and how the NHS can better support carers. Details of selected sites can be found at: http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/SocialCare/Carers/DH_094301.

Benefits, employment, skills and training

Jobcentre Plus has recruited Care Partnership Managers for each of the 48 Jobcentre Plus Districts. They will be responsible for improving information on local carer support for staff and customers, breaking down the barriers that carers may face in returning to paid employment, and representing carers' employment interests on a variety of partnerships.

From December 2009, Jobcentre Plus plans to provide funding for replacement adult care while carers are attending training courses or interviews. It will also extend voluntary access to training opportunities to carers who do not already have access to a 'new deal' (programmes that give people on benefits the help and support they need to look for work, including training and preparing for work).

'Employers for Carers' was launched in January 2009 to ensure that employers have the support to retain employees with caring responsibilities. It promotes the business benefits of supporting carers and provides advice and support for employers on carer-friendly policy and practice. The group is chaired by BT and supported by the specialist knowledge of Carers UK. A Memorandum of Understanding with Employers for Carers has been drafted with the aim that all signatories to the Carers Strategy will be signing to confirm they will work together to support the implementation of the Carers Strategy, and to further develop and promote good practice in supporting working carers.

Standing Commission on Carers

The Department of Health established the Standing Commission on Carers in December 2007 at the request of the Prime Minister. It is an independent advisory body, providing expert advice to Ministers and the Carers Strategy Cross-Government Programme Board (chaired by the Department of Health) on progress in delivering the national Carers Strategy. The first report of the Commission is available at: http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/DH_107305.

Below is an extract from the report which is just one example of the Commission's important findings that will go a long way to supporting older carers.

"The Commission welcomes the focus in *Building a society for all ages* on the changing role of grandparents, including their role as carers for their grandchildren and as a sandwich generation caring for both children and much older relatives. A growing number of carers (in particular parents of adult children with a learning disability or long-term condition) may be 'lifetime carers', with many carers providing care and support well into their later years. Without recognition and support, multiple caring roles may have adverse effects upon carers' income, health and emotional wellbeing. The next phase of the Commission will wish to keep this in view." (page 23 of the report).

Housing

Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods

The Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) published *Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods – our strategy for housing in an ageing society* in February 2008. Within this we set out our vision for the design of homes to meet the needs of people throughout their lives. We committed to ensuring that by 2011 all new public sector housing will be built in accordance with Lifetime Homes standards. These standards include a number of simple features such as a level or gentle sloping approach to property, doors wide enough to allow wheelchair access, and sockets and

controls at convenient heights. We are now working closely with developers, architects, planners and other professionals to encourage them to adopt these standards in private sector housing.

We announced funding of £33 million for new and enhanced handyperson services from 2009 to 2011. These services provide practical support for older, disabled or vulnerable people in and around the home to help maintain independent living. The support typically consists of small building repairs, minor adaptations, general home safety, accident prevention, security checks, energy efficiency and fire safety measures. Increased funding has been allocated to the Disabled Facilities Grant which also undertakes home adaptations which allow people to live independently in their own homes for longer.

To help people make decisions about their housing options in later life, we are funding FirstStop. First Stop is a web and phone service, for older people and their carers to get independent information and advice on housing, finance, care and rights.

Sheltered Housing

The issue around wardens in sheltered housing is one for local authorities to consider, based on local assessments of need. However, CLG has convened a Ministerial-led working group which has commissioned a number of pieces of work to identify ways to make a positive difference to the lives of people living in sheltered housing, now and in the future. The working group brings together representatives of sheltered housing residents, providers and service commissioners. It is taking forward a number of projects, including developing a good practice guide of different models of sheltered housing, good practice guidance on consultation and engagement with residents, a project to develop and pilot a complaints route-map for residents, and a new national Housing for Older People award – to be held on 4 February 2009. Reports from the first three projects will be published in January 2010.

Lifetime Neighbourhoods

Government has a key role in building and maintaining communities for all ages, not only through physical design of houses and neighbourhoods but also in ensuring that people feel safe and have a sense of belonging within their community.

As part of *Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods, a strategy for housing in an ageing society*, CLG will shortly commission work which will support local authorities to make a reality of lifetime neighbourhoods. Lifetime Neighbourhoods provides a vision whereby local communities are more inclusive of people of all ages through design, and where older people are encouraged to participate in their local environment. This

includes addressing issues such as fear of crime, unsafe pavements, better local amenities such as benches and public toilets, better access to transport and local services.

Public Toilet Provision

Being able to use clean, secure, and well-equipped public toilets is something that we all need away from home. For older people – and other groups, such as families with young children, disabled people, pregnant women – it can be the difference between being house-bound and being able to take a fuller and more active part in society.

The Government recognises this and has taken action to raise awareness about the importance of public toilets. The Strategic Guide “Improving Public Access to Better Quality Toilets”, published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) in March 2008, highlights approaches that can help to improve provision. A copy of the Guide is available at:

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/publicaccesstoilets

Looking Forward

I suppose I am more aware than most that the society we live in is changing rapidly. I have come to see, to notice and to interact with the older people around me. I have seen media coverage increase and Government departments and those in opposition take an increasing interest in the old. The danger is that various national and local authorities and institutions cannot keep up with the multitude of problems thrown up by the ageing population. These problems call for expertise, investment and understanding. They will need to be continually born in mind as the country's economy, its social welfare and health programmes are shaped for the foreseeable future. It is one of the greatest challenges of our day.

I have come to realise that an important consideration for the future is the relationship between the generations. There is a danger of resentment between the younger generations who feel they have a heavy financial burden in caring for the old who feel they deserve good care. Mixed generational workplaces as well as places of leisure will help ease these tensions.

This report itself is a case in point. I have had throughout its writing the collaboration of my personal secretary Erin Gordon who has not only attended to its production, but has been an invaluable sounding board for my ideas. I owe her my thanks.

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