
Review of Older People's Engagement with Government

John Elbourne – Report to Government

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Abbreviations & Acronyms

APPLGG – All Party Parliamentary Local Government Group

BGOP – Better Government for Older People

BME – Black and Minority Ethnic

CAA – Comprehensive Area Assessment

CLG – Department for Communities and Local Government

COSLA – Convention of Scottish Local Authorities

CPA – Comprehensive Performance Assessment

CSR – Comprehensive Spending Review

DH – Department of Health

DWP – Department for Work and Pensions

GO – Government Office

LA – Local Authority

LAA – Local Area Agreement

LGA – Local Government Association

LGPIH – Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

LINK – Local Involvement Networks

LSP – Local Strategic Partnership

OPAG – Older People's Advisory Group

OPQF – Older Peoples Quality Forum

PSA – Public Service Agreement

RIEPs – Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships

WAG – Welsh Assembly Government

Summary

Introduction

1. At the end of May 2008 I was invited by Mike O'Brien, Minister of State for Pensions Reform, to undertake an independent review of older people's engagement with government.
2. In agreeing to undertake the review, I saw that there was a real opportunity to inform and improve the way government at all levels engages and consults with older people. I recognised the importance of providing the means for older people to give their views, as well as a need for strong structures to capture views and ensure they are heard. A pre-requisite for this is welcoming diversity. By hearing the views of individuals and the collective voice of older people as citizens, there is a real likelihood that increased influence will bring about changes in attitudes to how society views older people and will positively shape behaviours for the future. Also, by understanding needs and aspirations, policy makers and service providers will be able to plan for and deliver policies and services that really meet the requirements of local older populations.
3. The full terms of reference for the review are set out at Annex A but in essence they have two distinct elements:
 - to review current arrangements for the engagement of older people and how these arrangements influence policy at all levels of government, and specifically to review Better Government for Older People (BGOP); and
 - to explore options for improvement and make recommendations.
4. The purpose of this review has been to examine whether there are any structural/organisational changes that can aid progress and enhance opportunities for older people to make themselves heard.

Approach

5. The approach I have taken has been to spend the bulk of my time talking to a large cross-section of organisations and individuals actively involved in this area, including a large number of representatives of older people's groups and forums.

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6. My emerging findings were presented to a number of the organisations involved in the Review and published as a slide set on the DWP website during week commencing 6th October 2008. I considered the many responses I have received from a wide range of individuals and organisations before arriving at my final conclusions and recommendations.
 7. Ideally, in a review of this nature any recommendations should be supported by quantifiable facts. I have based my recommendations on my interpretation of the views and opinions of those I spoke to and by considering the responses to my emerging findings and examining the relatively limited data that was made available. I have been impressed by the high level of support that I have received and the broadly positive nature of responses that my Review has so far generated. I am also indebted and offer my sincere thanks to all those that took part in this review. In all cases I have given interviewees an assurance that I would not be quoting names or verbatim comment in my Report. This has led to very frank and open discussions which I found extremely useful.

Principles for the Review

8. From the outset I decided that the Review should be guided by an overall set of principles which I have used as a reference point in terms of my considerations. These are:

Principle 1: To ensure that the voices of older people can influence government at a national, regional and local level in order to develop policies and services that meet their needs

Principle 2: To ensure that the voices of older people can be clearly heard

Principle 3: To ensure that a diversity of views can be heard

Principle 4: To build on what is already working

Principle 5: To ensure central government funding provides good value for money.

Context for older people's engagement

9. My research and discussions suggest that the challenges and opportunities raised by an "ageing society" are increasingly widely recognised. I considered a wide range of White Papers and other documents and initiatives which have sought to bring about improvements in the way government at all levels engages with its citizens in general, and older people in particular. In addition Government policy has been to encourage regions and localities to focus on what works well in considering how needs and aspirations can best be met.
10. Over the last 10 years Government policy has been to make regions and localities focus on what works well for their citizens. Central government wants local authorities to be accountable and responsible for effective engagement mechanisms that put local people at the heart of local policy development.
11. At a basic level public consultation on changes to policies and services is increasingly the norm, and in some cases new policies or services are now said to be co-produced by government and citizens. This is especially important for local authorities and other service providers, who are increasingly under pressure to anticipate and plan for changes in habits and demands for local services. Also at a local level there has been a growth of organisations who seek to influence local government.
12. Whilst the number and type of older people's forums have increased, I also recognise that there is no one route or quick solution to effective engagement. Often individuals prefer not to become involved in forums. I believe it is essential to recognise the rich diversity of views and to encourage individuals, groups and organisations to make themselves heard.

Engagement coverage and implementation

13. A very large number of older people are already involved and the extent of forums across the UK is impressive. Local authorities have a key role in taking the lead on understanding and reacting to the needs of local older people. Despite this most local authorities do not appear to consider that listening to the views of older people is a priority.

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14. The Audit Commission's report "Don't Stop Me Now" reinforces the view that despite significant numbers of older people being involved many of their views are not being captured or responded to. It found that only around one third of local authorities had meaningful engagement with the older community.
 15. However, where local authorities have put processes in place to listen to older people these tend to work well, with clear models of engagement supported by strong local leadership.
 16. The devolved nations have developed their own national arrangements. For example, in Wales the Welsh Assembly Government directly resource the Welsh Local Government Association to employ an Ageing Officer to help bring forums together, and have appointed a Commissioner for Older People to safeguard and promote the interests of older people. Scotland has introduced two National Forum on Ageing groups to give visible leadership at national level and to raise awareness of its older people's strategy. These forums also encourage older people to engage with others in forward thinking, planning and development of the age agenda.
 17. I found that despite impressive coverage at a local level by third sector organisations and other forums including those of Age Concern England, Help the Aged's Speaking Up for Our Age programme and the Older People's Advisory Groups (OPAGs), there are still areas where older people do not have the opportunity to make their voices heard. This patchy coverage of older people's engagement at a local level is exacerbated by there being no systematic means of capturing views at either a regional or a national level - this is a lost opportunity.
 18. From my discussions, it became clear to me that to a large extent successful engagement relies on leadership. If Elected Members, Chief Executives and Directors in local authorities want it to happen, then it often does.
 19. The Department of Communities and Local Government has recently produced a paper which sees Local Strategic Partnerships as the main vehicle for developing local visions and for tackling hard cross cutting issues. These Partnerships place local authorities in the lead and bring together other key partners such as Primary Care Trust, Police, Fire Service and others.

20. However, this is not to say that effective engagement should rely solely on the efforts of local authorities. In recent years there has been an increasing presence and influence from third sector organisations and independent groups. For example, Age Concern England, Help the Aged and Anchor Trust all work to improve the lives of older people through campaigning, providing help and advice on a wide range of issues and providing services valued by older people. In a number of areas OPAGs are the main groups obtaining the views from local older people, but the methods used to capture and feedback views have meant that central government has not always heard these views.

21. I have found that the linkages required for handling views and issues resulting from engagement with central, regional and local government are under-developed and mechanisms are needed to ensure that individual and collective views can be better captured. Additionally, it is important that forums and groups be constituted in such ways to ensure that views are accurately presented by those elected to do so.

22. This brings me to one of the specific purposes of this Review, to consider BGOP's arrangements for engagement with older people and to explore options for improvement.

Better Government for Older People

23. The formation of BGOP in 1998 was ground breaking and instrumental in spreading best practice and new local service initiatives, in particular its facilitation for the setting up of local OPAGs.

24. However, it was apparent during the course of my Review that in recent years the enthusiasm of OPAGs to provide views had not translated itself into more than a patchy and irregular influence on central and local government. From my inquiries, discussions and the comments I received I clearly established that the original partnership structure, governance, hosting arrangements, management systems and methods for capturing the views of older people have been outgrown. This view was informed by the bulk of comments I received on my emerging findings and by BGOP and OPAG themselves. The BGOP brand no longer has the support of many key players needed to bring about greater engagement of older people. Weaknesses in management planning and

performance monitoring, led me to question the value for money being provided. I therefore considered what elements of the BGOP role offer the means to effective engagement in the future.

25. Though the OPAG network is well established its value has not been fully realised and its reach remains patchy, with some local areas having no OPAG presence at all. However, it does have potential, with stronger and more clearly defined support mechanisms, to become more effective by developing clearer links straight into all tiers of government. My discussions pointed me towards the increasingly pivotal role of the regional level of government in terms of Government Offices. In addition I noted the potential complexity of linking representatives into government at different levels and a requirement therefore to assume that any structure for engagement should be straightforward if it is to be effective. Underpinning any structure should be arrangements which ensure local forums and older people's representatives see themselves as partners and work together.

26. I concluded from my discussions that significant opportunities exist to:

- Provide a clearer and more influential voice for older people at all levels of government;
- Re-invigorate the original BGOP spirit of partnership;
- Reinforce leadership at all levels of government to provide a focus for older people's issues;
- Provide more support to strengthen grassroots forums and OPAGs;
- Support coverage of older people engagement right across the UK;
- Complement the efforts of all organisations and forums to ensure a diversity of views is heard; and
- Provide improved value for money for government funding.

I also found near unanimous support for my view that there is a compelling case for significant change.

Emerging Findings

27. I published my Emerging Findings for the Review on 9th October 2008 (see Annex B) and invited comments. My starting point was the consensus that I found that the status quo was not an option. My emerging recommendations drew on the principles at paragraph 8, and included:

- A new UK Advisory Forum for Older People, supported by regional forums in every region;
- An enhanced role for Government Offices in supporting and developing engagement with older people; and
- Local Older People's groups and forums supported and built upon.

28. In putting together my emerging findings, I considered and rejected a range of variant options. In particular, BGOP presented an option proposing that it become an independent entity (probably as a Non Departmental Public Body). This may have addressed some of its current difficulties, especially in respect of hosting and governance but being mindful of my doubts about the value for money being provided by BGOP, I could not support this option. I felt that it did not appear likely to strengthen links with government and would probably require a significant increase in the current level of government funding to create a central structure that could build a truly nationwide network. I also felt that it would be unlikely to re-build partnerships, or establish authority at a national level which would be important in influencing government regionally as well as nationally.

Responses to Emerging Findings

29. I am extremely grateful for the number of responses I have received from individuals and organisations that have been involved in the Review. There was broad support for my emerging recommendations, in particular:

- The need for government clearly to recognise the value of older people coming together to influence and effect change;
- The principle that voices of older people should be heard across all levels of government;
- The need to build upon what is already working;

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- The support for a UK Advisory Forum for Older People and Regional Forums – although a number of respondents made the point that we need to ensure it does not duplicate existing groups; and
 - Widespread agreement that resources directed to Government Offices need to be used to establish, support and develop engagement opportunities for older people at local and regional level.

30. The many and varied responses I have received have also given me an opportunity to reflect and expand on some of my recommendations, namely:

- Beacon Councils are of course not the only means of promoting good practice – a number of respondents pointed to other sources of good practice which should be identified and shared;
- There is no one route to engagement: 1-2-1 engagement, outreach and other activities are equally as important as engagement through mainstream forums;
- Several respondents also suggested that the role of Government Offices would be more effective if they worked with Regional Forums to help them develop, rather than just in supporting local OPAGs; and
- The devolved nations already have well established older people's forums and engagement strategies and therefore sit outside many of my recommendations.

31. Some respondents also suggested a more level playing field in terms of both engagement arrangements and support, between OPAG and other groups. I accept that this could help support the speedy development of an effective, pluralistic engagement landscape.

32. BGOP and UK OPAG have jointly presented modifications to their initial proposal (see Annex C). They propose becoming an independent organisation by establishing a Community Interest Company, and becoming independent of grant aid from central government after a transitional period by accessing funding from a range of public and private sector sources. This may have addressed some of its current difficulties, especially in respect of hosting and governance, but I could not fully support this option.

33. My view is that if BGOP/OPAG want to pursue this option they should do so alongside my recommendations. I do not see it as presenting a viable alternative or as a higher priority for funding by government. My recommendations retain

proposals to provide financial support to OPAGs, but on a transitional basis, via Government Offices (see below).

The Way Forward and Recommendations

34. In making the following recommendations I have referred directly to the guiding principles that I set at the start of the Review (para 8, page 2) and have taken account of comments and suggestions made in response to my Emerging Findings.

Recommendation 1 - Establish a UK Advisory Forum for Older People chaired or co-chaired by the lead government Minister for Older People supported by regional advisory forums

Recommendation 2 – Secretariat services for the UK Advisory Forum be provided by government officials.

- My proposal would raise the profile of older people's issues by providing leadership at the highest level with the structure and means to capture views in an organised way.
- I envisage the UK Advisory Forum acting as a sounding board for Ministers and to provide advice on older people's issues; working with Ministers to advise on consultation and engagement with older people; to set up and govern sub-group activity for one-off tasks. A core task for the Forum could be to advise on the development and implementation of Government's overall strategy for an ageing society.
- I propose the secretariat would as part of its duties recommend a named contact point for older people's issues in each Government Department. These contacts would flag policy issues and development to the Forum. Having such a named contact point would set an example for local authorities. The secretariat could also support UK OPAG on a transitional basis.

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- I envisage the Regional Advisory Forums would draw their members from local older people's forums and groups.
 - I propose membership of the UK Advisory Forum should include:
 - Ministers from key Government Departments (DWP, DH, CLG);
 - Representatives from older people's groups;
 - Age sector and related organisations;
 - Service delivery organisations;
 - Devolved administrations; and
 - Local Government Association and Government Offices.
 - I propose that initially the UK Advisory Forum meets quarterly.
 - I propose periodic attendance by Regional Ministers at the Regional Advisory Forums, at least once a year, to provide visible leadership at a regional level and discuss priorities for the region.
 - I propose the Regional Ministers receive a quarterly report from the Regional Advisory Forum.
 - I envisage the Regional Advisory Forums supporting the development work of the Regional Assemblies in developing their regional strategies, and from 2010 complementing the enhanced role of Regional Development Agencies.
 - I anticipate there will be start up costs in setting up these arrangements and associated costs in terms of day to day running.
 - I envisage the secretariat function requiring resourcing with up to two government officials.

Recommendation 3 - Enhance the role of Government Offices in supporting and developing engagement with older people, supported by the UK Advisory Forum secretariat

- My proposal would redirect the majority of DWP's funding, which is currently provided to BGOP, to Government Offices to help build on the increasing role of regional government, and specifically to focus on supporting and developing engagement with older people. In my view, this is likely to provide better value for

money by strengthening links between older people's forums and government. Funding should be sufficient to provide a named resource in each GO, which I regard as essential. This resource should be specifically allocated to engagement work to avoid any perceived conflict of interest with GOs' role in relation to local government performance.

- I envisage this would provide the prospect of better coverage across the UK by providing direct access to the views of older people, putting older people's views at the heart of government policy.
- I envisage GOs working with Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships on the development of older people's forums.
- I propose GOs provide support to existing forums. Initially this should be primarily to OPAGs. This should move to a more inclusive approach over a period of two years after which a level playing field would operate.
- I envisage Regional Forums, supported by GOs, helping to organise local and regional events, advertising and publicity to capture the views of older people.
- I propose Regional Forums, supported by GOs, develop Regional Communications Strategies which set out methodologies for older people's engagement and which recognise diversity.
- I propose GOs work with Regional Ministers on wider older people engagement.
- I propose GOs and Regional Forums develop an 18 month programme to work with successful Beacon Councils to help spread good practice. This might also draw on wider examples of good practice.
- I propose the UK Advisory Forum secretariat support the start up and day to day processes required by GOs in carrying out this function.

Recommendation 4 – To address relevant findings from the Audit Commission's Report "Don't Stop Me Now", by Regional Forums supporting their respective local authorities to develop effective engagement strategies, to ensure a true diversity of older people's voices are heard.

My proposal would encourage local authorities to capture views which are representative of the communities they serve to ensure that small minority groups get the opportunity to influence government.

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- I envisage that regional engagement strategies would identify and embrace different approaches to ensure the views of all older people are heard, i.e. including Black and Minority Ethnic elders, Faith Groups, older Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender groups.
 - I envisage the local and regional advisory forums using the engagement strategies to ensure a true diversity of older people's voices.
 - I envisage that regional engagement strategies would support the introduction of named Older People's Champions in each local authority area – at both officer and council member levels.
 - I would expect to see clear plans for how regions will engage with Beacon Councils who have successful older people engagement strategies

Recommendation 5 - Older people's forums around the UK, including OPAGs, should be supported and built upon

- My proposal presents an opportunity to rebuild and, if necessary, re-configure partnerships with new roles in a new structure, encouraged by the GOs. It is an opportunity for all organisations that purport to work for older people to come together to challenge and influence government at all levels.
- I propose these forums should be provided, in England, with increased support via GOs. (Devolved nations have already developed their own national arrangements).
- I envisage that GOs would bring together older people's groups of different types and facilitate other ways of older people having a voice.
- I envisage that local authority and partner organisations would be actively encouraged by GOs to seek views and feedback from older people through the use of OPAGs and other older people forums.
- I envisage an approach where local government appoint Older People's Champions and provide effective training and support based on good practice guidance.

Recommendation 6 – BGOP is funded by DWP at current levels until the end of March 2009.

Recommendation 7 – The main funding for my proposals should come from DWP’s current funding for older people’s engagement.

- My proposals will ensure that central government funding focuses on areas which directly encourage and support engagement.
- I envisage the proposed new arrangements carrying forward government’s engagement with older people, into a new and even more effective phase.
- I believe it would provide for a significant presence in regions, and support for local groups.
- I recognise that extra funding may be required to fund the new UK Advisory Forum on Ageing.

Other related developments

35. I believe that my proposals are consistent with developing central government policy and reform programmes, in particular with the Empowerment agenda being led by the Department for Communities and Local Government, and that they complement a range of developments from the Department of Health, notably the LINks programme. I also think there will be significant opportunities for new structures to engage with the “new charity” being established by Help the Aged and Age Concern.

36. I have also tried to consider how a new independent BGOP might fit in. BGOP and UKOPAG’s modified proposal requires a significant amount of development to establish if it can be considered a viable option. Details are needed of how funding might be secured, how effective management would be put in place and how the organisation could become cost effective. Given the recent history of BGOP and my concerns outlined in this report, it is still unclear to what extent the new organisation would be able to provide a strong and effective contribution to improving government for older people and re-build partnerships. BGOP have offered to provide further details.

37. I concluded that without further significant development of the modified BGOP proposal it is not possible for me to offer a firm view on its merits, though I am doubtful of its likely success.

Concluding remarks

38. In my view the new arrangements should be put in place as soon as practicable, and by April 2009 wherever possible.

John Elbourne
November 2008

Chapter 1: Introduction; Approach; Principles; Context for older people's engagement

Introduction

1.1 At the end of May 2008 I was invited by Mike O'Brien Minister of State for Pensions to undertake an independent review of Older Peoples Engagement with Government. The objective was to complete the Review within 6 months. The full terms of reference for this Review are set out in Annex A but in essence they have two distinct elements:

- To review current arrangements for the engagement of older people and how these arrangements influence policy at all levels of government, but specifically to review Better Government for Older People (BGOP); and
- To explore options for improvement and make recommendations

1.2 It is not the purpose of this Review to examine the various models and forms of involvement for older people. This ground has been extensively examined in recent years by academics, professionals and charities with considerable experience in this field. The purpose of this Review has been to examine whether there are any structural or organisational changes that can aid progress and enhance opportunities for older people to make themselves heard.

Approach

1.3 The approach I took from the outset of this Review has been to spend the bulk of my time talking to a large cross-section of organizations and individuals actively involved in this area, including a large number of representatives of older people's groups and forums. As a place to start I began by talking to current and former partners of BGOP and their partnership network, the Older People's Advisory Group (OPAG), and from there took their advice on whom I should also seek to speak to. Details of those organisations that contributed to the Review can be found at Annex D. In all cases I have given the interviewees an assurance that I would not be quoting names or verbatim comment in my Report. This has led to very frank and open discussions which I found extremely useful.

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- 1.4 I also spent time with a large cross-section of representatives from older people's forums who represent a vast source of knowledge and experience. They want to be "heard" but they also want feed-back and they want to feel they are making a difference. They are very cynical about a "tick-box" approach to engagement.
 - 1.5 In addition, I have also examined a number of relevant discussion papers, reports, strategy documents, White Papers and other material. Details of these can be found at Annex E.
 - 1.6 I presented my emerging findings and recommendations to former and current partners of BGOP, and their hosts, on 6-8 October 2008 and asked DWP to publish the slide pack for these on their website on 9 October 2008, so that others with an interest could also comment. I am extremely grateful to the organisations and individuals who took the time to respond. I have taken many of the comments on-board and used these to adapt and expand my early findings and recommendations.
 - 1.7 Any errors and omissions in this Report are entirely my responsibility. I am indebted to staff at DWP for their administrative support. But I am especially grateful for the time and input freely given by a large number of people across the country; without their input this Review would not have been possible.

Principles for the Review

- 1.8 From the outset I decided that the Review should be guided by an overall set of principles which I have used as a reference point in terms of my considerations. Those I spoke to confirmed I had appropriately identified the principles. These are:

Principle 1: *To ensure that the voice of older people can influence government at a national, regional and local level in order to provide services that meet their needs.*

This is to ensure that engagement is not just about listening but also about close working together and taking action in response to views and feedback. It is also to recognise that there are differences between non-lobbying groups and those with other alignments or political affiliation

Principle 2: *To ensure that the voices of older people can be heard*

Older people should have access to effective engagement with all levels of government all around the country, and should be able to share their experiences and draw out common lessons

Principle 3: *To ensure that a diversity of views can be heard*

Different approaches should be embraced to ensure the diverse views of all older people are heard, including Black and Minority Ethnic Community and Faith Groups, for example

Principle 4: *To build on what is already working*

To ensure the good work in, for example, third sector, older people's forums and groups and Forums on Ageing in some of the Government Office regions is not lost or ignored

Principle 5: *To ensure central government funding provides effective value for money*

To ensure the focus for funding is on areas which directly encourage and support engagement and recognises the changes in the relationships between the different tiers of government and in particular the evolving role of the Government Regions

Context for older people's engagement

1.9 After establishing my guiding principles for the Review I considered the context for older people's engagement in terms of the current environment that it is set in and the major influences on that environment.

1.10 At national level there are already a number of consultation documents on engagement being developed by Government Departments, e.g. the Ministry of Justice published a discussion paper in July 2008 'A national framework for greater citizen engagement', plus other planned activities, including the DWP Opportunity Age strategy refresh.

1.11 It seems to me that over the last 10 years Government policy has been to make regions and localities focus on what works well for their citizens. Central government wants local authorities to be accountable and responsible for effective engagement mechanisms that put local people at the heart of local policy development.

Central and Local Government

1.12 I have already mentioned that there are numerous consultation documents and other publications on citizen engagement that have emerged from government departments. Over the following paragraphs I have attempted to reference some of the major ones. The list is by no means exhaustive but does, I think, demonstrate the shift in focus from central government control to local authorities being responsible for tackling local issues.

1.13 Over the past five years the relationship between local and national government has been changing. For example, the Local Government White Paper Strong and Prosperous Communities outlined the opportunity to rebalance the relationship between central and local government and their partners and with citizens. Its intention requires new ways of working for everyone, including the third sector, in order to strengthen partnership working.

1.14 The Local Government White Paper placed great importance on the role of the third sector, and it was the basis upon which the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (LGPIH) was developed. The Department of Communities and Local Government also produced a paper A framework for effective third sector participation in Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) which sees LSPs as the main vehicle for developing the local vision (the Sustainable Community Strategy) and for tackling hard, crosscutting issues. I see LSP's as being integral in progressing this agenda.

1.15 The framework states that “where an area has invested in more effective and inclusive third sector infrastructure and participation mechanisms, there has been deeper and wider involvement for the sector”. The benefits of a strong and well represented LSP include:

- Local groups should find it easier to have their voices heard;
- Local groups are able to influence services on behalf of their communities;
- Greater capacity and capability;
- Access to wider resources and knowledge;
- Acknowledgement, recognition and appreciation of the third sector and its contribution to wider civil society;
- Being better placed to make the case for support for community-based activities;

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- Being at the heart of decisions that matter to local people;
 - Joint financing so that the sector can take part fully in participatory activities; and
 - Stronger relationships and enhanced collaboration across the sector.

1.16 In April 2005, the Government set out its strategy for older people and the ageing society in Opportunity Age – meeting the challenges of ageing in the 21st century. The strategy set out how all parts of Government, central and local, are organising themselves more effectively to deliver a wide range of initiatives.

1.17 The Government is now refreshing its Opportunity Age strategy and will revisit the opportunities and challenges presented by an ageing society. An extensive stakeholder consultation is planned for Autumn 2008 and the refreshed strategy is planned to be published in Spring 2009.

1.18 Another initiative designed to engage citizens at a local level in the design of the services they receive is the Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) initiative that began in April 2008. The aim of LINKs is to give citizens a stronger voice in how their health and social care services are delivered. Run by local individuals and groups and independently supported - the role of LINKs is to find out what people want, monitor local services and to use their powers to hold services to account. Local authorities have been given £84 million in funding to support LINK activities between 2008 – 2011, and each authority is expected to contract an organisation (known as a host) to set up and then run a LINK. These hosts are expected to be in place in every area by the end of 2008. It is up to each community, with the support of a host, to decide how they want their LINK to be run and what issues they want it to focus on.

1.19 Centrally, the Government's 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) includes, for the first time, a Public Service Agreement (PSA) aimed at ensuring that the specific needs of the older population are given due priority – PSA 17 "Tackle poverty and promote greater independence and wellbeing in later life". The PSA recognises local authorities and their partners play a vital role in promoting greater independence and wellbeing in later life. They are increasingly seeking to address the specific challenges for their local populations and to empower older people to seize opportunities.

1.20 PSA 17 and its supporting indicators provide a new focus for a joined-up local response. They seek to provide a framework for:

- Understanding needs and engaging with older people;
- Developing corporate level strategies;
- Planning specific service improvements to deliver better outcomes; and
- Joining up service delivery.

1.21 Addressing this requires new ways of working from Government. The delivery of PSA 17 and related PSAs will be reliant on different parts of central government, local government, delivery organisations and other stakeholders working effectively.

1.22 There is also the new national indicator set for local authorities and local authority partnerships. The new indicators are intended to strengthen the incentives for closer partnership working to deliver joined-up outcomes because they will apply (where relevant) to other local partners - such as Primary Care Trusts and the Police.

1.23 The New Performance Framework is focused on improving outcomes for local people – rather than on processes and inputs. Everywhere in England currently has a Local Area Agreement (LAA). During 2008 this has become a much more powerful framework for devolution. Pooled funding, for example, is enabling delivery partners to work together towards shared outcomes for their citizens. Within the LAA the new performance system will aim to drive improvement and effective partnership working. The intention is that while burdens from central government may be reduced, direct accountability to communities will be increased.

1.24 LAAs set out the priorities for a local area agreed between central government and local partners at the local level. LAAs are about what sort of place people want to live in. The ideas behind them are to:

- Recognise that 'one size does not fit all' and local services should reflect what local people want;
- Give more flexibility to local authorities and other public sector organisations in the way they deliver services;

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- Make local authorities and other public services more accountable to local people;
 - Reduce red-tape and improve value for money; and
 - Enable local people to get more involved in decisions about local services.

1.25 There are 198 indicators flowing from cross-cutting PSAs and Departmental Strategic Objectives against which all local authorities performance will be measured. Local partnerships can choose up to 35 of these to include as local priorities in their LAA. The idea is to create shared endeavour between central and local Government and local delivery partners. To achieve these will involve empowered and engaged local people and effective partnerships with local organisations from all sectors.

1.26 The current Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) measures local government performance and covers both organisational capacity and the whole range of council's services. From 1 April 2009, CPAs and most rolling programmes of inspection will be replaced by a new performance assessment framework – Comprehensive Area Assessments (CAA). The Audit Commission is working with six other local service inspectorates to develop and implement a methodology to deliver CAA. Key aspects of CAA are:

- It will build on CPA;
- The needs and aspirations of local people being at the heart of CAA;
- A stronger focus on experiences and view of local citizens, particularly the vulnerable;
- The delivery of better outcomes for each local area by local authorities working alone or in partnership, rather than the performance of individual institutions; and
- Rationalisation of current approaches to reduce the potential for overlap and duplication.

1.27 The first CAA reports are expected to be published around November 2009 and will include, amongst other things, an area assessment looking at how well local public services are delivering better results for local people on local priorities such as health, economic prospects and community safety and how they are to improve in the future.

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- 1.28 In December 2007 HM Government and the Local Government Association (LGA) published a Central-Local Concordat which established a framework of principles for how central and local government will work together to serve the public. The Government is pursuing a programme of constitutional reform and will work with the LGA to ensure that the roles and responsibilities of local government are reflected in proposals as they are developed.
- 1.29 'Putting People First: a shared vision and commitment to the transformation of Adult Social Care' sets out the vision, ambitions and components of the future system. Led by the Department of Health, it establishes an explicit, collaborative approach between six Government Departments, local Government, the sector's professional leadership, providers and the regulators.
- 1.30 Putting People First aims to recognise the need to empower citizens to shape their own lives and the support they receive. It also emphasises the need for a strategic shift away from intervention at the point of crisis to a more pro-active and preventative model centred on improved wellbeing, with greater choice and control for individuals.
- 1.31 The Beacon Council Scheme is a prestigious award scheme that recognises excellence in local government. One of the themes currently being assessed is "Positive Engagement of Older People to support and promote greater independence and wellbeing in Later Life."
- 1.32 Allied to the Beacon Council Scheme is the announcement in March 2008 by the Local Government Minister John Healey of the allocation of £185m through council-led Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships (RIEPs), to pioneer innovative ways to transform and improve services, and cut waste. RIEPs are in the very early stages of development (some regions more advanced than others) but all will be required to promote ways to achieve greater value for money.
- 1.33 Looking at regional government, the GOs provide strategic leadership and operate through partnerships with central, regional and local organisations. While each GO works with its own region and Regional Minister, the nine offices operate as a national network, albeit one characterised by 'regional particularity' i.e. what works in one part of the country may need to be different in another. GOs are 'Whitehall in the regions' working at the crossroads of policy and
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delivery to make a reality of decentralised and devolved government. A key role for GOs is to join up and align departmental programmes to ensure coherence in delivery. This means feeding back from the 'front line' and identifying and resolving potential barriers to delivery.

1.34 The Regional Ministers are responsible for providing a clear sense of strategic direction for their region and for giving the region a voice in central government, ensuring that government policy takes account of the differing needs of the nine English regions. Part of their role is to bring together local services and different arms of government in their region and facilitate a joined up approach across government departments and agencies to enable the effective delivery of the single regional strategy.

1.35 Regional Assemblies, comprised of local authority members and regional stakeholders work in partnership to, amongst other things, represent the voices of regions to Whitehall and provide a strategic focus for integrating regional strategy development and partnership working. From 2010 their role will transfer to the more business-led Regional Development Agencies.

Older people's forums and groups

1.36 The third sector has a tradition of service innovation. More recently the Government has developed a vision for greater sector involvement in public service reform and has increased investment accordingly. The last two Spending Review rounds included:

- commitments in 2006's public services action plan, including training commissioners and creating a range of standard contracts.
- publication in 2007 of a third sector Review – the Government's largest ever consultation of the sector.

1.37 The relationship between the third sector and older people is not straightforward. Types of support range from providing services to campaigning and cover help/advice on such issues as culture/leisure, finance, advocacy, education, health/social care, transport and housing. At a national and local level nearly 4,500 charities list that they work with older people. Help the Aged and Age Concern dominate the third sector among organisations representing and serving older people exclusively and other key players include Anchor Trust, the largest not-for-profit provider of housing, support and care in England,

whose purpose is to improve the lives of older people by providing a range of services valued by older people.

1.38 Campaigning can often be seen by the third sector as an effective tool for raising awareness of older people's concerns. Campaign objectives vary from changing Government policy to the behaviour of individuals or other organisations.

1.39 Help the Aged, Age Concern and the National Pensioners Convention are all active campaigners but there are equally a number of other charities whose campaigns focus on older people. For example:

- British Heart Foundation: 30 a day campaign promoting physical activity in later life;
- Deafblind UK: health campaign to improve access to services for people with dual sensory loss (most of whom are over 65); and
- WRVS: Be a Star campaign to combat loneliness among older people.

1.40 There are vast numbers of charities who focus on supporting older people but also a growing number who actively campaign for a stronger voice for people in later life.

1.41 BGOP plays a slightly different role in that it is a partnership of the OPAG network, government departments, local authorities and other subscribers seeking to involve older people to create better services that work for all older people. Their philosophy is that a change in perspective is needed by government at all levels if public services are to meet the challenges of an ageing society. By acting in partnership as a "critical friend" they seek to bring about this change.

Overview

- 1.42 I have tried to illustrate in this chapter the scale of change over the past 10 years. Government policy has been to make regions and localities focus on what works well for their citizens. Regional and local Government are beginning to realise that older people must have a say in how their communities are run. Increasingly third sector organisations and independent groups have emerged. The Senior Council for Devon, involving 27 town based groups is an example of a newly formed arrangement, which is typical of the growth of forums and groups.
- 1.43 I hope I have shown that we are now in a climate of change where older people's views are being actively sought and that this is increasingly becoming the norm. In some cases new policies or services are now said to be co-produced by government and citizens. This is especially important for local authorities and other service providers, who are increasingly under pressure to anticipate and plan for changes in habits and demands for local services. Also, at a local level there has been a growth of organisations who seek to influence local government. But in my opinion we must not be complacent – a lot more needs to be done, both locally and centrally.
- 1.44 Whilst noting the number and type of older people's forums have increased, I also recognise that there is no one route or quick solution to effective engagement. Often individuals prefer not to become involved in forums. I believe it is essential to recognise the wide diversity of views and to encourage individuals, groups and organisations to make themselves heard. I also see potential for developing co-ordination and leadership at all levels, and how those leaders not only engage with, but truly represent the views of older people. In the following chapter I will discuss the effectiveness of these current arrangements

Chapter 2: Engagement coverage and implementation

2.1 In this chapter I consider how various public and third sector organisations are engaging with older people, and the effectiveness and extent of the coverage of their engagement.

Central Government

2.2 Looking at the effectiveness of the current arrangements, one of the commitments in Opportunity Age was to pilot a LinkAge Plus service, the intention of which was to provide access to fully integrated services for older people. This approach was subsequently reinforced by the publication of the Social Exclusion Unit report “A Sure Start to Later Life” in January 2006. This Report suggested that the Sure Start approach in galvanising communities and re-shaping children’s services, could work equally well with older people.

2.3 The LinkAge Plus pilots have, in my opinion, provided valuable learning about access to quality services and have provided examples of successes in helping older people access a range of services through a single contact. They are demonstrating the value of solid consultation with local older people to determine their local needs, priorities and aspirations, using older people to deliver services, and making even more effective use of Local Authority infrastructures and partnerships.

2.4 Building on the lessons learnt from LinkAge Plus, is the Government’s strategy for housing for an ageing society, “Lifetime Homes. Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society”, published in February 2008. The intention here is to address older people’s housing needs and aspirations by listening to what older people want and placing their needs at the heart of policy making, which is to be encouraged.

2.5 Although these examples show that steps are being taken by government to involve older people in service design and delivery it must not be complacent. The findings of the Audit Commission report published in July 2008, “Don’t Stop Me Now” reviewed the extent to which local authorities were prepared for an older population. I concur with its analysis of central government’s role in that it is plainly evident that the strategic aspirations of the Government’s Opportunity

Age strategy are clear and much good work has been done by Government to drive forward on this agenda and provide the leadership required.

- 2.6 However, and I agree, the report also says there has been limited impact on local authorities. It seems to me that any changes to the current methods of engagement must be sustainable, meeting the needs of today as well as for the next generation and generations that follow.
- 2.7 The Department for Communities and Local Government has recently produced a paper which sees LSPs as the main vehicle for developing local visions and for tackling hard cross cutting issues. These partnerships place local authorities in the lead and bring together other key partners such as Primary Care Trusts, Police, Fire Service and others.

Local Government

- 2.8 Local authorities have a key role in taking the lead on understanding and reacting to the needs of local older people. Despite this, most local authorities do not appear to consider that listening to the views of older people is a priority. The “Don’t Stop Me Now” report reinforces the view that despite significant numbers of older people being involved, many of their views are not being captured or responded to. Analysis of the older people shared priority in 111 Corporate Assessments published between September 2005 and May 2008 revealed that more than two-thirds of councils needed to improve their services for older people. The Review found that:
- Only twenty eight percent of councils were performing well and had meaningful engagement with the older community, well developed cross-cutting strategies and a co-coordinated range of services.
 - Forty five percent of councils had started to make progress but were at an early stage of strategic development.
 - Twenty seven percent of councils focused solely on social care and made no other provision for older people.
- 2.9 The report also found that many of the areas with the highest population of older people have the most improvement to make. It pointed to no clear link between preparedness for an older population and a council’s overall performance.

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- 2.10 Against a background of more than 10 years endeavour by a wide range of agencies and charities coupled with positive encouragement from Government the results of the report must be considered disappointing. It also indicates the scale of the challenge facing a large number of local authorities.
- 2.11 These findings were echoed in July 2008 by the report of the All Party Parliamentary Local Government Group (APPLGG), "Never too late for living: inquiry into services for older people". Amongst the APPLGG recommendations were a call for a change in public perceptions, a simple way to know how nationally agreed outcomes will be delivered in each area, and transparency about what public money is being spent on locally. I endorse these recommendations.
- 2.12 One obvious conclusion to draw from this is that engaging with older people does not rank high in the list of priorities for a number of local authorities. Without a change in priorities coupled with commitment and leadership from officials at the top it is difficult to envisage much changing. It is also fair to say that when Elected Members, Chief Executives and Directors in local authorities want it to happen, then it often does. This is crucial as the Audit Commission report identifies that local authorities are uniquely placed to lead local change and need to work with their partners to engage and work closely with older people themselves to make the change.
- 2.13 However, effective engagement should not rely solely on the efforts of local authorities. In recent years there has been an increasing presence and influence from third sector organisations and independent groups.

Older People's Forums

- 2.14 A very large number of older people are already involved and the extent of forums across the UK is impressive. In recent years there has been an increasing pressure and influence from third sector organisations and independent groups. For example, as I've mentioned earlier, Age Concern England, Help the Aged and Anchor Trust all work to improve the lives of older people through campaigning, providing help and advice on a wide range of issues and providing services valued by older people. In a number of areas OPAGs are the main groups obtaining the views. I looked at the activities of

these forums and how effective they have been in being able to inform policy and actions of government at all levels. From my observations and conversations, the main point for older people's forums in terms of their effectiveness is, do they feel they add value? The only way they find the answer to this question is through feedback.

2.15 By working together in forums, older people are making their voices heard on the things that really matter to them, influencing the planning and provision of local, regional and national services. Although they vary in size from small groups to those with members numbering many hundreds or thousands, forums all have a number of important features in common. They are independent organisations which give a collective voice to older people, in order to influence decision-makers on matters which impact on their every-day lives and they are run by older people, for older people. Many have social activities, run trips and hold open meetings, helping to break down isolation by providing opportunities for older members of the community to socialise, meet new people and keep in touch with local news and information. Indeed, for some forums, the social side is more important than the political.

2.16 Information on the numbers of older people's forums is difficult to ascertain. For example, Help the Aged tell me that locally there are currently over 650 Senior Citizens' Forums in the UK, with a total membership in excess of 150,000. On the other hand BGO claim to have links to approximately 200 forums electing members to OPAG with a reach of 500,000. Despite the impressive coverage there are still areas where older people do not have the opportunity to make their voices heard. This patchy coverage of engagement at a local level is exacerbated by there being no systematic means of capturing views at either a regional or national level.

2.17 At a regional level there is growing support for networks of agencies to come together to support the later life agenda. For example the South East have set up a Regional Forum on Ageing, the North West have a 5050 vision forum, East of England have established Future East and York & Humber have Future Years.

2.18 From comments from representative Age Concern forums, I note they regard older people's forums as an important route by which to influence service provision at a local level. Some local Age Concerns report good working

partnerships with County and Local Councils who were committed to capacity build in order to ensure effective engagement with older people but there were no comments or views on the local work permeating up to a national level, which suggests a gap to be filled.

2.19 But I am mindful that much more needs to be done to capture the views of more diverse groups who are often prevented from having their voices heard, for example, language difficulties or mobility issues. Several respondents commented that there is no one route for engagement and government at all levels needs to ensure that opportunities are available for everyone to have their voices heard.

Devolved Nations

2.20 During my Review I have also looked at the approaches taken by the devolved nations to older people's engagement.

Wales

2.21 In March 2008 the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) reviewed their arrangements with BGOP Cymru. WAG concluded that the coordinating role of BGOP Cymru was generally well received and access to information was useful and creation of OPAG was a positive step. However, according to some respondents creating the OPAG should be seen as a first step. They saw the need to bring together older people's groups of different types and facilitate other ways of older people having a voice. WAG therefore decided to amend their funding arrangements so that resources go directly to the Welsh Local Government Association to employ an Ageing Officer rather than to host a BGOP Co-ordinator. For the WAG this ensured additional and more focused support for Local Councils in implementing their older people's strategy. However, whilst noting their amendment to funding arrangements and their reasons for doing this, I also note WAG has continued their membership of BGOP.

2.22 The WAG have also appointed a Commissioner for Older People to ensure that the interests of older people in Wales are safeguarded and promoted. The role of the Commissioner is to be an ambassador and authority on older people's issues, and they are intended to speak up on behalf of older people, and be a

source of information, advocacy and support for older people in Wales and their representatives. As well as looking at the interests of older people as a whole, the Commissioner can also look at, amongst other things:

- the effect that public bodies, such as the Assembly Government, Local Government, and the NHS, have on older people, and may publish reports, making recommendations for change;
- the providers of regulated services across Wales, issuing guidance on best practice to ensure that they safeguard and promote the interests of older people.

The Commissioner may also help individuals to make a complaint about the services provided.

2.23 The Commissioner will be able to look at the way in which a local authority, or health body, implements the policies and procedures that it has put in place for dealing with elder abuse. If these were not being carried out effectively, she could hold authorities to account.

2.24 Perhaps most importantly in the context of this Review, the Commissioner will work to ensure that older people themselves can influence the way in which important public services are managed and delivered in Wales.

2.25 This post was only announced in January 2008 and is the first of its type in Europe. It would be premature to offer a view on these arrangements but the development does provide visible leadership for older people's issues.

Scotland

2.26 In Scotland, they have their own Older People's Quality Forum (OPQF) which runs local groups and, on occasions, seminars. It was very successful and its work has led to a Eurocities award. Other local groups send representatives to OPQF but it will be replaced, I am told, in the future because of local authority restructuring and will be called the Checkpoint Group.

2.27 I asked the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), which represents all 32 Scottish Local Authorities, about their links to older people's forums. They reported no strong link to BGOP although there is communication with the Scottish BGOP representative. BGOP is perceived as having been very useful and influential when first put together but has now lost its direction. There are established links to OPAG. Interestingly, it seems most Scottish LA's did

subscribe to BGOP but now most do not as there was, they say, little return for their subscription – mainly periodic (but infrequent) journals. Much of the content of these journals was drawn from LAs so was already known. One Council cited as having stopped subscription 4 years ago because of poor value for money.

2.28 Scotland have introduced a National Forum on Ageing Implementation Group chaired at Ministerial level to look at implementation of their older people's strategy document, All Our Futures, and look forward to new issues arising.

Membership includes:

- academics and policy thinkers;
- service providers for older people, both public sector, private and voluntary;
- mainstream service providers, both public sector, private and voluntary;
- older people and their representative organisations;
- businesses;
- employers; and
- National Health Service, local authorities, education.

2.29 They are also proposing to set up a 'National Forum on Ageing All Our Futures Group', a proactive think tank which will engage in "forward thinking, planning and the development of a future to set Scotland firmly at the forefront of the age agenda." Membership of this group will consist of professionals and volunteers (including retirees) from a range of organisations specialising in older people's issues, with the aim of getting ideas directly from the grass roots level, particularly from pre-retirees and those whose concerns are not mainstream. This would complement the work of the Ministerial group, and its administration, including staff and event costs has been calculated at around £40,000 a year to run. I note that BGOP are one of the proposed group's members.

2.30 It is apparent that in Scotland they see the introduction of National Forums, involving a range of stakeholders, including most importantly older people themselves, as a key way to raise awareness of and get citizen's engagement with the 'All Our Futures' strategy.

Assessment of Better Government for Older People (BGOP)

2.31 This brings me to one of the specific purposes of this Review, to consider BGOP's arrangements for engagement of older people and to explore options for improvement. I have detailed at Annex F background on BGOP and OPAGs.

2.32 In looking at where BGOP fits into a picture of effectiveness, many of those people I interviewed recognised BGOP's early successes, in particular acting as a catalyst for change; bringing parties together; acting in the lead on older people's engagement; and sharing best practice.

2.33 However, over the last two or three years many said the picture has become much more mixed:

- BGOP are no longer the only player in this field;
- Third sector partners have lost confidence in BGOP's commitment to work with them, demonstrated by withdrawals from the Partnership Board arrangements;
- The level of subscribers to BGOP from local authorities have fallen away from BGOP as they do not see the benefits to them;
- There have been limited outcomes in terms of input to central and regional government.

Though the OPAG network is well established its value has not been fully realised and its reach remains patchy, with some areas having no presence at all.

2.34 Indeed, one of the Partners, Help the Aged, decided to fill what they perceived as a gap in the effectiveness of capturing the views of older people by setting up their own "Speaking Up for Our Age" programme¹ dedicated to supporting Older People's Forums. These forums are all independent but Help the Aged supports them through its Speaking Up for Our Age programme. They provide practical support through field staff, and can give small grants for starting up and developing forums. They also hold events so forums can meet and obtain training.

¹ More information on Speaking Up for Our Age can be found at www.helptheaged.org.uk/forums

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- 2.35 I found from talking to OPAG members and local councils, that OPAG does valuable work as individuals in their areas. There is though a sense of frustration with only limited processes in place for the OPAG to feed their views into regional and central government to get feedback on those views. There was a view expressed by some OPAG members that they were at risk of being seen as no more than a talking shop where nothing seems to get done.
- 2.36 The recent demise of the Partnership Board confirms that the current BGOP arrangement does not work in the present circumstances and the lack of a Consortium Agreement means governance arrangements are in the main weak and ineffective. The concept of a hosting arrangement for BGOP is also not a workable or feasible proposition in my view. From my enquiries, discussions and the comments I received I clearly established that the BGOP brand no longer has the support of many key players needed to bring about greater engagement of older people. BGOP's current mandate is unclear; its focus is dominated too much by the central office; and work plans are of a poor standard. I found a lack of managerial control within the current model, evidenced by poor management systems, unavailable business performance information, and ineffective accountability arrangements. Symptomatic of these weaknesses has been the failure to produce an annual director's report since 2005-2006. The extent of these failings also led me to question the value for money being provided.
- 2.37 I do recognise that despite these lost opportunities and significant weaknesses in the current arrangements there remain many merits in what BGOP is still trying to achieve, and through the setting up of OPAGs there has been a real sea-change in the involvement of older people. Also, if anyone can be said to "own" BGOP it is their members rather than any one group or government department.

Overview

- 2.38 I concluded that significant obstacles and lost opportunities lie with the current BGOP organisation and more generally the overall model of engagement. There is a patchy reach of OPAGs and other forums across the UK and no systematic approach in place to capture and feed into government the views of older people, and no system is in place to provide older people with feedback. However, the OPAG network does have potential, with stronger and more

clearly defined support mechanisms, to become more effective by developing clearer links straight into all tiers of government.

2.39 My discussions pointed me towards the increasingly pivotal role of the regional level of government in terms of GOs. In addition I noted the potential complexity of linking representatives into government at different levels and a requirement therefore to assume that any structure for engagement should be straightforward if it is to be effective. Underpinning any structure should be arrangements which ensure local forums and older people's representatives see themselves as partners and work together.

2.40 From discussions, I also concluded that significant opportunities exist to:

- Provide a clearer and more influential voice for older people at all levels of government;
- Re-invigorate the original BGOP spirit of partnership;
- Reinforce leadership at all levels of government to provide a focus for older people's issues;
- Provide more support to strengthen grassroots forums and OPAGs;
- Support coverage of older people's engagement right across the UK;
- Complement the efforts of all organisations and forums to ensure diversity of views are heard; and
- Provide improved value for money for government funding.

All of the above leads me to conclude that maintaining the status quo in terms of the current model of engagement is not a tenable option. I found near unanimous support for my view that there is a compelling case for change.

2.41 During my fieldwork a number of options for the future were presented to me, including an option from BGOP to become an independent entity. These options helped to inform my Emerging Findings which I discuss in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Emerging Findings

- 3.1 I published my Emerging Findings for the Review on 9th October 2008 (see Annex B) and invited comments. My starting point was the consensus that I found that the status quo was not an option. My emerging recommendations drew on the principles at paragraph 8, Chapter 1
- 3.2 In putting together my emerging findings, I considered and rejected a range of variant options. In particular, BGOP presented an option proposing that it becomes an independent entity (probably as a Non-Departmental Public Body). This may have addressed some of its current difficulties, especially in respect of hosting and governance but being mindful of my doubts about the value for money being provided by BGOP, I could not support this option. I felt that it did not appear likely to strengthen links with government and would probably require a significant increase in the current level of government funding to create a central structure that could build a truly nationwide network. I also felt that it would be unlikely to re-build partnerships or establish authority at a national level which would be important in influencing government regionally as well as nationally.
- 3.3 It was clear to me that to a large extent successful engagement relies on leadership and arrangements should seek to encourage partnership working. From my emerging findings I provisionally recommended (see Annex B):
- ***Establishing a UK Advisory Forum for Older People, chaired by the appropriate Minister for Older People, supported by regional forums.*** My thinking here was for a permanent national forum with readily identified leadership to engage with central government and advise on developing and implementing the government's ageing strategy. This would be supported by local groups feeding into regional forums, ensuring views are fed into government at all levels.
 - ***Enhancing the role of the Government Offices in supporting and developing engagement with older people.*** This proposal was to ensure at a regional level a named older people's lead officer in each GO to support the capture of older people's views and spread best practice.

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- ***OPAGs around the UK should be supported and built upon.*** This was to continue support to engage and consult with older people at the local level.

3.4 I saw the benefits of these proposals including strong leadership across all sectors with opportunities to rebuild partnerships within new roles and structures along with the prospect of more effective engagement across local authorities. With the many processes planned or already in place that I have mentioned in the preceding chapters, my recommendations could, in my opinion, spread effective engagement and consultation more rapidly and at no, or little, additional cost.

3.5 I also looked at two potential options with BGOP functions being merged or taken over by other organisations including third sector or government bodies but I did not pursue them though as they were not proposed by anybody I had met and would have compromised the independent and non-aligned nature of OPAGs. I also looked at an option BGOP presented proposing that it becomes an independent entity whilst still retaining government funding. I felt that this could answer some of its current problems, especially in respect of hosting and governance. However, as I felt that their proposal was not fully developed and mindful of my earlier observations on BGOP I did not include their option in my initial set of recommendations. My reasoning is set out in the slides at Annex B.

Responses to Emerging Findings

3.6 I was encouraged by the broad support my emerging recommendations received, not least that the real issue at stake here is ensuring that “the voice of older people” reaches those in government who can make a real difference to their lives. The most common views expressed to me were:

- The need for government clearly to recognise the value of older people coming together to influence and effect change;
- The principle that voices of older people should be heard across all levels of government;
- The need to involve older people at an early stage of policy development; to shape it to be more effective and acceptable to older people;

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- The need for DWP also to involve a range of other government departments and their Ministers, for example Dept of Health, Dept for Communities and Local Government (CLG), Dept of Transport, the Home Office. Some respondents thought that CLG may be better placed to lead this agenda due to its link with local authorities;
 - The need to build upon what is already working; several respondents drew my attention to their own networks and forums, highlighting the many and varied approaches to engagement and pointing out that OPAGs should not be seen as the only vehicle for effective involvement;
 - The need to recognise the diversity of the older population, ensuring that minority groups are not excluded from having their opinions sought;
 - The support for a UK Advisory Forum for older people and Regional Forums – although a number of respondents made the point that we need to ensure it does not duplicate existing groups; and
 - Widespread agreement that resources directed to Government Offices need to be used to establish, support and develop engagement opportunities for older people at local and regional level.

3.7 There is, as mentioned in the preceding chapters much work being done by the Age Sector organisations and it was suggested a more level playing field in terms of how government funds are spent in this area. As one of my guiding principles is to build upon what is already working, I feel that all the existing networks should be maintained and to re-route current resource away from any of them would go against that. However, by the same principle, other existing forums and groups should also be supported to encourage the speedy development of an effective and pluralistic engagement landscape.

3.8 Following this line of thinking I also considered whether all the funds should be re-routed to the Age Sector organisations as they are well established organisations with well known and identifiable brands, but discounted this option as I feel it is vital to encourage diversity and support a range of forums (some of whom may be small in membership) but have the organisational structure to ensure the voices of minority groups are also heard.

3.9 The responses I received also gave me an opportunity to reflect and develop my recommendations, namely:

- Beacon Councils are not the only means of promoting good practice – a number of respondents suggested that there are other sources of good practice which should be identified and shared, for example ‘Older People’s Champions’ ;
- There is no one route to engagement: 1-2-1 engagement, outreach and other activities are equally as important as engagement with mainstream forums;
- Several respondents also suggested that the role of GOs would be more effective if they worked with Regional Forums to help them develop, rather than just in supporting local OPAGs;
- I was reminded by both the Scottish and Welsh Assemblies that they already have well established older people’s forums and engagement strategies, developed and in place over a number of years and therefore sit outside many of my recommendations; and
- Financial support should be more readily available at grassroots level to enable smaller groups and forums to develop further

3.10 There was also agreement that older people’s engagement is patchy, with views expressed that current structures are not doing enough to communicate to the grassroots and do not do enough to make engagement a bottom-up process.

3.11 BGOP and UKOPAG also put forward a development of their earlier option to me which recognised the difficulties I had identified. This proposed BGOP becoming an independent entity in the form of a Community Interest Company relying on government funding only to support them through the transition to this status. They are confident of attracting funding from other areas and that a new organisation can be quickly established. A key component of this for me is that BGOP would continue to support the OPAGs. However, this modified proposal still, in my opinion, requires a significant amount of development to establish if it can be considered a viable option. For example, details are needed of how funding might be secured, how effective management would be put in place and how the organisation could become more cost effective. Given the recent history of BGOP and my concerns outlined in this report it is my opinion that even if this modified option is viable, it is still unclear to what extent the new organisation

would be able to provide a strong and effective contribution to improving government for older people. BGOP have offered to provide further details but not until after this report is published.

3.12 Despite my concerns, I recognise there is a strong desire from BGOP and UKOPAG to follow a path towards independence. But my preference remains for OPAGs to be supported by and to work closely with Government through the Government Office network. Even so, I also recognise that it could be feasible for an independent BGOP and UKOPAG to work alongside GOs whilst retaining their autonomy as an (independent) organisation.

3.13 In the next chapter I will detail my suggestions for the way forward, supported by my recommendations.

Chapter 4: The Way Forward and Recommendations

The Way Forward

- 4.1 In my Review of the current arrangements for the engagement of older people and the ability of those arrangements to inform policy and actions of government at all levels, the conclusion I have reached is that there is no right or wrong way of engaging older people. What works for one part of the country may be completely inappropriate for others. I feel that the onus must be placed upon government at all levels to ensure that appropriate processes are in place to capture views which are representative of the communities they serve – this is especially true in the case of older people who are isolated or hard to reach and minority groups. By welcoming a rich diversity of views there is a very real likelihood that policy makers and service providers will be able to plan for and deliver policies that really meet the needs of local older populations
- 4.2 By listening to older people through the course of my Review I concluded that structured processes need to be in place to systematically capture the voice of older people, reinforced by systems that encourage views and aspirations to be expressed, and recognise the contribution made by older people. Central Government appears to be reaching this conclusion as well, seeing active participation by as many older people as possible as being “essential for a healthy democracy as it encourages a shared understanding, builds cohesion and instils confidence in the institutions and the people who are elected to represent us”². To my mind, and in the context of this Review, the aim should be to ensure that older people are fully engaged in developing local, regional and national policies and strategies and influencing service design and delivery with all levels of government and sharing good practice throughout the UK.
- 4.3 The challenges and opportunities raised by an ageing society are increasingly widely recognised. From hearing and receiving the views of a wide range of people and from my own observations I feel that real progress has been made by Government in engaging and involving older people in the last 10 years.

² Forward to, ‘A national framework for greater citizen engagement: a discussion paper’, Ministry of Justice, July 2008.

However, the new Government framework for older people, i.e. the Later Life and other Public Service Agreements, the national indicator set for local authorities, local area agreements and so forth outlined in Chapter 1, provides a much stronger expectation of regional focus, which has to date been underdeveloped. Central government increasingly expects local authorities to be accountable and responsible for engagement.

4.4 This means that there is a need to build on and improve the mechanisms that already exist, but also to recognise the changing structures across government – particularly at a regional level in terms of Regional Ministers and GOs. In addition I noted the potential difficulties of linking representatives into government at different levels and a requirement therefore to assume that any structure for engagement should be straightforward if it is to be effective. Arrangements should ensure that local forums and older people’s representatives are encouraged to see themselves as partners and to work together.

4.5 I am not aware of any review along the lines of the Audit Commission report “Don’t Stop Me Now” into the effectiveness of Government Departments in their engagements with older people. But, central government has, as I have mentioned earlier in Chapter 1 produced a number of documents over the last year or so that indicates to me that whilst central Government recognises the value of effective engagement it is still developing and exploring the most efficient and effective ways of engaging with older people on national issues³. There remain further opportunities for a role to develop co-ordination and leadership at central and local government level.

³ Further illustrated by the Office of the Third Sector, in September 2008, initiating their own survey to measure the quality of support for the third sector in every local area in England.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 - : Establish a UK Advisory Forum for older people chaired or co-chaired by the lead government Minister for Older People supported by Regional Advisory Forums

Recommendation 2 - Secretariat services for the UK Advisory Forum to be provided by government officials.

- My proposal would raise the profile of older people's issues by providing leadership at the highest level with the structure and means to capture views in an organised way.
- I envisage the UK Advisory Forum acting as a sounding board for Ministers and to provide advice on older people's issues; working with Ministers to advise on consultation and engagement with older people; to set up and govern sub-group activity for one-off tasks. A core task for the Forum could be to advise on the development and implementation of Government's overall strategy for an ageing society.
- I propose the secretariat would as part of its duties recommend a named contact point for older people's issues in each Government Department. These contacts would flag policy issues and development to the Forum. Having such a named contact point would set an example for local authorities. The secretariat could also support UKOPAG on a transitional basis.
- I envisage the Regional Advisory Forums would draw their members from local older people's forums and groups.
- I propose membership of the UK Advisory Forum should include:
 - Ministers from key Government Departments (DWP, DH, CLG);
 - Representatives from older people's groups;
 - Age sector and related organisations;

-
- Service delivery organisations;
 - Devolved administrations; and
 - Local Government Association and Government Offices.
- I propose that initially the UK Advisory Forum meets quarterly.
 - I propose periodic attendance by Regional Ministers at the Regional Advisory Forums, at least once a year, to provide visible leadership at a regional level and discuss priorities for the region.
 - I propose the Regional Ministers receive a quarterly report from the Regional Advisory Forum.
 - I envisage the Regional Advisory Forums supporting the development work of the Regional Assemblies in developing their regional strategies, and from 2010 complementing the enhanced role of Regional Development Agencies.
 - I anticipate there will be start up costs in setting up these arrangements and associated costs in terms of day to day running.
 - I envisage the secretariat function requiring resourcing with up to two government officials.

Recommendation 3 - Enhance the role of Government Offices in supporting and developing engagement with older people, supported by the UK Advisory Forum secretariat.

- My proposal would redirect the majority of DWP funding, which is currently provided to BGOP, to Government Offices to provide a named resource in GOs to help build on the increasing role of regional government, and specifically to focus on supporting the developing engagement with older people. In my view, this is likely to provide better value for money by strengthening links between older people's forums and government. Funding should be sufficient to provide a named resource in each GO. This resource should be specifically allocated to engagement work to avoid any perceived conflict of interest with GO's role in relation to local government performance.

-
- I envisage this would provide the prospect of better coverage across the UK by providing direct access to the views of older people, putting older people's views at the heart of government policy.
 - I envisage GOs working with Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships on the development of older people's forums.
 - I propose GOs provide support to existing forums. Initially this should be primarily to OPAGs. This should move to a more inclusive approach over a period of two years after which a level playing field would operate.
 - I envisage Regional Forums, supported by GOs, helping to organise local and regional events, advertising and publicity to capture the views of older people.
 - I propose Regional Forums, supported by GOs develop regional Communications Strategies which set out methodologies for older people's engagement and which recognise diversity.
 - I propose GOs work with Regional Ministers on wider older people engagement.
 - I propose GOs and Regional Forums develop an 18 month programme to work with successful Beacon Councils to help spread good practice. This might also draw on wider examples of good practice.
 - I propose the UK Advisory Forum secretariat support the start up and day to day processes required by the GOs in carrying out this function.

I have acknowledged the need to address the relevant findings from the Audit Commission's report, "Don't Stop Me Now".

Recommendation 4 - Regional Forums supporting their respective local authorities to develop effective engagement strategies, to ensure a true diversity of older people's voices are heard.

- My proposal would encourage local authorities to capture views which are representative of the communities they serve to ensure that small minority groups get the opportunity to influence government.
- I envisage that regional engagement strategies would identify and embrace different approaches to ensure the views of all older people are heard i.e.

including Black and Minority Ethnic elders, Faith Groups, older Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender groups.

- I envisage the local and regional advisory forums using the engagement strategies to ensure a true diversity of older people's voices.
- I envisage that regional engagement strategies would support the introduction of named Older People's Champions in each local authority area – at both officer and council member levels.
- I would expect to see clear plans for how regions will engage with Beacon Councils who have successful older people engagement strategies.

I have concluded that there is real value in existing networks, which are run, for example, by Help the Aged, Age Concern and OPAG and their local arrangements continuing and being built upon. Given the strategic intent of virtually all Government departments to engage with citizens, including Older People, to listen and understand their views, and the new local government performance framework, it would seem perverse to take any action which would prejudice the continuation of any existing networks.

Recommendation 5 - Older people's forums around the UK, including OPAGs, should be supported and built upon

- My proposal presents an opportunity to rebuild and, if necessary, re-configure partnerships with new roles in a new structure, encouraged by the Government Offices. It is an opportunity for all organisations that purport to work for older people to come together to challenge and influence government at all levels.
- I propose these forums should be provided, in England, with increased support via Government Offices (GOs). (Devolved nations have already developed their own national arrangements).
- I envisage that GOs would bring together older people's groups of different types and facilitate other ways of older people having a voice.
- I envisage that local authority and partner organisations would be actively encouraged by GOs to seek views and feedback from older people through the use of OPAGs and other older people forums.

-
- I envisage an approach where local government appoint Older People's Champions and provide effective training and support based on good practice guidance.

Recommendation 6 - BGOP is funded by DWP at current levels until the end of March 2009.

Recommendation 7 – The main funding for my proposals should come from DWP's current funding for older people's engagement.

- my proposals will ensure that central government funding focuses on areas which directly encourage and support engagement.
- I envisage the proposed new arrangements carrying forward government's engagement with older people, into a new and even more effective phase.
- I believe it would provide for a significant presence in regions and support for local groups.
- I recognise that extra funding may be required to fund the new UK Advisory Forum on Ageing.

Other related developments

- 4.6 I believe that my proposals are consistent with developing central government policy and reform programmes, in particular with the Community Empowerment agenda being led by the Department for Communities and Local Government, and that they complement a range of developments from the Department of Health, notably the LINKs programme.
- 4.7 I also think there will be significant opportunities for new structures to engage with the "new charity" being established by Help the Aged and Age Concern.
- 4.8 I have also tried to consider how a new independent BGOP might fit in. BGOP and UKOPAG's modified proposal requires a significant amount of development to establish if it can be considered a viable option. Details are needed of how

funding might be secured, how effective management would be put in place and how the organisation could become cost effective. Given the recent history of BGOP and my concerns outlined in this report, it is still unclear to what extent the new organisation would be able to provide a strong and effective contribution to improving government for older people and re-building partnerships. BGOP have offered to provide further details.

4.9 I concluded that without further significant development of the modified BGOP proposal it is not possible for me to offer a firm view on its merits, though I am doubtful of its likely success. My recommendations reflect the fact that I consider that any ongoing grant funding should be provided for the direct running costs of OPAG and on a transitional basis.

Concluding remarks

To ensure the future engagement with older people at national, regional and local government levels best informs the improvement of independence and well-being in later life it is my belief that my recommendations:

- would meet the expectations of older people so that they were being listened to and contributing;
- would best support the independence and well-being of people in later life; and
- would ensure an effective and efficient process to serve these needs.

In my view the new arrangements should be put in place as soon as practicable, and by April 2009 wherever possible.

Annex A

Terms of reference for the Review of Older People's engagement with Government

Minister for Pensions Reform (Mike O'Brien) announced on 22 May 2008 that John Elbourne had been asked to:

“Examine the current arrangements for the engagement of older people and the ability of those arrangements to inform policy and actions of Government at all levels.

Specifically, this will include examining Better Government for Older People's: aims, structure and relationships; past achievements, lessons learned and best practice; lines of accountability, governance and reporting; and management arrangements, legal status and funding. He will explore options for improvement of engagement with older people in respect of the new Government performance framework and in relation to the roles of other organisations. He will then make recommendations to ensure that the findings of the review take full account of the expectations of older people, best support the independence and wellbeing of people in later life and ensure an effective and efficient process to serve these needs.” Hansard

Annex B

Emerging Findings slides published on DWP website 9th October 2008

http://www.dwp.gov.uk/resourcecentre/ind_review_older_peples_eng_with_govt.asp

Review of Older People's Engagement with Government

- Emerging Findings

John Elbourne
October 2008

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2

Summary

Over the last four months I have found that:

- older people's engagement with government is often very impressive, but is patchy;
- older people's input is very often influential, but could be more so with more regular, structured contact direct with government;
- the environment in which engagement takes place has changed very significantly in recent years, but some of the opportunities presented have not been taken;
- there is much effective practice to build on; and
- there is strong support for change to take a range of opportunities.

A number of key findings and principles have emerged. These provide the basis for recommending significant changes for government, older people's groups and related organisations.

3

Summary

My recommendations include:

- To establish a UK Advisory Forum for Older People, and secretariat, regularly bringing together government, older people and other organisations;
- To establish regional forums in all regions;
- To retain and strengthen OPAGs with dedicated support provided by Government Offices; and
- To spread good practice with an 18 month programme building on Beacon Scheme authorities.

These new arrangements should be funded primarily from DWP's current support for engagement, but would have some additional costs for the UK Forum.

If implemented I believe these new arrangements could carry forward government's engagement with older people, and in particular the work of BGOP, into a new and even more effective phase.

The key benefits would include:

- stronger leadership across all sectors, with a stronger influence directly into government at all levels;
- an opportunity to rebuild partnerships, with new roles, in a new structure;
- the prospect of faster progress in spreading effective engagement across all Local Authorities; and
- new roles offering significant new opportunities to use to the full the talents and experience of those currently engaged in this area.

4

Review – Terms of Reference

Minister for Pensions Reform (Mike O'Brien) announced on 22 May 2008 that John Elbourne had been asked to:

“Examine the current arrangements for the engagement of older people and the ability of those arrangements to inform policy and actions of Government at all levels.

Specifically, this will include examining Better Government for Older People's: aims, structure and relationships; past achievements, lessons learned and best practice; lines of accountability, governance and reporting; and management arrangements, legal status and funding. He will explore options for improvement of engagement with older people in respect of the new Government performance framework and in relation to the roles of other organisations. He will then make recommendations to ensure that the findings of the review take full account of the expectations of older people, best support the independence and wellbeing of people in later life and ensure an effective and efficient process to serve these needs.” Hansard

5

Approach

- It is not the purpose of this review to examine in detail the relative merits of the various models and forms of involvement for older people. This ground has been extensively examined in recent years by academics, professionals and charities.
- The purpose of the review has been to examine whether there are any structural/organisational changes that can aid progress and enhance opportunities for older people to make themselves heard.
- I have given interviewees an assurance that I would not quote names or verbatim comment. This has led to very frank and open discussions.

6

Approach

- I spent the bulk of my time talking to a large cross-section of organisations and individuals actively involved in the area of older people's engagement, including a large number of representatives of older people's groups and forums.
- Quantifiable facts were limited – recommendations are based on what data was available to me and my assessment of views that have been expressed.
- I am indebted and offer my sincere thanks to all those that took part in this Review.

7

Findings – Context for older people's engagement

My research and discussions suggest that:

- The challenges and opportunities raised by an "ageing society" are increasingly widely recognised.
- In recent years, government has sought to improve how it engages with citizens and government policy has been to encourage regions and localities to focus on what works well for their citizens. Central government increasingly expects local authorities to be accountable and responsible for engagement so that local people are placed at the heart of local policy development. I am aware of a wide range of White Papers and other documents and initiatives which have sought to bring about change. This amounts to a major change in the environment for engagement.
- At a basic level public consultation on changes to policies and services is increasingly the norm. In some cases new policies or services are said to be "co-produced by government and citizens".
- It is especially important for local authorities and other service providers, who are increasingly under pressure, to anticipate and plan for changes in habits and demands for local services.
- At a local level there has been a growth of organisations who seek to influence government.

8

Findings – engagement coverage and implementation

- A very large number of older people are already involved and the extent of forums across the UK is impressive. There exists:
 - Wide coverage of engagement with older people by third sector organisations and charities
 - Nearly 4,500 charities say they work with older people
 - OPAG network of around 200 local forums, consisting 500,000 older people
- Despite this level of commitment and enthusiasm most local authorities do not appear to consider that listening to the views of older people is a priority
- The Audit Commission's report "Don't Stop me Now" reinforces the view that despite significant numbers of older people being involved many of their views are not being captured or responded to. It found that only 28% of local authorities were performing well and had meaningful engagement with the older community
- Where local authorities have put processes in place to listen to older people, these tend to work well, with clear models of engagement and strong leadership.

9

Findings – engagement coverage and implementation

- Despite impressive coverage at a local level by OPAGs, third sector organisations and other forums, there are still areas where older people do not have the opportunity to make their voices heard.
- Despite widespread (but patchy) coverage of older people's engagement at local level, there has been no systematic means of capturing views at a national level - this is a lost opportunity.
- Formation of BGOP in 1998 was ground breaking and was instrumental in spreading best practice and new local service initiatives, in particular its facilitation for the setting up of local OPAGs. Discussions demonstrated clearly how the original partnership structure, governance, and hosting arrangements had been outgrown and needed to be replaced by new arrangements.

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Findings - Leadership

- From discussion it was clear to me that to a large extent successful engagement relies on leadership.
- It is critically important that a process for engagement with older people is driven from both the Elected Members as well as Chief Executives and Directors in local government.
- But that isn't to say that effective engagement should rely solely on local authorities – there are many examples of effective engagement with older people by third sector organisations and charities who see themselves as having a key representational role.

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Findings – Engagement Structures

- In recent years there has been an increasing presence and influence from third sector organisations and independent groups
- OPAGs have a high level of confidence and in a number of areas are the main groups used to obtain the views of local older people
- Some weaknesses in the structure for the capture of views has meant that central government does not always hear the voices of older people
- The linkages for handling views and issues resulting from engagement between central, regional and local government are under-developed.
 - mechanisms are needed so that individual and collective views can be captured
 - important that forums and groups be constituted in such ways to ensure that views are accurately presented by those elected to do so

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Findings – Developing Recommendations

In developing recommendations, my discussions also suggested that as a starting point, I should take that:

- The OPAG network is well established and has the potential to become more effective by developing much clearer structural links into all tiers of government.
- The pivotal role of the regional level of government should be recognised.
- To recognise the potential complexities of linking representatives into government at different levels a straightforward structure is needed.
- Arrangements should seek to encourage partnership working.

13

Opportunities

I have concluded that significant **opportunities** exist to:

- Provide a clearer and more influential voice for older people at all levels
- Re-invigorate the original BGOP spirit of partnership
- Reinforce leadership at **all** levels to provide a focus for older people's issues
- Provide more support to strengthen grassroots OPAGs
- Spread older people engagement right across the UK
- Complement the efforts of other organisations and forums to ensure diversity of views are heard
- Provide improved value for money for government funding

I found strong support for the view that there is a compelling case for change.

14

Underlying principles that emerged

A set of principles has emerged from considering the full range of issues and developments above and from discussions. I have used these to shape my recommendations.

1. To ensure that the **voice of older people can be heard**:
 - Older people should have access to **effective** engagement with **all** levels of government, all around the country
 - Older people should be able to share their experiences and draw out common lessons
 - Different approaches should be embraced to ensure the diverse views of all older people are heard e.g. BME, Faith Groups, etc
2. We should build on what is **already working, eg**:
 - OPAGs
 - Third Sector
 - Forums on Ageing in some Government Office Regions
 - Other forums and groups.

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Underlying principles

3. Ensure the voice of older people can **influence** government at a national, regional and local level to provide services that meet their needs.
 - Ensure engagement is not just about listening but about close working together, and taking action in response to views or feedback
 - Recognise the difference between non-lobbying groups and those with other alignments or political affiliation
4. Ensure central government funding provides **effective value for money**
 - Focus funding on areas which directly encourage and support engagement
 - Recognise changes in the relationships between the different tiers of government and in particular the evolving role of Government Regions

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The way forward

- I considered a range of options for change which essentially focused on variations of how BGOP might function in the future, but I concluded that these would be unlikely sufficiently to seize the potential opportunities for older people and for government.
- I am therefore recommending a more radical reshaping which would involve significant change for government, for older people's groups and for partner organisations.
- The next few slides explore the options and outline the recommendations.

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Options considered

The key driver for options was that the current legal status, governance and hosting of BGOP were very unlikely to be able to underpin an effective operation in the future.

There were two potential options with BGOP functions being merged or taken over by other organisations including third sector or government bodies. These could have provided efficiencies or other benefits but they would have compromised the independent and non-aligned nature of OPAGs. They were also not proposed by those I met, and so were not pursued.

Option 1 – A central government Department taking over the role of BGOP and directly administrating the OPAG network

- would carry forward support for OPAG organisation and activities
- but
- would compromise OPAG independence - which is perhaps its greatest asset.
- no guarantee that OPAG volunteers would want to be directly aligned to a government department.
- misses the opportunity to devolve administration closer to the day to day activity of OPAGs.
- does not recognise the evolving role of regional Government Offices or their influence with local authorities or partner organisations. Also, the importance of their role in Local Area Agreements and Comprehensive Area Assessments.

Option 2 - Leaving the OPAG network to its own devices or encouraging it to merge with age sector organisations

- leaving OPAG network to its own devices would retain independence.
- potential to join up existing forums into one network.
- potential for greater cost effectiveness through joining up with age sector organisations for economies of scale.
- but
- because the OPAG network is well regarded, this option would not meet the underlying principle of building on what already works.
- withdrawing support for OPAG network would undermine the existing commitment and goodwill of volunteers.
- leaving OPAG to its own devices would not fit with Government's policy of encouraging citizen engagement.
- no guarantee that OPAG volunteers would be attracted to joining up with age sector organisations.
- joining up relies on support from all sides - without support, potential for OPAG network to wither.
- joining up risks losing the diversity of voices which may be to the detriment of debate.

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Options considered

The option put to me by BGOP is set out below. This recognised the difficulties of hosting, legal status and governance and proposed BGOP becoming an independent entity whilst still relying on government funding.

Option 3:

- BGOP is set up as an independent legal entity, self-governed and commissioned to undertake tasks for government organisations / departments with OPAG.
- BGOP's objective / purpose remains to influence, shape, challenge, facilitate decision making and policy development at all levels of governance.
- There should be virtual regional and national networks coordinated by OPAG, Govt Office/devolved administrations, and regional coordinators.
- BGOP continues to be an agent of change, across government as a whole in partnership. BGOP mandated to be an agent of change.
- BGOP permitted to challenge in a non-confrontational way.
- BGOP continues to be a 'critical' friend.
- BGOP to be resourced appropriately to meet its commission aims/objectives.
- BGOP continues to comprise its three aspects (the BGOP concept, the partnership and the delivery team).
- BGOP remains a UK wide body

My recommendations seek to incorporate the best features of this option.

My conclusion with this option is that this:

- would indeed overcome some of the difficulties that BGOP has had of late
- would maintain the role of OPAGs
- offers significant benefits from a stronger regional structure

However, I did not pursue this option for the following reasons:

- it is uncertain whether the structure would have the authority at regional and local level to spread best practice rapidly
- it is unlikely to be able to rebuild partnerships with other players at a national level
- it will increase central government funding
- it could be more strongly linked to government, without undermining the independence of OPAGs – so that older people's voices could have more direct impact.

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Recommendations

1. To establish a UK Advisory Forum for Older People, supported by regional forums

- In order to make the principles a reality there needs to be a permanent forum to engage with central government, and advise on the development and implementation of the government's ageing strategy. This should be a **UK Advisory Forum for Older People** to include representation from OPAGs and other older peoples' groups, from government and from other relevant organisations.
- The Terms of Reference could include:
 - To act as a sounding board for Ministers and to provide advice on older people's issues, including the development and implementation of the government's strategy
 - To work with Ministers to advise on the engagement and consultation of older people
 - To be informed by a structure of meetings at a local and regional level involving older people and key statutory and voluntary sector stakeholders, ensuring views are fed into government at appropriate levels
 - To set up and govern, when requested, sub-group activity for one-off tasks

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Recommendations

- The UK Advisory Forum for Older People could be chaired by the lead government Minister on older people, or joint chaired. Membership could include:
 - Representatives from Older People's groups
 - Age Sector and related organisations
 - Government Departments and service delivery organisations
 - Devolved administrations
 - Local Government Association, Government Offices
- Meeting frequency quarterly or every 6 months
- Secretariat services could be provided by government officials supporting the Minister. These could also support UK OPAG and broker older people's engagement with central government policy development and projects.
- The UK Advisory Forum for Older People should be complemented and supported by **Regional Advisory Forums for Older People**, with memberships based upon the UK Forum +/- other partners as appropriate.

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Recommendations

2. Enhance the role of Government Offices in supporting and developing engagement with older people.

Introduce a new named older people's lead officer in each GO, funded by central government, and additional to current plans, to:

- support OPAGs (and other groups) to engage at regional and local level – through paying expenses, organising meetings and other engagement, and facilitating advertising and publicity materials
- hold regular meetings of Regional Forums, and support Regional OPAG meetings
- where necessary, help organise local engagement events
- develop and set up processes and mechanisms to capture views from a local level to inform all levels of government
- identify and spread best practice on engagement with older people . This should include the development of systems that encourage two-way dialogue. Consider alternative methods of engagement recognising that some older people prefer to voice their opinions via letter, internet or questionnaire
- work with successful Councils who are awarded Beacon Scheme status on Older People's Engagement with Local Government to ensure best practice is shared across the region. An 18 month time limited programme, starting in April 2009 might target all those Local Authorities without effective engagement already in place.

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Recommendations

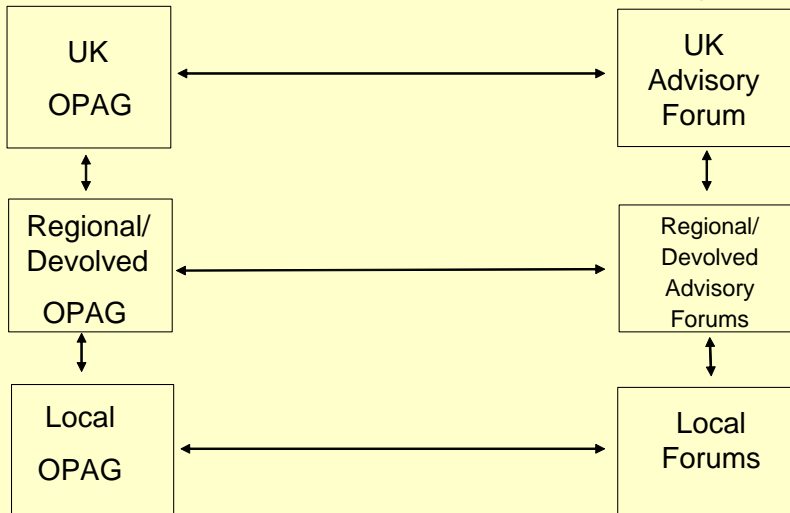
3. Older People's Advisory Groups (OPAGs) around the UK should be supported and built upon.

- These should be provided, in England, with increased support and funding via Government Offices (GOs). Devolved administrations could develop parallel arrangements
- OPAGs should be supported and encouraged by GOs to work with and complement other forums of older people
- Local authority and partner organisations should be actively encouraged by GOs to seek views and feedback from older people through the use of OPAGs and other older people forums

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Recommendations

The recommendations suggest a structure for tighter engagement between OPAGs and government. This might e.g. be arranged to include a quarterly series of meetings as shown:



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Benefits

I consider that the proposed new arrangements could carry forward government's engagement with older people, and in particular the work of BGOP, into a new and even more effective phase.

The key benefits would include:

- stronger leadership across all sectors, with a stronger influence directly into government at all levels;
- an opportunity to rebuild partnerships, with new roles, in a new structure;
- the prospect of faster progress in spreading effective engagement across all Local Authorities; and
- new roles offering significant new opportunities to use to the full the talents and experience of those currently engaged in this area

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Resourcing

I propose that the main funding for the new arrangements should come from DWP's current funding for older people's engagement.

This should provide for a significant presence in regions, and support for local groups. Extra funding may be required to fund the new national forum.

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Next steps

Your comments or observations are welcome and should be sent by 31 October to John Elbourne at:

e-mail: elbournereview@btinternet.com

or by post to:

John Elbourne

Mail Point 1

3rd Floor

1-11 John Adam Street

London WC2N 6HT

These will inform my final report to government.

Thank you.

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Annex C

Revised BGOP and UKOPAG Independent Proposal – Provided after Emerging Findings (As supplied by BGOP)

Taking forward partnerships with Older People in Practice:

A Developing Business Case Supporting Option 3

Foreword by Nigel Druce

The creation a decade ago of BGOP signified the government's commitment to increasing older people's involvement in all those aspects of public life that affect them and their families. Ten years on the success of the project is unquestionable and many of the improvements made are fully endorsed in the Elbourne review. Numerous initiatives, undertaken always in partnership with others who share a belief in the value of joint working as equals to solve key public issues, have shown the effectiveness of the model that has developed. There is now a body of knowledge about what to do and how to involve older people to achieve the best outcomes, as well as an understanding of the barriers that still remain, and which may slow down the aim of universal engagement.

Notwithstanding the many achievements, there remains much to do. The recent Audit Commission report 'Don't Stop Me Now', delivered evidence where work still needs to be done in the majority of councils, many of which have still not adopted the recommendations detailed in publications like Opportunity Age. The evidence from the commission's report is clear that, where there is local commitment and a climate created which encourages older person's involvement over a period long enough to allow the effects to begin to emerge, the results are outstanding. Many of the councils who have achieved the best outcomes have been those who subscribe to BGOP financially, but equally importantly adopt our approach to partnership working, both throughout their departments and in the manner in which they approach other public bodies to encourage collaboration. However, what has also become clear is that the effectiveness of BGOP is being hampered by the now outdated organisational framework initially created to support its activities. At the outset the commitment to engagement was a shared objective of the original members of the Partnership Board, and consequently the governance framework made no arrangements for BGOP to be a legal entity.

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Not only have the hosting arrangements proved a barrier to progress, but the illogicality of giving a controlling role over BGOP to those very service providers which should be the subject of older persons' scrutiny efforts is now very apparent.

This paper outlines the case for BGOP's independence from other age sector bodies and also the way in which, in the medium term, whilst remaining fully committed to the government's key objective of participation of older people, financial support can be obtained from a variety of public and other sources, thus freeing the Network and OPAG from reliance on grant aid from the DWP.

As BGOP and OPAG have developed their work across government departments in recent years, there have been a number of occasions when additional resources would have been forthcoming if the organisation were a legal entity. We are confident that, subject to appropriate transitional financial arrangements, the Network and OPAG can become fully self supporting within two to three years. In major part we believe this to be the case because the issues that we have raised and championed in the past couple of years, for example, intergenerational interdependence, are now being recognised as key elements in building stronger family lives and improving community cohesion. Our emphasis on recognising that the increased and increasing diversity of our older community is a rich resource to use as a body of knowledge and skills which are available to all who wish to benefit, makes our approach relevant in many areas. Additionally, we are the only organisation which, from its outset, saw that increasing numbers of people in their middle years both want to think about and to plan for their own lives as they grow older, and, in preparation, are willing to participate and contribute to a shared approach to engagement for all. We believe that the last ten years has prepared BGOP, and OPAG within it, to be especially valuable to meet the challenge of engagement at all levels and in every area of public life which affect citizens directly.

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Revisiting Option 3

Submission to John Elbourne

Assumptions

It continues to be apparent that no single organization, however large or small, can, on its own, ensure older people's engagement with government, given the diverse nature of the older people's population. On the contrary, engagement requires more rather than fewer bodies.

Opportunities that encourage effective engagement are presently limited to a minority of Local Councils and public bodies, as shown by the Audit Commission report 'Don't Stop Me Now' (2008) (although this applies to England only).

Opportunities for the voices and views of older people to be heard directly by government are even more limited at local, national and UK levels, and, if judged on the basis of establishing a non-lobbying, non-campaigning and interdependent approach, almost invisible.

A coherent option that takes forward Better Government for Older People (BGOP)

By establishing a legal entity such as a Community of Interest Company (CIC) Older People's Advisory Groups (OPAGs) and the existing Network of local councils and public bodies from which the membership of OPAG are drawn can:

- attract additional and alternative funding streams which over two years reduce the reliance on government funding (i.e. Department for Work and Pensions);
- be responsible and accountable to a single and coherent governance body which is more conducive to managing a business entity such as a Community of Interest Company;
- focus on local, regional and national partnerships between older people and service commissioners, providers and leaders of public bodies; and
- through a partnership with regional Government Offices (GO's) in England, the Welsh Assembly Government, Welsh Local Government Association and the Scottish Government, use the relationship of local councils and public bodies

with local older people to demonstrate a range of engagement methods to meet the opportunities and challenges of engagement.

The evidence at local and regional levels is that effective partnerships do exist, and indeed flourish, with a range of national players. It is important both to build on current innovations and experiences, and to encourage and support those authorities which have, so far, been unable to demonstrate successful engagement processes.

The “New BGOP“(CIC) would therefore be able to negotiate and establish a working partnership with the developing “New Charity” (Age Concern and Help the Aged). The Governing body of the CIC will therefore have a key role in demonstrating that new partnership.

The “New BGOP” combines the best outcome of the Review’s preferred recommendation, whilst protecting the uniqueness that has for 10 years been the BGOP brand, namely direct engagement with older people and demonstrating and evidencing a wide and innovative range of partnership processes leading to positive outcomes for older people and the public sector.

The “New BGOP” would be based on a “co-operative model” between older people, public bodies and interested partners, across the age sector landscape.

A social and cultural change is required, if the aspirations of policy relating to the direct engagement with older people are to be realised by all the stakeholders and partners. This will need to be based on a diversity of approaches, of voices, of organisations and of older people themselves.

Therefore a variety of new and radical approaches will need to be developed that both build upon the Review’s recommendations and capture the countless examples and evidence which comprise the legacy of BGOP over the past decade. It is necessary therefore to sustain and further develop BGOP and we will play a crucial role in this regard.

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A “Tight-Loose” Governance Arrangement

The “New BGOP” will require:

- memoranda and articles of association;
- a declaration that the Company will not be Party Politically driven or motivated;
- legal compliance;
- compliance with regulations for financial accountability, asset management and decision making;
- a non - campaigning and non - public lobbying approach;
- activities which a reasonable person might consider to benefit a wide spectrum of members and not a particular body (see below); and
- evidence that the “New BGOP” benefits the wider community.

The arrangements for Governance will need to underpin:

- activities that benefit and enhance Older People’s engagement from all sectors, cohorts and communities;
- active and empowered communities;
- community cohesion;
- challenging the often anti-discriminatory nature of older people in engagement and civic participation; and
- participation through **civic activism**; through older people engaged formally as elected members, etc; through **civic consultation**; through creating opportunities for older people to engage in existing and new consultative groups, forums etc; through **civic participation**; and as partners with civic and public agencies.

National and regional OPAGs, alongside and with alliance partners, commercial and private enterprises, local and national councils and public bodies, will:

- influence local, regional and national policies;
- shape and co-design engagement processes;

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- share learning and best practice;
 - support local councils, health authorities, other public agencies and the third sector, alongside the Government Offices in the English regions, to help in the delivery of government policy across a range of strategic intentions and outcomes, and to assist them in meeting the recommendations from inspection and regulatory bodies;
 - support the devolved nations in the delivery of government policy across a range of strategic intentions and outcomes, and to assist them in meeting the recommendations from inspection and regulatory bodies;
 - take forward the Recommendations of “Don’t Stop Me Now” (Audit Commission 2008); and
 - facilitate and increase the spread and reach of older people’s engagement, particularly with those whose voices are seldom heard, including those from the cohort of people aged 45-55 (baby boomers), lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender community (LGBT), older people from black and other minority ethnic communities; and older people with disabilities.

Funding streams available across governments, NHS Boards and Trusts, the private sector, the European Union, etc, will be accessed to progress specific projects and innovations, as well as to contribute to the wider and longer term objectives; for example: engagement; tackling myths and stereotypes; age discrimination; equalities; human rights approaches; and independence and well-being. The “New BGOP” will primarily focus on citizen based engagement, which incorporates and thus includes those older people who are often excluded because of frailty, dependency, ageism, institutional racism, homophobia, income, geography etc.

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The Structure

The governance arrangements will reflect the legal and business requirements of the “New BGOP” (CIC) both at a UK level and through memoranda and articles of association which includes the four nations. There is no reason why the chair should not (and arguably should) be elected from UK OPAG.

The Board at UK level will have executive and non-executive membership (directors - OPAG and partners), but the balance would be 50% older people drawn from across the four nations. Each nation, however, would, through the memoranda and articles be autonomous, thus being able to attract regional and national funding streams. The regional and devolved boards will be self-governed and managed, but remain an integral part of the UK governance and management arrangements.

The Government Offices (England) will play a key, but non-governance role. It will be important for the “New BGOP” to work collaboratively with all English regional governance bodies including the Regional Development Agencies and the newly established Regional Efficiency and Improvement Partnerships.

This protects the autonomy and independence of the “New BGOP” and OPAG, as well as the autonomy of the various partners, including the Network of public sector, and voluntary groups and organisations from which OPAGs are drawn.

The existing and highly successful networks of older people’s champions and public sector lead officers already brought together in a number of regions and nations will have an independent “forum” in which to share learning and experiences, and will, in addition, have access to regional, national and UK government. This has been and continues to be one of the strengths of the BGOP enterprise. In England the GOs could provide accommodation for the “New BGOP”, but the lead officers of BGOP cannot however be government employees under the terms of the Community of Interest Companies regulations.

The “governance” has to be independently regulated, and provide statutory and non statutory funders with assurances of compliance with spending on that for which investment has been provided, with appropriate management processes in place, to remove the need for a third party host.

The actual organisational and functional structures can be co-designed between BGOP and the appropriate government department DWP, but would - in any event - need to meet the regulations for a Community of Interest Company.

The Company would thus be able to develop a strategy that reduces the direct investment presently provided by the HM Treasury through DWP in order to finance BGOP over a possible three year period. The “New BGOP” does not therefore automatically seek or require additional investment from the DWP budget heads or BGOP cost centres.

BGOP can thus be protected whilst at the same time re-enforcing its uniqueness.

The Financial Case

The underlining principles of the “New BGOP” will be founded upon:

- maintaining and developing older people’s engagement;
- the economic contribution which flows from older people and the public sector working together;
- well-being and interdependence (Transformational Government); and
- implementing UK and devolved strategies and policies in partnership.

The “New BGOP” will conduct its work and activities according to the business and financial regulations of a Community of Interest Company, drawing on the expertise of older people, public sector agencies and third sector organisations that wish to work alongside. It will provide a solid foundation for the development of its role, providing advice and evidence to local, regional, national and UK Government.

Should Option 3 be recommended by the reviewer and agreed by the Minister, we will by 17th November 2008 provide a costed business plan that will pledge to:

- outline a 3 year action plan;
- identify a three year funding strategy that increases investment from other bodies and reduces that from DWP;
- develop an operational model will include outcomes negotiated with the Network, OPAG and other partners; and
- identify a resourced performance framework regulator, that satisfies the CIC regulators requirements thus allowing funders to evaluate outcomes against their specific funding and investment.

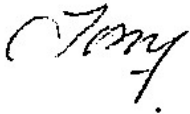
Aims and Objectives

1. Provide expert and informed advice from both OPAG and the Network with whom they are in partnership to national and UK Governments on the development of their age policies.
2. Provide focus and impetus for the debating and supporting the development of effective policies jointly designed with and between OPAG and the public sector including councils, police authorities and fire and rescue services etc.
3. Inform and advise government at all levels on all matters which have an impact on the lives of older people.



Nigel Druce OBE

Chair of the BGOP Interim Partnership Group



Tony Salter OBE

Chair of UK OPAG



Mervyn Eastman

UK BGOP Director

30th October 2008

Annex D

Contributors to the Review

I am grateful for the invaluable contributions received from the following organisations that contributed to and formed the basis of my Review:

- Age Concern England
- Anchor Trust
- Audit Commission
- Better Government for Older People
- Blackpool Borough Council
- Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council
- Camden Council
- Centre for Policy on Ageing
- City of Edinburgh Council
- Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
- Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
- Department of Health
- Early Years Equality
- Government Office for the East Midlands
- Government Office for Yorkshire and Humberside
- Government Office North West
- Government Office West Midlands
- Help the Aged
- Improvement and Development Agency for local government
- Lancashire County Council
- Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service
- Local Government Association

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- Manchester City Council
 - National Pensioners Convention
 - Nottinghamshire County Council
 - Office of Disability Issues
 - Older People's Project
 - Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme Scotland
 - Scottish Older People's Advisory Group
 - South Ribble Borough Council
 - Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council
 - UK Older People's Advisory Group
 - Welsh Assembly Government

I am also grateful for the many individuals who contributed to the Review. I have given my assurance to them that I would not be quoting individual names and so have not listed who they are but remain thankful for their input.

Annex E

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Annex F

Background to Better Government For Older People and the Older People's Advisory Group

Part of the terms of reference for the review was to examine BGOP which receives the majority of its funds from central Government via the DWP. BGOP was launched in June 1998, as part of the Government's modernising government initiative, to test out local joined-up strategies to provide better services for older people and engage them more directly. Its aim was to "improve public services for older people by better meeting their needs, listening to their views, and encouraging and recognising their contribution".

BGOP's annual income is a mixture of fixed contributions from each BGOP Partner and subscription funding from Regional and Local Authorities. The BGOP Consortium Agreement expired in April 2008 and Age Concern and Help the Aged, two funding partners, declined to sign a new agreement and opted to withdraw from the partnership. DWP is the main provider of funds, £600,000 of a total budget of £791,000 for 2008-2009.

BGOP has no legal identity and is therefore "hosted" by another organisation who are responsible for being the employer of all BGOP staff and for all contracts of service and administration of the payment of staff remuneration and for the provision of office accommodation and office services. DWP underwrite this provision which is documented in an Indemnity Agreement. The Centre for Policy on Ageing are the current hosts.

The BGOP pilot proved to be an excellent example of what can be achieved when national and local government work together with voluntary organisations, and other agencies, to provide better services for older people.

The evaluation report "Making a Difference", produced in May 2000 by Warwick University, documented a series of tangible and successful outcomes and over the following years BGOP made a positive contribution to ensuring that older people were at the heart of the government agenda. For example, better meeting the needs of older people by improving older people's access to information; developing strategic approaches; and influencing the national agenda.

There is also an extensive network of volunteers, with approximately 200 local older people's forums electing members to a national and regional structure, the OPAG network. It is claimed these forums now engage with around 500,000 older people.

OPAG was formed by older people in response to a BGOP conference in July 1999. Since its inception OPAG has been a resource frequently called upon by local and national government. OPAG has contributed and co-ordinated older people's response to numerous Green and White papers and has also shaped and informed Community Strategies, Best Value Reviews, LinkAge Plus, Partnerships for Older People Projects, Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) and the development of Local Area Agreements. It is clear that OPAG has played a central role in helping the Government's stated objective of a better quality of life for all older people and there is evidence of its value in this Report.

Annex G

John Elbourne Biography

John Elbourne has considerable experience (at Plc Board and Senior Executive) in corporate strategy development and execution in both the UK and internationally, retiring as Chief Executive of Prudential Assurance in 2001 where over a four and a half year period he led the reorganisation and restructuring of their UK insurance business and the integration of Scottish Amicable.

Prior to joining Prudential Assurance, John had been Retail Director and Deputy Group Chief Executive with TSB Group plc. He had joined them in 1991 from Legal and General where he had been Group Director, Life and Pensions.

During his career John has qualified as a Chartered Insurer and was a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Bankers as well as enjoying external representation as Board Member LAUTRO 1991-95; Member Life Insurance Council 1991-94; Board Member of Association of British Insurers 1994-96; Council Member of the Institute of Bankers 1992-95; and several Directorships.

Since December 2006 John has been a non-executive director on the Department for Work and Pensions, Pensions Client Board and also a member of their Personal Accounts Project Board.

