



Future of an Ageing Population: Local Expert Stakeholders' Roundtable - Sunderland

16 September 2014

Context

As part of the evidence gathering for the Foresight Project on the Future of Ageing, Sir Mark Walport and the Lead Expert Group are undertaking a programme of visits around the UK. The first of these visits was to Sunderland on 16 September.

Meeting

At a roundtable meeting, Sir Mark Walport and Professor Paul Boyle (a member of the Lead Expert Group) discussed with local experts the key challenges, opportunities and vision for the future of the ageing population in Sunderland and the North East. The attendee list is at Annex A.

Sunderland's population is ageing rapidly. By 2033, 24.3 per cent of people will be aged 65 or over. The UK average is 22.9 per cent. There are also widening health inequalities; the average disability free life expectancy for women in England is 64.4 years compared to 61.1 years for women in the North East. Research on ageing is the focus of a local knowledge hub at the Newcastle University Institute for Ageing.

Discussion: Key themes

The issues discussed by attendees are summarised below.

Older adults as contributors:

- The need to embed in society a more positive attitude towards ageing and the older population.
- The potential for government to take a lead role in promoting the use of positive language when discussing older people.

Transition into older age:

- "Transition" into older age as a concept that could usefully replace "cliff edge" perspectives on retirement and old age.
- The role of employers in supporting employees to plan effectively for retirement. For example, this could include circulating information on health care and finance support ahead of employees reaching State Pension Age.
- A need to ensure that self-employed individuals can access retirement planning advice and support.

Housing:

- The importance of understanding the housing wants and needs of older people.
- The need to ensure that UK housing stock can support individuals with different physical and mental health needs and capabilities.
- The need for public procurement initiatives to embrace innovation. In discussing housing developments, it was felt that public procurement routes were difficult to navigate and risked acting as barriers to new initiatives and potentially compromising the quality of outputs.

- The success social investment initiatives in the housing sector at the local level, and the potential benefits of scaling these up for national roll-out.
- **Housing 21 Scheme** was identified as a particular success. Sunderland City Council facilitated the investment of £120m into development of new housing for older people. With funding from private sector and social investors, the initiative has created hundreds of local jobs and released affordable homes.

Neighbourhoods:

- The potential for centrally locating shops and other facilities to successfully bring together people from different generations and help build cross-community support mechanisms.
- The importance of sharing knowledge, information and data across localities to promote social integration and improve health, employment and social outcomes. The Housing Learning and Improving Network was identified as a good example of an effective knowledge hub.

Business:

- The scope for businesses to benefit from the ageing population; the growing number of adults in older age might create new business opportunities as well as provide a pool of experienced workers.
- A need for employers to have access to clear information and guidance on managing the needs of older workers, and on retirement practices and legislation. This includes flexibility and choice about leaving the workforce to care for sick relatives and options to re-enter the workforce at a later date. This is particularly important for SMEs and micro-businesses.

Health:

- The need for NHS services and healthcare provision to include prevention-focused and community-based initiatives, and to link strongly to social care and the voluntary sectors and services.
- **Healthwise:** Gentoo Housing Sunderland, in partnership with the NE Dementia Alliance, has developed an IT-based system that allows staff visiting customers in their homes to share information and data. Gentoo Housing has begun to analyse data to explore whether this can be used to identify early symptoms of illnesses.

Policy delivery:

- The impact of central government policy at the regional level. In particular, the extent to which impacts would vary across the UK. For example, in areas such as the North East where healthy life expectancy is lower than the national average, the impact of policies to extend working life will be limited.

Annex A: Roundtable attendees

| Name | Organisation |
|----------------------|--|
| Mark Walport (chair) | Government Chief Scientific Adviser, Government Office for Science |
| Paul Boyle | President & Vice-Chancellor Designate, Leicester University. |
| Graham Armitage | Deputy Director of Engagement, Newcastle University Institute for Ageing |
| Richard Baker | Economic Advisor, Newcastle City Council |
| Lynne Corner | Director of Engagement, Newcastle University Institute for Ageing |
| Chris Drinkwater | Chair, Ways to Wellness |
| Barbara Douglas | Strategic Director, Quality of Life Partnership |
| Carol Jagger | AXA Professor of Epidemiology of Ageing, Newcastle University Institute for Ageing |
| Mary Nicholls | Chair, Elders Council |
| Neil Revely | Director of Adult Social Care, Sunderland |
| Julie Walker | Head of Service, Gentoo Housing Sunderland |
| Cynthia Bartley | Co-Director, Age Inclusive Ltd |
| Neil Barker | Council Member, North East Chamber of Commerce |
| Gill Usher | HR Manager, Alex Smiles Ltd |
| Wendy Kaiser | Deputy Head of Service Reform, Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group |
| Stephen Bennett | Deputy Director of Foresight, Government Office for Science |
| Jon Parke | Government Office for Science |
| Nitharna Sivarajah | Government Office for Science |