

Notes from:	<b>UK Advisory Forum on Ageing 12 September 2012</b>
<b>Chair:</b>	Justin Russell, Department for Work & Pensions (DWP)
<b>Members:</b>	<p>Claire Keatinge, Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland  Nancy Davies representing Andrea Nicholas-Jones, Adult Social Services Policy Division, Welsh Assembly  Barry Wilford, East Midlands Regional Forum  Ellen Lebeth, London Regional Forum  Norman Jemison, North East Regional Forum  Pam Flynn, North West Regional Forum  Ruth Rose, South East Regional Forum  Brian Warwick, South West Regional Forum  Keith Sherman, West Midlands Regional Forum  John Welham, Yorkshire &amp; Humberside Regional Forum  Agnes McGroarty, Scottish Older People's Assembly  Alan Sidaway, Scottish Older People's Assembly  Rob Blundell, Welsh Senate of Older People  Alan Hatton-Yeo, Beth Johnson Foundation (BJF)  Gilly Crosby, Centre for Policy on Ageing (CPA)  Howard Lewis, UKOPAG representing ChangeAGENTS Network UK Limited  Alan Beazley, Employers Network for Equality &amp; Inclusion (ENEI)  Matthew Hibberd, representing Cllr David Rodgers OBE, Local Government Association (LGA)  Dot Gibson, National Pensioners Convention (NPC)  Laura Bennett, SENSE  Chris Ball, The Age and Employment Network (TAEN)  Tony Watts, AGENDA</p>
<b>Observing:</b>	<p>Lucy Smith, East Midlands Regional Forum  Shelagh Marshall, Yorkshire &amp; Humber Regional Forum  Antonia Mochan, European Commission Representation in the UK  Tracey Avison, Age UK  Louise Middleton, Beth Johnson Foundation  Dr Nori Graham, Age Action Alliance</p>
<b>Officials:</b>	Elaine Squires, Department for Work & Pensions (DWP)
<b>Apologies:</b>	<p>Paul Carnie, representing Junior Ministers Jennifer McCann &amp; Jonathan Bell, Office of the First Minister &amp; Deputy First Minister (Northern Ireland)  John Storey, Older People &amp; Age Team, Equality Unit, Scottish Government  Sarah Rochira, Older People's Commissioner for Wales  Ron Douglas, East of England Regional Forum  Phyllis Preece, National Partnership Forum for Older People, Wales  Mervyn Kohler, Age UK  Dawn Warwick, Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS)  Steve McIntosh, Carers UK  Baroness Sally Greengross, Equality &amp; Human Rights Commission (EHRC)  Raj Jogia, Kensington &amp; Chelsea Forum for Older Residents  Prof. Stephen McNair, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)  Lorraine Jackson, Department of Health (DH)</p>
<b>Speakers:</b>	<p>Alan Patchett, Age UK  Emily Georghiou, Age UK  Pat Healy, National Union of Journalists (NUJ)  Hamida Ali, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)</p>

	Liz Kershaw, Radio Broadcaster
<b>Secretariat:</b>	Gwen Wolf, Department for Work & Pensions (DWP)
<b>Meeting Support:</b>	Natalie Idehen, Age UK Warren Seddon, Age UK Sam Nicklin, Age UK Helen Dimmock, Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) Simon Wilkinson, Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) Ken Cooper, Department for Work & Pensions (DWP)

### **Welcome, Introductions, Update & Overview of the Day Justin Russell DWP**

Justin introduced himself and gave the meeting a brief insight into his background. He also welcomed new representatives and observers.

Pam Flynn asked for UKAFA to express its thanks to Paul Burstow, the former Minister of State for Care Services, for his engagement with the forum.

Justin advised the meeting that the outcomes from the UKAFA review would form the basis of an agenda item at the next meeting.

### **Attitudes to Ageing – Exploring the Issues Emily Georghiou Age Action Alliance**

Emily thanked UKAFA for setting up this collaborative meeting with the Age Action Alliance on the important issue of promoting positive attitudes to ageing and explained that the central aim for the day was to generate ideas for practical action to be taken forward by UKAFA and the Age Action Alliance.

Emily outlined the three underlying questions to be explored in discussion from each session:

- What's the problem?
- What can UKAFA representatives do about it?
- What can the Age Action Alliance do to help?

Emily further advised that a media focus had been decided on for the day's discussions because of the media's dual role in reflecting and influencing public opinion. This also reflected the concerns and priorities of older people, the Age Action Alliance working group on Attitudes to Ageing and the UK Steering Group for

the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity Between Generations (EY2012).

Emily introduced the opening ice-braker; an opportunity for members to discuss their reactions to some reproduced negative newspaper headlines. A record of these discussions is attached at Annex A.

### **Change the Record Pat Healy NUJ**

Members had been provided with a copy of the current NUJ guidelines on reporting age (a copy is attached with these notes).

Pat advised that the current guidelines emerged from the Reference Group set up to monitor the Equality Act; with Age UK, Help the Aged, NUJ and the NPC working together to develop this guidance.

Pat went on to explain how journalists operate under many constraints; for example, they are always, always in a hurry. Journalists will be working to deadlines which don't give them time to check details or consider the impact of the language they use; and they will be limited to the amount of words and pictures that they can use. Also, journalism is very much a trade for younger people who, inevitably, will not have the same attitude to and experience of age as older people. To have any hope of changing things you need to understand how journalists work. And the discussions that Pat had been part of earlier in the morning showed that the current guidelines were not working.

Pat told the meeting that she is Chair of a group of 60+ journalists in the NUJ and that one of the group's main concerns is ageist attitudes in the media. A lot of older journalists are still working and they have the same issues as other people in holding on to their jobs as they age. Pat suggested that a lot more needs to be done to get older people to engage with journalists to change attitudes, and proposed that UKAFA members might ask to speak at NUJ meetings in their locality as a first step towards this.

The NUJ are looking to revise the current guidelines and are keen to engage with others to do this. One of the reasons for this revision is that the Code of Conduct for journalists has been changed; the requirement not to use a person's age unless it is relevant to the story has gone.

Subsequent discussion generated the following suggestions:

- Working with journalists to generate a set of non-discriminatory phrases/words to describe different groups of people and promote the use of these phrases/words to replace those currently in use;
- Being clear what you want to see reported and providing journalists with key information that will fit their space restrictions, i.e. give them what you want them

- to report in a format that they will only need to alter slightly, if at all;
- Building good relationships with local journalists also helps to ensure that what you want to say is what is reported.

Pat agreed that providing clear and succinct information was useful to journalists and suggested emphasising the three main points you want to make.

Members also expressed concern over recent articles in a number of national newspapers that seemed intended to promote the idea that older people are responsible for the problems facing younger people and society in general, and the impact on older people's employment prospects of this and other negative reporting.

Pat encouraged members to write to newspapers when they are angered or upset by, or concerned about newspaper articles or reporting.

### **Serving All Ages Hamida Ail BBC**

The BBC is currently chairing the Creative Diversity Network (CDN) with the aim of ensuring broadcast meets the needs of a diverse population. ITV take over the chair of the CDN in January 2013.

Hamida explained to the meeting that audience research is important to the BBC as it helps decision-makers understand their audiences; and went on to talk through key points from the Serving All Ages research report, commissioned by the BBC on behalf of the CDN.

Age wasn't the first thing that came into people's minds at the focus groups and workshops but when it was raised as an issue there was a clear response that the media had a responsibility to truly reflect society and challenge stereotypes. Older people were more concerned about the amount of coverage of their age group rather than the quality. They felt their age group received less airtime but what there was offered a much more balanced portrayal than that of younger people.

They did feel there was an undue focus on the mental and physical capacity of older people which they felt was out dated and not reflective of society as it currently is. The lack of older women on screen was raised as a significant issue within the

research and was of concern to many – not just older women. The lack of black and minority ethnic people was also a concern, and that an homogenous image of older people is presented which does not reflect the diversity of older people, including the difference between the different generations of older people, e.g. the 'young-old'.

Young people were particularly concerned, alongside all groups, with their portrayal - 40% of young people said they were unhappy with how they were portrayed,

concerned that the nature of their portrayal reinforces negative stereotypes of their age group.

The importance of accuracy of portrayal differed for audiences according to genre; for example, accuracy of portrayal in news programmes was most important but in drama only if it would make for better quality drama. That said accurate portrayal of age was thought to be more important for continuing drama, programmes with a larger audience and for public service broadcasters such as the BBC, ITV and Channel 4.

Ultimately high quality programmes are what matter to the audience and research consistently shows that one important ingredient is the ability to reflect diversity authentically.

The Serving All Ages report was provided to members in advance of the meeting and is available from: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/diversity/audiences/Report-on-the-Attitude-of-Audiences-on-Age.html>

Hamida explained that the research findings have been shared internally with programme makers. BBC Three and Radio 1 have taken a particularly keen interest in the research findings on the portrayal of younger people.

Members made a number of positive comments about the When I'm 65 series of BBC programmes run through the summer on issues related to later life, and queried how this quality of programming will be maintained as the BBC seems to be reducing the extent of its in-house productions. Hamida was pleased members had liked the When I'm 65 programmes, and explained that the Royal Charter requires that 50% of programmes must be created in-house; then 25% goes to the independent sector and the remaining 25% forms the "window of creative competition" (WoCC) for which the BBC and the independent sector then compete. These quotas guarantee a level of BBC in-house production with the opportunity to compete for more. In recent years the independent sector has been winning the lion share of the WoCC.

The issue of the absence of older women presenters on television was also raised, and Hamida agreed that the recent cases of Miriam O'Reilly and Strictly Come Dancing had highlighted this issue for the audience. Hamida further explained that there are some parts of the Equality Act that broadcasters are exempt from to protect their impartiality. However the BBC is required to meet the six public purposes set out in the Royal Charter and one of these is reflecting the diversity of society. This raises a constant challenge between mirroring society as it is versus what we might want it to be.

Members also raised two further concerns: the absence of older people's representatives on Question Time, and a recent episode of Eastenders where a cheap perfume was described as smelling of older people. Hamida explained that Question Time works hard to ensure the audience reflects the political diversity as well as demography; and suggested that any concerns about this, or any other issues should be raised by e-mail directly with the executive producers initially and, if the subsequent response does not address the concerns raised then go through the formal complaints process (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints/>). Hamida said that she

would check whether there had been any complaints logged about the particular edition of Eastenders.

### **Making Waves on the Wireless Liz Kershaw**

Liz Kershaw told members how she had become a DJ and involved with Age UK. Liz has been a DJ for 30 years; working for BT she went into the local radio station to sell them a switchboard and was offered a radio show as they wanted young “blood”. Liz has worked on Radio 1 and helped to launch Radio 5; now works Saturdays on Radio 6 and on BBC local radio.

Liz has been speaking out about older people’s issues since 1999 when she featured an item on her radio show, and agreed to become a spokesperson for Age UK. Liz talked to the meeting about her personal experience of ageism in the NHS when her Grandmother was denied treatment and treated with a lack of respect; and about the huge response she received when she did a report on this for Channel 4.

Liz highlighted that, in her view, women in broadcasting face sexism combined with ageism; male broadcasters are seen to grow wiser as they grow older, while older women broadcasters raise the question: “what is that silly old bag going on about?”. Liz is the third longest serving music presenter on BBC; of the 2 longest serving; Anne Nightingale is on one hour a week and Janice Long is on Radio 2 at night time. A picture of how women broadcasters are moved along on and sidelined as they age.

Local radio is trying to serve the over 50s; but has a limited understanding of what this audience is looking for.

Members asked what could be done to get their views across on local radio, and how they could work to promote the sort of content local people want to hear. Liz advised members to contact programme editors to complain or suggest material, and, if necessary to write to/e-mail the national radio station controller.

### **Next Steps Alan Patchett Age UK**

Alan thanked everyone for the opportunity to discuss these issues with UKAFA; and thanked Emily, and the DWP team for organising the day.

The Attitudes to Age working group will look to encourage both the NUJ and the

Creative Diversity Network to become members of the Age Action Alliance and to work with the working group to take forward the ideas from today. There was a good suggestion that the group could produce and test out a template of questions to pose to local media and then feedback the results to measure the level of any success. The next meeting of the working group is on 15<sup>th</sup> October.

Regional and local forums might want to think about how they can form links across generations; and, maybe identify champions in the media to support the message. There is clearly a lot to do but we have always known this would be a long job.

### **Final Remarks & close Justin Russell DWP**

Justin thanked all the speakers for sparking such lively discussions and all those present for participating so actively. There are lots of practical actions coming out of the discussions and a lot we can also do as individuals.

Justin also thanked to the DWP team and Emily for organising the day; and reminded members that the next meeting would be on 21<sup>st</sup> November.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 21 November 2012; and will be held at EEF Broadway House Conference Centre, Broadway House, Tothill Street, London, SW1H 9NQ. The meeting will start at 10.45, with refreshments available from 10.30.

## Annex A

### Exploring the issues – Table discussions

#### **Bed blockers “put NHS in danger of collapse”:**

- Headline and image inferred older people were putting the NHS at risk by blocking hospital beds rather than reflecting the wider reality.
- Sensationalist and over-simplified.
- Passed the blame to the “victims”, i.e. older people waiting to be discharged from hospital.
- Focused on the symptoms of the problem, and not the cause.
- Emotive language risks reinforcing negative stereotypes.
- The photograph was felt to be sexist as well as ageist; and seemed to infer that the patients were not really ill.
- Picture is from a photo library – what is it really an image of?
- Do photo libraries have enough positive photos, to support positive articles?

#### **Old slackers face the boot:**

- The language used is offensive.
- No indication of what the story is really about.
- “Slackers” could be applied to workers of all ages – use of “old” implies that only older workers don’t pull their weight.
- Fails to acknowledge workers have rights and that “slacking” is a disciplinary matter.

#### **Ageing Population “timebomb” endangering GP service:**

- Headline seems intended to be sensationalist and scare-mongering.
- Uses unnecessarily emotive language to reinforce negative attitudes and personal bias, making ageing appear to be acceptable.
- Over- simplifies a complex issue.
- Reinforces stereotypes – a majority of older people live healthy lives; and headline does not reflect the numbers of younger and middle-aged people on long-term medication.

#### **Britain faces elderly care ‘timebomb’:**

- Sensationalist, scare-mongering and reinforces stereotypes.
- Blames older people rather than successive governments which have failed to address the issue over many years.

#### **Take rat! Pensioner kills giant rodent measuring 4ft with lump of wood on his farm:**

- Person would probably identify himself as a farmer rather than a pensioner.
- Would this make the news if it was a younger person?

#### **Handbagged! Woman pensioner foils sledgehammer jewellery store raid by clobbering six thugs with her bag:**

- Broadly positive

- Witty (Refers to additional text: “The six robbers came well kited out for the raid, armed with sledgehammers and riding mopeds for a quick getaway. But there was one thing they weren’t prepared for – a woman in her 70s wielding a handbag.)
- Pensioner/reference to age used in a positive way.

**Mystery ‘Angels’ rescue drowning Gran and her dog:**

- That the rescued woman is a “Gran” is irrelevant to this story.
- Use of “Gran” implies older people are a risk to themselves and others.

**Tonbridge grandfather uses bus pass for a 450 mile adventure:**

- Positive article, but why add ‘and it didn’t cost him a penny’?
- Why are older people referred to as ‘taking’ e.g. resources, space?

**General comments not attributed to any specific headline:**

- The media can be discriminatory against both older and young people, sometimes seeming to pitch these groups against each other; preventing reasoned discussion.
- Media are looking to draw attention so present issues in a sensationalist/alarmist way, e.g. “demographic time bomb”, which can generate tension between generations.
- Ageism goes often unnoticed in the press because it happens so often.
- Library pictures used to illustrate articles are often negative.
- Editors/journalists should be held to account for negative reporting/inappropriate language.
- Advertising is also a problem in the way it portrays age.
- The active roles of older people in supporting their families, caring for their grandchildren and supporting their local community are seldom, if ever, reported.
- Issues are over-simplified, not checked for factual accuracy and ambiguous.
- Reporting is too often based on assumptions and stereotypes.

**Actions:**

- Find how to get older (and younger) people involved on, or at least engaged with, key decision making and standards bodies to feed in these issues.
- Make sure to complain, send “letters to the editor” when you find something offensive.
- Write to your MP to put pressure on.

## **Annex B**

### **Change the Record – Table discussions**

#### **What's the problem?**

- NUJ guidelines are not “enforceable”; this needs to be addressed.
- Editorial licence leads to things being misinterpreted.
- The guidelines are useful but need to be read in the context of current issues.
- Guidance needs to include advice on suitable phrases to describe different groups within the community.
- Older people should be involved in producing revised guidelines.
- Journalists, and society in general, need to be helped to understand that ageing is a natural progression for everyone and should not be used just to attract attention to the headlines.
- Revised guidance needs to be short and snappy – one page?
- Revised guidance needs to be available through a comprehensive mix of sources, e.g. facebook, twitter, etc.
- Older people should take an active role in promoting the revised guidance; by engaging with local journalists, and the media in their area.
- Some media actually promote a divisive agenda to sensationalize.

#### **What UKAFA reps can do:**

- Challenge negative stereotypes at a local level, using positive examples and real-life experience.
- Establish letter writing panels/an online campaign network across the UK to respond to unbalanced/inaccurate articles, stereotyping, etc.
- Work with the AAA to establish some sort of “media watch”.
- Respond positively to the sort of media features members want to see.
- Build relationships with local media to promote understanding of the issues/concerns, appropriate use of language, non-demeaning ways to present vulnerability, etc.
- Work with AAA members and regional/local forums to develop skills to engage effectively with local media and a tool-kit of useful materials, e.g. how to write a press release.
- Support regional and local forums to become fully representative of local communities so that they can better engage with local media to promote positive messages.
- Improve intergenerational connections within their communities and at the national/UK level to better reflect the process of ageing and help younger people understand and plan for the issues that they will face as they age.
- Use social media to “bite back”.
- Make “attitudes to age” the first agenda item for all UKAFA meetings.
- Produce a report to influence the expressions used to describe older people/ageing; gathering evidence on current attitudes followed by recommendations. List case studies of changes already achieved e.g. Leeds Teaching Hospital change to older peoples, rather than geriatric, services.

**How AAA can help:**

- Attitudes to Ageing working group can link outcomes from meeting to NUJ and National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ).
- Work with UKAFA to develop and promote a “Style Guide”/guide to non-offensive language and a briefing pack of key facts, e.g. older people’s contribution to the economy.
- Use ‘Taking active ageing beyond 2012’ paper (attached as Annex E) to support ongoing work.
- Work with NUJ to develop new “short and snappy” guidelines, and promote these with personal commitments from well known journalists, e.g. John Snow.
- Encourage private sector to use models that reflect society, e.g. age, ethnicity, size, etc., in their advertising.
- Challenge use of “elderly couple” road sign with Department of Transport.
- Establish and awards scheme to recognise positive coverage of ageing issues and highlight poor examples.
- Work with UKAFA to produce a quarterly/twice yearly report on inappropriate media coverage.

## **Annex C**

### **Serving All Ages – Table discussions**

#### **What's the problem?**

- Negative portrayal of both younger and older people can generate fear, anxiety and stress adding to people's worry of issues e.g. going out at night, their health etc.
- Limiting most coverage of a news item to "soundbites", and only offering a full story through a certain programmes, news sites, can lead to a misleading version of events.
- Presenting certain groups of people/individuals in a negative way, encourages/seems to support less favourable treatment. Changing attitudes and thinking is complex, and especially so when people don't even realise they are biased, or that their biases have a bad impact.
- Limited representation of older people on TV and discrimination among the BBC's own staff – does this impact on programming?
- The views of older people are usually presented through a spokesperson from a representative organisation, e.g. Age UK; broadcasters in radio and television should seek to build networks of informed older people, or more direct local advocates, to call upon to represent these views.
- Very much agreed that the key calibration/measure should be the quality of the individual (presenter, actor etc) – how well they do their job – rather than their age or ethnicity. The question (of news presenters) should be 'Can they convey the information they need to?' But the opportunities must be open to all.
- Negative attitudes towards ageing could be positively tackled if broadcasters had to objectively justify their decisions.

#### **What UKAFA reps can do:**

- Build relationships with local broadcasters so that they are seen as a viable source of reliable information and opinion for future programmes.
- Raise concerns directly as mentioned by Hamida, and other speakers, and encourage the wider community to do so too.
- Develop and implement a vigorous, long term, all embracing campaign to:
  - Clarify the damaging words and images.
  - Encourage people to object.
  - Raise awareness of subtle ageism.

#### **How AAA can help:**

- Attitudes to Age working group to take forward outcomes from this meeting and come back to UKAFA in, say, a year's time to report on action and progress.
- Work with UKAFA and others to create a media group of non-stereotypical older people who can more accurately represent the range of older people and their views. This group should be composed of older people who can respond constructively, who have confidence to put their views across.

- TV is very important; it opens doors and challenges stereotypes. AAA could engage with relevant organisations, e.g. Creative Diversity Network, to explore how the following could be progressed:
  - involving older people in ensuring a more balanced, positive and accurate portrayal of older people;
  - reviewing the profile of programmes to determine the proportion aimed/representing various age groups;
  - achieving a balance between 'stereotypical' views of ageing, e.g. “dodderly but dear”, “complaining old codger”, and more positive views of active, independent ageing;
  - value of a disclaimer in highlighting any subjective views portrayed in a programme;
  - opportunities for highlighting the difference between prejudices about older people and “real”, non-stereotypical older people;
  - portraying more older people, and their wisdom, experience and the positive role they play in families and community;
  - increasing the visibility of older people on mainstream programmes.
  - programme about the greatest experiment in fulfilling the need for purposeful living in retirement - and this is the 30th year of its existence - the U3A.

## Annex D

### Making Waves on the Wireless – Table discussions

#### What's the problem?

- Interviewers cutting people off when they don't like what they are saying.
- Need to see/deliver the 'whole' picture, e.g. when part of a story, or a sound-bite, is given in the wrong context it gives a distorted view.
- Older people don't do enough to promote positive images and challenge negative stereotypes; we need to be more assertive, less accepting and not be intimidated.
- Limited understanding/perception of older people's interests and preferences, e.g. music.
- Lack of programming that showcases older people's specific interests.
- Younger people, and society in general, need to see older people as a diverse mix of individuals with different interests, ideas and experience.

#### What UKAFA reps can do:

- Contact local radio and local community TV stations to build relationships and positive contact so that your organisation is "the one" local media come to for views and comments.
- Use different methods, e.g. a flashmob posted online, to generate local media interest and raise your group's profile.
- Respond to "Phone-in" programmes on local radio stations to air your views and get your group/organisation noticed.
- Support older people's forums and groups to showcase their work or highlight older people's issues, e.g. oral histories (e.g. living through the war, political change, social change etc...); or 'what I wish I'd known' so that older people can share their experiences with younger generations.
- Increase positive local media coverage of older people by:
  - regularly submitting positive stories about older people and their activities;
  - highlighting the contributions of older people to their families, community and society;
  - challenging negative stereotypes if and when they appear in the media;
  - encouraging the local authority/local business/the voluntary sector to recognise and celebrate the achievements of older people.
- Establish a UK wide letter writing panel to present a united response – this would be quite powerful.

#### How AAA can help:

- Organise a media training day for older people using AAA member's resources and experience.
- Invite Broadcasters to join the Alliance
- Develop the idea of an "Ageing Programme" so that the experiences and challenges of ageing can be presented and discussed in mainstream media.
- Develop resources ('how to' guides) to support older people's groups to engage with local radio/community TV and take an active role in broadcasting.

## Annex E

### European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generation 2012 Steering Group paper

#### Taking active ageing beyond 2012: Improving attitudes to ageing

##### Background

The UK steering group for the European Year of Active Ageing wishes to ensure that the positive aspects of the year continue beyond 2012 and that there is a lasting impact of the activities undertaken in the UK. The steering group will examine three aspects in particular: Knowledge, Policy and Attitudes. This paper sets down some ideas for action in the field of Attitudes.

##### Age in the media

###### **Broadcast:**

The research done for the Creative Diversity Network report 'Serving All Ages'<sup>1</sup> found general agreement that it was the responsibility of the media to reflect society in all its diversity, and age was part of this. While general dissatisfaction in this area was quite low, and mild, the research did find some specific issues, particularly relating to the representation of older women.

The Ofcom code includes a reference to age discrimination in its section on Harm and Offence. It could be useful to find out from Ofcom how many (if any) of their complaints relate to portrayals of ageing.

###### **Written Press:**

There is less clear research available on the impact of portrayal of and reference to ageing in the written press.

The Press Complaints Commission Editor's Code makes no reference to age in its section on discrimination.

##### Objectives

Against this background, it makes sense to examine attitudes to ageing in the media and see what can be done to identify problems and potential solutions.

The ideas proposed broadly address 3 objectives:

- Bring together all those with an interest in the issue;
- Improve awareness among media practitioners of what could constitute discriminatory languages and practices when dealing with age;
- Encourage more positive images of ageing in the media.

##### Ideas

These ideas range from the immediate and realistic to the long-term and imaginative. They are designed to provoke debate and comment. Steering group members are encouraged to provide their own.

- Bring together all those with an interest in the issue.
- Organise a meeting with relevant partners to agree a strategic approach, ensuring no double effort, or contradictions and to set out who does what.
- Monitor academic activities and research in this field as part of the Knowledge activity of the group.

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<sup>1</sup> Serving all ages by White, Morrell, Luke, Young, Bunker, 31 January 2012

- Improve awareness among media practitioners of what could constitute discriminatory languages and practices when dealing with age.
- Request data from Ofcom on complaints on media portrayal of ageing or age discrimination.
- Lobby PCC successor to include age as a ground for discrimination in the code. Work with them to set out guidelines for the treatment of age in the press. This could also extend to sensitive coverage of issues that affect older people, such as dementia.
- Encourage more positive images of ageing in the media.
- Engage more actively with the Roses awards as the sole (?) event recognising age in the UK media.
- Propose to the BBC that the Big Question programme around 1 October be dedicated to debating attitudes to ageing in the media.
- Find stories about older people that would make good television and radio storylines. Once this initial work is done, a roundtable could be organised with script editors from major soaps and dramas. This could be linked to the competition idea below.
- A theatre festival on ageing, with plays tackling a number of age-related themes.
- Hold a competition with CDN partners to discover older scriptwriting or directing talent (as they do so often for younger talent).

## **Partners**

There are a number of potential partners for this work, who will have their own experience and expertise. In addition, working with them will give added weight to anything proposed.

### ***Creative Diversity Network***

<http://www.creativediversitynetwork.org/index.php>

This body brings together the major players in broadcasting to address diversity in their media. They produced a report on “Serving All Ages” which looked at attitudes to age in broadcasting. On the whole the report was quite positive, but did highlight the problem of the under-representation of older women in television in particular.

### ***Press Complaints Commission (or its successor)***

<http://www.pcc.org.uk/>

The Press Complaints Commission (PCC) has in the past prepared guidance notes on the reporting of sensitive issues such as mental health or refugees & asylum seekers. The PCC is itself in a state of flux and likely to be reformed once the Leveson inquiry has been completed. That will be the moment to approach the successor organisation about drawing up similar guidelines on the treatment of age in the press.

### ***Ofcom***

<http://www.ofcom.org.uk/>

Ofcom is the quasi-governmental body that has responsibility for ensuring standards in broadcast media. This includes implementation of the Ofcom Code, which does include age discrimination as an issue that can cause harm and offence.

### **Age Action Alliance**

<http://ageactionalliance.org/>

The Age Action Alliance, “a network of over 200 organisations and individuals committed to improving older people’s lives”<sup>2</sup> is already working on the theme “Attitudes to Ageing”. They have already expressed an interest in working with the EY2012 Steering Group on the issues raised in this paper.

### **Independent Age**

<http://www.independentage.org/the-roses-media-awards-2012.aspx>

This charity runs annual awards called the Roses highlighting the best and worst of media portrayals of age.

### **NUJ 60+**

<http://www.nuj.org.uk/innerPagenuj.html?docid=1547>

The National Union of Journalists has a section for journalists over 60. Their experience of the sector could be invaluable in ensuring activities in this field are appropriate and have the highest possible chance of success.

Links to relevant research

<http://www.wam-research.org.uk/>

<http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/encap/research/clcr/researchareas/interpersonalcommunication/index.html>

<http://www.dmu.ac.uk/research/research-faculties-and-institutes/art-design-humanities/media-discourse/media-discourse-group.aspx>

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<sup>2</sup> From the “What we do” page of the Age Action Alliance website  
[http://ageactionalliance.org/?page\\_id=187](http://ageactionalliance.org/?page_id=187)

## Annex F

### **A Short Paper from the Greater London Forum for Older People giving the views of some older Londoners.**

The point that comes across overwhelmingly is – don't look at people as a date of birth whatever your profession – look at older people as individuals – how you yourself would like to be viewed.

The other main point is to stop blaming older people for the recession. There are never any details or reference to the contribution older people make - not just from the age of 50 – but throughout their lives. People have made contributions within their communities, economically, etc. and continue to do so but sometimes in different ways. The media should remember that unfortunately you do not stop paying tax because you are 50 – often it is implied that older people do not pay tax, which is why they are such a burden.

A final point is this perception that all baby boomers are wealthy, rich enough to do without any support. Yes there are people who are rich or comfortably off (although many have lost out on savings with no interest) but there are also many people who are not rich, who have worked all their lives but have not been in a position to benefit from the so called “good times”.

The media is one of the most powerful tools in defining attitudes, often through negative language and words affecting not only older people but all sections of the population, e.g. hoodies, elderly. A news headline: An elderly woman Mrs T aged 60, how many people over 60 would identify with that description? An elderly woman, Twiggy 60+; would Twiggy ever be described as elderly? and if not, why not?

So who do the media think are these pensioners, old, elderly, aged, senior, older people? Judging by some examples the media do not know who they are, what they read, watch, leisure, employment or what role in society they play. Perhaps not surprising as the boundaries have become blurred but the impression is that the media are not comfortable in covering this very large diverse group of people as there are few role models – what is normal? What is unusual? What is the expectation? Often interviewers and papers come across as patronising and condescending as if interviewing an alien species.

If you highlight someone – Mrs A – aged 68 and call her elderly – what is your vision of that person and by stating her age what picture are you trying to paint? What does she look like? Is she grey haired or blonde? What is she wearing? Is she working? What does she do with her time? Does it make a difference as to what part of London/the UK Mrs A lives in – particularly thinking of the increased death rate when travelling west to east across London.

Then Mr. B – aged 75 – again called elderly. Having put him in the same category as Mrs A – is he of the same generation of experience? Is he working? What does he do with his life?

And finally Mr C – aged 86 - again called elderly – is he of the same generation of experience as Mrs A and Mr B? I would have thought that there was a very wide chasm between the era of sex, drugs and rock and roll and the horrors of the world wars but the media still insist they are put in the same category to paint a picture!

Apart from categorising or labelling a person elderly/pensioners – how does putting a person's age describe a person when people in their 60's are doing everything from working full time, starting up their own business, volunteering, childcare, sailing, white water rafting, ballooning, watching day time TV, being ill, isolated or lonely. When are you going to tell Alan Sugar he is too elderly to run his business?

ITV News at 6 Production Team say giving a person's age describes them and people are really interested in a person's age (this was said by a team who were late 20's/early 30's who were unaware of any discrimination if you had the label). But giving a person's age no longer describes a person or defines the type/style of clothing, hair colour, etc.; nor does it define the type of lifestyle, including leisure activities – look at Glastonbury, go clubbing, go to restaurants and bars.

### **So what do we want?**

Recognition of the differing generations within the 50 year time span We are the only group given the same label for 50+ years. 0 - 50 is not described under one label so why 50 - 100 where there are very different generations with very different life experiences? If people have to work until they are 70, does it make sense that they have 'the elderly' label for 20 years of working life? Age is a state of mind. Age is on the outside – not necessarily on the inside. Older people are not just one 50-year lump; you cannot have one image which fits all older people just as you cannot claim one voice speaks for all older people.

Stop reporting people by age which fans the categorizing and stereotyping, i.e. putting a person's age automatically on a story; if it is not relevant to the story as it does not paint a picture or describe the person. In 2006 journalist's guidelines stated: avoid stereotyping and stories emphasizing the person's age rather than the reasons they were in the news. The NUJ's own code of conduct, clause 10, states that a person's age should only be mentioned if strictly relevant. Over the years this clause has got lost. We want clause 10 back as part of good practice. Categorising by age fans the stereotype – putting people in a box implies how they should behave – but more and more people do not conform to their box and this applies to people of every age.

Change the language used and the attitudes, look at the words used, most are not positive. A survey of 20 – 80 year olds revealed: Seniors is seen as American/authoritarian; Elderly as negative; Aged as feeble; pensioner is associated with poverty and benefits. Older appears to be the most acceptable; after all you are older the day after your birth, but overwhelmingly, people just wanted to be people and not a category. There is the perception that older = social care/burden but in fact only a small percentage of people require intensive social care.

Value older people; worryingly older appears to mean less valued. Look at the high profile presenters who have been axed, apparently because viewers like younger people! Who says so?

Self development does not stop at 50 so stop patronising when 50+ achieve - it is the norm.

Look at 50+ roles within the community; their volunteering; acting as carers. The economic contribution, particularly the billions they have saved the country through child care, as carers, and their community volunteer role.

Equality; the age strand must be treated as any other equality strand.

So let us move forward and have clause 10 reinstated and compulsory; challenge the stereotyping and language used; acknowledge that older people are important within the community, making huge contributions to the economy and society; describe people in terms of who they are not their age, we are all individuals, everyone will get older. How do journalists want to be treated when they are older? At what age do **YOU** want to be called elderly/pensioner with all the negative connotation that will bring?