

Notes from:	UK Advisory Forum on Ageing 26 November 2014
<p>Chair:</p> <p>Members:</p> <p>Observing:</p> <p>Apologies:</p>	<p>Mary Pattison, Department for Work & Pensions (DWP)</p> <p>Andrew Latto, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Nancy Davies, representing Strategy for Older People, Welsh Assembly Iwan Williams, representing Sarah Rochira, Older People’s Commissioner for Wales Barry Wilford, East Midlands Forum Ellen Lebethe, London Forum Norman Jemison, North East Forum Jean Gaston-Parry, South East Forum Jackie Allen, South West Forum Anne Bailey, West Midlands Forum John Welham, Yorkshire & Humberside Forum Phyllis Preece, National Partnership Forum for Older People, Wales Mervyn Kohler, Age UK Gilly Crosby, Centre for Policy on Ageing (CPA) Howard Lewis, representing ChangeAGents Network UK Limited Dot Gibson, National Pensioners Convention (NPC) Raj Jogia, Kensington & Chelsea Forum for Older Residents Michael Monaghan, Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament Tom Berney, Scottish Older People’s Assembly David Hill representing John Vincent, Welsh Senate of Older People Nicola Venus-Balgobin, SENSE Steve Robinson, Beth Johnson Foundation Kevan Larkin, Future North West Ruth Featherstone, representing Michael Bond.East of England Forum</p> <p>Brian Warwick, South West Seniors Network Irene Kohler, Positive Ageing in London (PAiL) Corinne Gregory, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Gerry Calder, Future East Steve Smith, Royal Voluntary Service Janet Whitehouse, University of the Third Age Patricia Conboy, British Geriatrics Association Norman Lamb MP</p> <p>Mnister of State for Care and Support Claire Keatinge, Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland Prof. Stephen McNair, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)</p>

Speakers:	<p>John Welham, Yorks and Humberside Forum Nori Graham, RedandYellowCare Bill Ions North East Forum Lynne Wealleans, Beth Johnson Foundatio Shelagh Marshall OBE, Future Years</p> <p>Rt. Hon. Steve Webb MP, Minister of State for Pensions Barry Wilford East Midlands Forum Peter Frakes, East Midlands Forum Sara Mason, Department of Health Clint Elliott National Association of Retired Police Officers (NARPO)</p>
Secretariat:	<p>Helen Dimmock, Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) Louca Hepburn, Department for Work and Pensions(DWP)</p>
Meeting Support:	<p>Russell Taylor, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) John Baker, Department for Work & Pensions (DWP)</p>

**Welcome and DWP Update
Mary Pattison, DWP**

Mary welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the agenda for the day. She informed members about the new State Pension communications campaign which was launched on 18th November, and the Private Pensions Schemes Bill currently being considered by Parliament.

Helen Dimmock updated members on the progress of the Age Action Alliance, which now has 700 members. A review of progress is being completed including the results of a membership survey.

**Update on Pensions
Rt. Hon. Steve Webb MP Minister of State for Pensions**

The Minister gave an update on a broad range of topics, beginning with communications around new State Pension. The main objective of the campaign is to convey exactly what is changing and how it will affect individuals In particular it will:

- Reassure current pensioners that nothing will change, nothing will be taken away.
- Make those who are within five years of State Pension age aware that they can

request (by telephone or online) a personalised tailored statement. There are plans to expand this service to others within ten years of their State Pension age by Spring 2015.

- Encourage people to look at their national insurance records, and see where there are gaps to fill.
- Encourage people to make the most of their savings. For example, Pensioner Bonds from National Savings and Investments will offer better interest rates than many existing savings products. The rates for a one year and a three year Bond will be announced shortly.
- For people reaching State Pension age before 6 April 2016, the State Pension top up (Class 3A voluntary lump sum contributions) will enable individuals to top up their State Pension by between £1 and £25 a week. They will provide an index linked, inheritable income for life. Rates have been set on an actuarially fair basis by the Government Actuary. They are open to all people who will be of State Pension age on 6 April 2016.

Private Pensions

The intention is to give people the freedom and information to make the right choice for themselves. Changes to legislation will allow individuals with defined contribution pension savings, greater flexibility in how and when they access their pension pot. A 'guidance guarantee' will ensure that all individuals with a defined contribution pension arrangement have the right to free and impartial guidance on how they might use their pension savings before they retire; this will be via web, on the telephone or face to face with CAB.

Rates of Pensions and benefits for next year

In line with the Government's triple lock commitment, the basic State Pension will be increased by the highest of the growth in average earnings, price increases, or 2.5 per cent. Under the terms of the triple lock, the basic State Pension will be increased by 2.5 per cent in 2015/2016.

Question and answer session

Following his session, The Minister invited questions from members, a number of whom thanked the Minister for the commitment he has shown in regularly attending UKAFA. In responding to questions, the following points were made:

- There can be no guarantee that a future Government won't change the pension system again, but this is unlikely given that the new State Pension is a clearer more transparent system with cross-party support.
- The tax system has incentives for people to spread their pot, and it is unlikely that

people who have saved all their lives will suddenly decide to spend it indiscriminately, leaving them reliant on state support.

- The face to face channel of the guidance guarantee will be delivered by the CAB, paid for by a levy on the Financial Services Industry, not the tax payer. The CAB has been chosen to deliver as they are a trusted organisation and local.
- Financial advisors will be regulated by the FCA, and work is underway with the Pensions Regulator to raise awareness and prevent pension scams.
- There is no doubt that in future people will need to work longer, but the pensions system as it stood was unsustainable; doing nothing was not an option. The percentage of national wealth spent on pensions is increasing and action is necessary to avoid an unsustainable burden for future generations.
- Although in 2016 there will be two different systems in place, existing pensioners should not be concerned that they will be treated less favourably than those under the new State Pension. The new State Pension does not mean that everyone reaching State Pension age after April 2016 will receive £148.40 instead of £113.10.
- PensionsTube has now been launched to publicise the changes, but if there is need for further or different communication materials, the Minister would welcome members' feedback.

Pensioner Poverty

- Many elderly widows will be entitled to Pension Credit, and will get help with their housing and council tax, but there is an on-going need to drive take up of Pension Credit.

Engagement with Local Authorities

- Members felt that an Older Persons' Commissioner for England would encourage Local Authorities to engage on older people issues. The Minister asked for examples of where Local Authorities were failing to engage to be brought to his attention.

Future meetings

- Members raised the possibility of holding a further meeting before the election. The Minister was unable to commit to attend given his Parliamentary commitments, but suggested members were welcome to hold a further meeting without ministerial presence.

Shelagh Marshall, OBE, Update on Concessionary Fares progress

Shelagh shared the latest draft of the questionnaire on Concessionary Fares and thanked members for their input to date.

She asked members to send her any further thoughts or queries before she completes a final draft, which Age UK and other partners have offered to distribute widely.

A number of points were raised during the discussion that followed:

- The importance of recognising that concessionary fares are key to preventing loneliness, isolation and depression.
- There should be a question in the survey about the use of taxi vouchers for situations where buses aren't available.
- Only a percentage of buses are operated by Local Authorities, the commercial sector also needs to be taken in to account.

Shelagh agreed to amend the questionnaire accordingly and asked members to forward any final amendments within two weeks.

Barry Wilford and Peter Frakes, East Midlands Forum Money Matters and Older People

Barry and Peter gave a presentation, a copy of which is attached with these notes.

The session focused on work carried out by the East Midlands Forum to research the money concerns of older people. A workshop was held in Leicester in February 2014 with 40 attendees made up of Forum partners and older people themselves, and a regional survey was conducted. The results have revealed five main concerns :

1. Care & support costs in later life.
2. High costs of utility bills, especially during the winter months.
3. How to manage when a partner dies and income is greatly reduced,
4. Savings and investments constantly decreasing due to low interest rates.
5. Where to go for sound financial advice which is independent and not connected to 'someone selling something'.

Following the presentation there was a discussion around the issues raised, including:

- The problem of eroding face to face contact in the move to online services. Barry offered to raise this point with Barclays who are Age Action Alliance members. Some members pointed out that they have sympathetic banks who have people on hand to help with financial advice and digital services.
- For many older people living in London, their issue is not money advice, but lack of money itself i.e. not having investments and pensions, and faced with a choice between heating and eating. There appears to be a lack of access to information on how to handle the small amount of money they do have.
- The reason that Winter Fuel Payment is issued to people at different times, is because eligible people are identified from a sweep of different computer systems. Whichever system you are on will determine when you receive payment.
- People need to be encouraged to apply for their entitlements. Up to a third of people are not getting the Pension Credit they are entitled to. Partly this is down to attitude, with people considering it to be charity rather than entitlement. Andrew applauded work done in the North East to encourage take up of Pension Credit and encouraged others to follow their example.

Members asked if the full list of older people's money concerns highlighted in the survey could be shared.

Sara Mason, Department of Health Dilnot Care Cap

Sara gave a presentation on the development of the care costs cap.

She began by setting out the context to the reforms. Most people are unaware that unlike the health system, care and support has never been freely provided by the state. The current system was created in 1948 when the average life expectancy was 68. Average life expectancy is now 80 and rising.

The funding reform will, for the first time, create protection from the risk of catastrophic care costs by capping the amount people have to pay towards their eligible care and support needs, and extend the point at which help is available.

Progress towards the cap will be recorded in a care account to be maintained by Local Authorities. Local authorities will ensure people are notified when they are about to reach the cap and ensure a smooth transition to Local Authority funding.

The Department of Health is Working closely with a range of stakeholders to build the approach, and will continue to do so to understand the costs and challenges. Sara provided a number of case studies that are in the presentation slides attached to these notes.

A lively discussion followed and the following points were raised:

- .Work is underway to investigate the risk to providers.
- Members raised concerns that there appeared to be a lack of open consultation on these reforms, and in particular with senior forums. In addition, in the past, where there has been consultation, members' perception is that findings from government enquiries have often not been implemented.
- There were concerns about the capacity for local authorities to continue to pay care costs when their budgets are currently being eroded and staffing reduced.
- The Department of Health are currently developing their consultation programme with ten regional events planned. Sara expressed interest in investigating other opportunities if members would like to offer suggestions.

Clint Elliott National Association of Retired Police Officers Age Platform UK

Clint gave a presentation, a copy of which is attached to these notes.

Age Platform was set up in 2001, and consists of a European Network with approximately 160 Member Organisations, that directly represent over 30 million older people.

It aims to voice and defend the interests of older people, to raise awareness of the issues that concern them, and promote areas of interest.

Co-financed by a grant from the EU and by its members, it has an ethos to involve older people, seeing them as a positive resource.

The Age Platform website helps promote issues affecting older people, and last year over 220 issues were raised on the website. It then works with EU parliament on those that are most relevant. As well as improving dialogue it aims to share best practice.

A General Assembly, supported by an Admin Council is underpinned by an executive

committee, with secretariat provided by Brussels. Task forces work on the issues of most concern to older people across the EU.

UK members meet bi- annually, and include a cross section of organisations such as the Civil Service Pensioners Alliance, the Institute of Life Long Learning, Older Women's Network and the Older People's Commissioner for Wales.

Clint asked members how Age Platform Europe can have a greater impact in Europe and the UK and then answered questions, during which the following points emerged:

Membership

- Applications for membership of Age Platform Europe are invited from organisations online via the website. There is a capped fee depending on organisational income with two levels of membership.
- Due to the many existing organisations lobbying on older people's issues, it was felt beneficial to create one overarching organisation, rather than become attached to an existing organisation.
- Clint offered to raise the issue of funding sources with AGE Platform, with a view to producing a best practice template that would help increase chances of success when competing for EU funding.
- Members commented on the lack of widespread awareness of Age Platform. In order to grow its influence, Clint pointed out that they are currently drawing up a list of successes that will help attract older people's organisations to join. He offered to circulate this in the next couple of weeks and members will investigate whether there are any prospects for joint campaigns and closer ties with European or UK MPs.
- There was discussion on how Age Platform evaluates its impact. Members drive the process, but projects additionally have democratic external oversight.

Members thanked Clint for the valuable work carried out by Age Platform Europe.

Close and Future Meetings Mary Pattison, DWP

Mary thanked all the day's speakers for their time and commitment; and commented on the wide range of issues that had been covered. Members were also reminded to complete their meeting feedback forms.

The date of the next meetings will be advised