



February 2009

## Empowering engagement: a stronger voice for older people

The Government response to  
John Elbourne's review





Department for Work and Pensions

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John Elbourne's review

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# Abbreviations

<b>BGOP</b>	Better Government for Older People
<b>BME</b>	Black and minority ethnic
<b>CLG</b>	Communities and Local Government
<b>COSLA</b>	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
<b>CPA</b>	Centre for Policy on Ageing
<b>DH</b>	Department of Health
<b>DIUS</b>	Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
<b>DWP</b>	Department for Work and Pensions
<b>GO</b>	Government Office
<b>HtA</b>	Help the Aged
<b>IDeA</b>	Improvement and Development Agency for local government
<b>LGA</b>	Local Government Association
<b>LINKs</b>	Local Involvement Networks
<b>LSP</b>	Local Strategic Partnerships
<b>OPAG</b>	Older People's Advisory Group
<b>PSA</b>	Public Service Agreement
<b>POPPs</b>	Partnership for Older People Projects
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UK OPAG</b>	United Kingdom Older People's Advisory Group



## Foreword

### Empowering engagement: a stronger voice for older people

To create a more equal and just society which values all citizens, we must empower older people to have their say in the governing of their communities.

Our aim is to ensure everyone has the opportunity to shape the world in which they live, regardless of their age. We want to enable older people to influence Government policy, at local, regional and national level.

As the balance between generations changes we will rely more on the vital contribution of experienced people, and their voice must be increasingly and clearly heard in Government. John Elbourne's review helps us do this.

*Empowering engagement: a stronger voice for older people* builds on the success of *Opportunity Age – meeting the challenges of ageing in the 21st century*. First published in March 2005, this first cross-Government strategy was a crucial milestone, highlighting a dramatically changing social landscape. Developed in partnership with older people, and recognising the need to challenge outdated perceptions about later life, it sought to ensure that the right conditions were put in place to enable older people to participate fully in society.

We are committed to deepening the principles of *Opportunity Age*, both through our Public Service Agreement (PSA) to 'tackle poverty and promote greater independence and wellbeing in later life,' and by updating *Opportunity Age* this year. We will publish a refreshed strategy to chart the way forward, working with older people and their representative organisations through consultation events around the UK.

We have a good platform to build on.

We have enacted radical pension reforms, health and life expectancy is improved, and we've seen increased employment levels for older people. And by building on positive initiatives such as free bus travel and free swimming, we can do more, focused on providing a stronger voice for older people in Government.

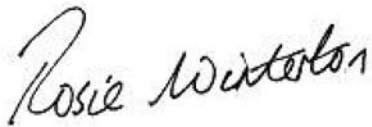
Through effective engagement of older people at all levels – local, regional and national – we can work together to make sure that policies are durable and services are truly aligned with need, aiming to make later life a time of choice, influence and aspiration.

I am grateful to John Elbourne for his report.

His recommendations, and the comments I have received, have shaped an important programme of action. We will introduce a new UK Advisory Forum on Ageing with input from the English regions and devolved nations, and build the capacity for effective dialogue at regional and local level – with Regional Forums on Ageing and strengthened local authority commitment. We want to see a strong, diverse and inclusive framework for engaging older people at all levels.

These are important changes designed to empower engagement, ensuring a stronger voice for older people in Government.

I look forward to seeing them in action.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rosie Winterton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Rt Hon Rosie Winterton MP**

**Minister of State for Pensions and the Ageing Society**



## Executive summary

1. This Government has made citizen engagement a key priority.
2. The Minister for Pensions Reform (Mike O'Brien) underlined this commitment when he announced on 22 May 2008 that John Elbourne, former Chief Executive of Prudential Assurance UK, 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 included examining the role of Better Government for Older People, a partnership of government and third-sector organisations with older people's groups. Full terms of reference for the Elbourne Review are at Annex 1.
3. The Final Report to Government was published on the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) website on 18 November 2008, following publication of emerging findings in October 2008. Comments were invited by 9 January 2009 to inform the Government response.
4. *Empowering engagement: a stronger voice for older people* is the Government's response to the review and to the lively debate it has generated. It sets out an action plan to improve the quality of life of older people through their closer engagement with government.

## John Elbourne's report

5. John Elbourne's report to Government made seven 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 be provided by 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.

### Recommendation 4

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.

### Recommendation 5

Older people's forums around the UK, including Older People's Advisory Groups (OPAGs), should be supported and built upon.

### Recommendation 6

Better Government for Older People (BGOP) is funded by DWP at current levels until the end of March 2009.

### Recommendation 7

The main funding for these proposals should come from DWP's current funding for older people's engagement.

These recommendations were broadly welcomed by the majority of those who responded to the review. The opportunity to put in place new arrangements to provide structured engagement at all levels of government was seen as important. There was a note of caution about ensuring that these complemented and sustained the best of what already existed, avoiding duplication.

## Government response

6. At the heart of its response, the Government supports the case for a new UK Advisory Forum on Ageing to provide a stronger, clearer and louder voice for older people at a national level. The Government sees a strong case for investing in a new regional role to help champion older people's voices at a regional level, and to strengthen the network of local authority forums. This will help ensure these voices are clearly heard and inform regional and national policy and delivery.
7. Working with the networks of older people's groups, and age-sector organisations, the aim is to bring about a more effective dialogue about the services and policies which most affect wellbeing in later life. This would be done as part of a new commitment to work together to oversee implementation and development of the Government's strategy for older people and an ageing society.
8. The new public sector duty, extended to cover age, forms part of the Equality Bill which the Government intends to introduce in 2009. This will require public authorities to pay due regard to age equality and good relations between the ages when planning service provision, making effective dialogue of this kind an essential priority.

## Establishing national leadership for older people in a UK Advisory Forum

9. The Government will establish a new UK-wide Forum. This will provide a means of bringing together representative views of older people at a national level, and will build links with forums in the devolved nations and the English regions. The advisory forum will be known as the UK Advisory Forum on Ageing, and will be co-chaired by the Minister for Pensions and the Ageing Society and the Minister of State for Care Services. It will have a clear focus on helping to improve the wellbeing of older people and addressing the opportunities and challenges of an ageing society. It will provide advice and support on the implementation and development of the Government's strategy for older people and an ageing society.
10. Details of the remit, membership, structure, agendas, reporting, and frequency of meetings will be developed as part of the current work to update *Opportunity Age*, the Government's Ageing Strategy. This will draw on recent developments in citizen engagement and good practice from existing, similar arrangements.

## Empowering a regional voice for older people

11. The Government will set up a new structure with a designated lead regional coordinator for older people's engagement in each English region. This will provide advocacy and coordination for older people in the region. It will take an entrepreneurial approach, working with older people to set up Regional Forums on Ageing, where they do not already exist. This will build on existing arrangements for engagement with older people and address weaknesses in the current structure – for example, the Audit Commission found that only 28% of local authorities were performing well on older people's services with meaningful engagement with older people, well-developed cross-cutting strategies and a coordinated range of services.
12. A key aim will be to encourage the appointment of local authority champions and the setting up of local forums where none exist. This will help to ensure that older people can have real influence on the development of local services and policies. There will be an important role in spreading good practice, and establishing a central register of what is in place. This will need to recognise that arrangements must be flexible to support local preferences and variations, and should ensure that all voices have an equal opportunity to be heard.
13. These arrangements recognise the vital role of regional structures and Government Offices both in terms of addressing regional issues and in terms of being a communications channel between local and national levels.

## An independent future for Better Government for Older People

14. BGOP have been trailblazers in establishing engagement in many parts of the UK. The value of their network of OPAGs is significant. BGOP's response to the challenges from John Elbourne's review has been to develop a proposal for a new independent body to carry forward their aims. This will be the start of a new phase for them. It is important that their valuable knowledge and experience is built upon and used effectively. The Government aims to ensure that this can be done by:
- ensuring there is a firmer engagement structure in place, to which BGOP can contribute;
  - providing funding to OPAGs via the new regional structures, sustaining the current level of resource committed to older people engagement; and
  - supporting BGOP to make a smooth transition into independence by providing one-off transitional funding.

## Next steps

15. The Government will take action to deliver the necessary changes set out in this response, including:
- developing a UK Advisory Forum on Ageing to advise on cross-Government policy development for older people with a particular focus on the implementation of the Government's updated *Opportunity Age* strategy;
  - putting in place a secretariat to support the Advisory Forum by 1 April 2009;
  - providing funding from April 2009 to directly support OPAGs and other forums through enhanced regional structures;
  - establishing or developing Regional Forums on Ageing in each region;
  - putting in place regional coordinators to strengthen the network of local authority forums and to champion older people;
  - setting up processes to ensure the views of older people at a local level are systematically captured to inform Government at all levels;
  - providing a structure so that local and regional forums feed into and inform the UK Advisory Forum on Ageing;

- developing communication channels to support discussion between all forums and the sharing of notable practice;
- developing a central register of the Forums in regions and local authority areas in which older people can participate;
- working with local government to enhance awareness and understanding of the new duties contained in the forthcoming Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill;
- working with local government to enhance awareness and understanding of the new duties contained in the forthcoming Equalities Bill;
- providing guidelines for the strategic engagement of older people for the benefit of local authorities and other organisations;
- working with Regional Empowerment Partnerships;
- engaging all Regional Ministers with their regional forums; and
- supporting BGOP to become an independent entity.





# 1 John Elbourne's report and responses

- 1.1 On 22 May 2008, the Minister for Pensions Reform (Mike O'Brien) announced that John Elbourne, former Chief Executive of Prudential Assurance, 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*'. The terms of reference for the Elbourne Review can be found at Annex 1.
- 1.2 This included examining the role of BGOP, a partnership established in 1998 to promote older people's engagement with government. Partner organisations have included DWP, Age Concern, Help the Aged, the Anchor Trust and the Local Government Association. BGOP has established a network including over 200 older people's advisory groups.
- 1.3 The Final Report of the review was published on the DWP website on 18 November 2008<sup>1</sup>. The Executive Summary is attached at Annex 2. The Government invited views on the report before considering its response. This section provides a summary of the written feedback received from 46 organisations and individuals.

## Key findings

- 1.4 There was strong support for the principles adopted in the review, and for the key findings and recommendations. The majority of respondents expressed real enthusiasm and support for taking forward the review's recommendations. Respondents particularly welcomed the recommendations to establish a UK Advisory Forum on Ageing and to build on existing OPAGs and other forums.

## 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.

- 1.5 There was wide support for this recommendation and several respondents made the point that there needs to be a clear national focus and strong leadership to bring about really effective engagement and consistency of practice across the UK.

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<sup>1</sup> *Review of Older People's Engagement with Government – John Elbourne's Report to Government (2008)*  
<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/resourcecentre/john-elbourne-181108.pdf>

## 10 John Elbourne's report and responses

- 1.6 Many respondents stated that older people themselves should be involved, not just age sector groups and Government Departments, to capture older people's experience at grass-roots level. Some made the point that by including older people this would ensure that the voice of older people is at the heart of government, with an open route to the Ministerial ear. Others commented that the inclusion of older people would ensure that a 'bottom-up' approach leads the agenda, not 'top down' from the Forum.
- 1.7 Some respondents made the suggestion that local authorities and current forums must be involved in developing the new structure. Further to this, some replies advocated the need to ensure as much support as possible at local authority level to encourage a broader view of the issues and an opportunity for work at a local level through sharing best practice and supporting networking.
- 1.8 Other replies, while agreeing with the principles, sought more detail on how the new arrangements might work and suggested that, for example membership could be time-limited, that a co-chair might be considered, and that a national forum might be more appealing with representation from the academic sector.

### Recommendation 2

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

- 1.9 Those that responded to this recommendation agreed with it, although one respondent did raise the question that government officials might not be best placed to support the 'independent' nature of the Forum.

### Recommendation 3

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

- 1.10 There was general support for this recommendation with some older people's groups in particular suggesting it was the best way to go. Some respondents noted it is timely to redistribute resources to bring about a step change and put in place a regional structure of support for older people's forums and groups. Others said it could bring about a broader-based approach and that by supporting the formation of local networks it will be easier to cascade information and share best practice.
- 1.11 Replies to this recommendation also agreed that Government Offices play a key role in supporting and encouraging regional and local government, and are best placed to maximise the development of engagement with older people. Other replies welcomed the opportunity to work with Government Offices to assist in driving forward the better engagement of older people.
- 1.12 Those respondents already working with Government Offices said it had helped to build a continuing dialogue across a range of issues and suggested that it could be



further enhanced by the provision of guidelines for the strategic engagement of older people for the benefit of local authorities and other organisations.

- 1.13 In supporting the recommendation, some raised concerns that Government Offices did not have the experience and expertise to undertake this role and argued they should be provided with the resources and tools to support this change. It was suggested that it would be best to set the resource level and let the individual Government Offices work with their regions to arrive at the best method of support. Other responses suggested that this recommendation could be implemented effectively if Government Offices involved older people themselves, as already happens in some areas, to improve the connection between older people and government. Involving older people would, respondents said, also help maintain the independence of older people's organisations.

#### Recommendation 4

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.

- 1.14 Responses to this recommendation showed widespread support. Most respondents suggested that engagement needs to be considered as a two-way process, seeking to create opportunities for citizens to contribute and assist in bringing about solutions and improvements. In addition, replies called for strategies for developing engagement to identify and embrace different approaches to ensure the views of all older people are heard, including disability and gender as well as race, religion, belief and sexual orientation.
- 1.15 Some views were expressed that Regional Forums have an important role to play in ensuring local forums are engaged at regional and national levels and that local authorities need to link up with other local authorities and national agencies to develop effective and sustainable engagement mechanisms. The importance of good communications channels between the local and regional level was also mentioned.
- 1.16 More specifically some respondents said that each local authority should have a duty to have a nominated Older People's Lead with a clearly defined role, as engagement with older people takes place best at the local level and because local authorities are the main vehicle of change for older people's quality of life.
- 1.17 Some views were expressed that while the recommendation was accepted, meaningful engagement is already taking place in some areas and that these links had been developed informally over time. Other replies said that some local authorities resent having dialogue and co-operation with voluntary groups.

#### Recommendation 5

Older people's forums around the UK, including Older People's Advisory Groups (OPAGs), should be supported and built upon.

## 12 John Elbourne's report and responses

- 1.18 There was broad support for this recommendation. Specific comments included the need to ensure mechanisms are in place to enable everyone to contribute, and the point was made that not everyone belongs to a forum and not everyone has access to email or internet. Respondents said that forums including OPAGs must be challenged as well as resourced to engage with minority groups and those that are hard to reach.
- 1.19 Some of the comments received argued that funding should be directed to those forums already in existence and they should all receive equitable access to resources. The view was that future proposals must enhance what is already in place and build on existing networks developed by BGOP and others.
- 1.20 Comments received also agreed that coverage and effectiveness of local forums can be patchy but it was unclear how the Regional Forums and older people's forums would work together.

### Recommendation 6

Better Government for Older People (BGOP) is funded by DWP at current levels until the end of March 2009.

- 1.21 Of the comments received on this recommendation, the majority agreed with it. A number of respondents, including some regional BGOP and OPAG members, acknowledged that it was time to move on from the present arrangements in order to bring about a much needed step-change.
- 1.22 A few replies commented on the previous contribution of the BGOP programme referring to the BGOP/Public Studies Institute Report 'Beyond the Tick Box'<sup>2</sup> and the positive progress that has been made as a result, particularly in some local authority areas and with national programmes such as the Partnership for Older People Projects (POPPs) pilots. These respondents felt that the legacy of BGOP, and in particular OPAG, ought not to be lost as a result of the changes proposed.
- 1.23 BGOP submitted proposals to become an independent organisation which will in future seek funding from a range of sources.

### Recommendation 7

The main funding for these proposals should come from DWP's current funding for older people's engagement.

- 1.24 While no dissenting comments to this recommendation were received, one response was keen to see how future funding arrangements would work in the devolved nations. Of the other responses received, in welcoming the recommendations it was suggested sustainability needed to be ensured by a three to five-year commitment to them, and that this recommendation coupled with the earlier recommendations represented a sensible way forward.

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<sup>2</sup> *Beyond the tick box: Older Citizen Engagement in UK Local Government*. October 2007



## 2. Government response

### Approach

- 2.1 The Government has carefully considered the findings of John Elbourne's Review and the comments made by those who responded to it. It is clear that there is strong support for an approach which addresses a number of general themes:
- a) engaging older people and government at all levels, to address the changing nature of later life in an ageing society.**
- 2.2 Our ageing population will change our society in many ways. Expectations are changing. People are living healthier, more active lives and for longer than their parents or grandparents. Attitudes are beginning to change: many people now think differently about what they want from their old age and, in fact, what 'old age' actually is. At such a time of change it is crucial that there is an effective partnership between older people and government to ensure we can take the opportunities presented by an ageing society. This can involve on the one hand local service issues or on the other, national strategy, policy or culture changes.
- b) working with other wider developments to support and encourage local authorities to develop effective engagement.**
- 2.3 Ambitions for greater local involvement were set out in the White Paper, *Communities in Control: real people, real power*.<sup>3</sup> The commitments to increased citizen involvement are being taken forward in the current Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill. This will provide local people with greater opportunities to participate in decision-making processes, and introduce new rights to shape local services. This includes:
- Extending the duty to involve – this duty already applies to best value local authorities, but from April 2009 is being extended to partner organisations to give citizens and communities more opportunities to have a meaningful say.
  - Duty on local authorities to respond to petitions – improving transparency in local decision-making and the extent which citizens feel able to influence local decisions.
  - Duty to promote democracy – by ensuring local authorities raise awareness of their work so people can find out how decisions are made, how to make their voice heard and how to stand for a civic role.

<sup>3</sup> Communities and Local Government, *Communities in Control: real people, real power*, 2008 (<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/communitiesincontrol>)

## 14 Government response

2.4 It is important that regional and local-level government ensures that older people see the full benefits of these new duties and rights. This will include working with Regional Empowerment Partnerships and learning from the network of 18 pathfinder local authorities.

### **c) helping spread good practice**

2.5 Even though there is a range of established good practice in engaging with older people, the picture remains very patchy, as recognised by the Audit Commission in their 2008 report *Don't Stop Me Now*<sup>4</sup>. They found that engaging with older people does not rank high in the list of priorities for many local authorities; although when elected members, chief executives and directors in local authorities want it to happen then it usually does.

2.6 In the 2009 Beacon Scheme round for local authorities, Round 10, there is a specific theme of 'positive engagement of older people.' Although the Beacon Scheme is restricted to England, experience has shown the benefit of sharing learning across local authorities throughout the UK, and we will therefore look to see how we can build on this to spread good practice across the UK.

2.7 There will be an important role in helping all local authorities to understand and adopt the lessons from good practice generally, and perhaps especially that emerging from the current Beacon Scheme round.

2.8 The extent of older people's forums across the UK is impressive and very many older people are already involved. A precise picture at a national level is hard to find, but it is estimated that there are over 650 active senior citizens forums in the UK. Groups include: the Speaking Up For Our Age network, established by Help the Aged; Age Concern representative forums; OPAGs and other independent groups.

2.9 Despite this, there are still areas where older people do not have the opportunity to make their voices heard. In addition, much more needs to be done to ensure we are hearing the voices of more diverse groups who are often excluded from engagement through issues such as language difficulties or mobility issues. This patchy coverage of engagement at a local level is exacerbated by an underdeveloped approach to hearing these voices at either a regional or a national level. This is why we will set up a central record of older people's forums in each region to identify gaps in provision.

2.10 These general themes have informed the Government response to the Elbourne Review.

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<sup>4</sup> Audit Commission, *Don't stop me now: Preparing for an ageing population*, 2008

## John Elbourne's recommendations

- 2.11 John Elbourne's seven recommendations fall into three broad areas:
- Establishing a UK Advisory Forum on Ageing.
  - Enhancing the role of Government Offices through funding to support and develop engagement, including through Regional Forums, OPAGs and other local older people's forums.
  - Continuing BGOP funding until March 2009 and supporting a new regional structure to increase older people's engagement at a local, regional and national level.
- 2.12 The following sections provide the Government's response in each of these broad areas.

### Establishing national leadership for older people in a UK Advisory Forum

- 2.13 The Government welcomes the recommendation to establish a UK Advisory Forum as a means of bringing together representative views of older people at a national level. A UK Advisory Forum on Ageing will be established and co-chaired by the Minister of State for Pensions and the Ageing Society and the Minister of State for Care Services.
- 2.14 The remit of the Forum will include a clear focus on advising Government on improving the wellbeing of older people and addressing the opportunities and challenges of an ageing society. It will also provide advice and support for the implementation and development of the Government's strategy for older people and an ageing society. This should include:
- **Reviewing progress** on improving independence and wellbeing in later life, with reference to the relevant PSAs and national and local indicators.
  - **Creating an age-friendly society** – doing more to tackle stereotypes about old age, to change attitudes and to make sure that services are well designed and accessible to people of any age.
  - **Encouraging better preparation for later life** – both through planning for the future financially and encouraging people to think much earlier about what they might want and need as they grow older so that they can plan and prepare at a much earlier stage.

- **Helping people to live well in later life** – by creating opportunities for people to remain active in society throughout their life. This might be by continuing to work, through volunteering or remaining active in their community or within their family.
- **Providing stronger protection and support** – by doing more to join up services, promote the take-up of benefits and make sure that people can get support and help from those that they trust when and how they need it.

2.15 The Forum could also establish sub-groups to consider specific policy areas. For example, these might include housing, employment, rural issues, joined-up services etc. Existing committees or forums might often carry out these roles. A starting point would be the current Opportunity Age Strategy Partnership Group's sub-groups.

2.16 The Forum's remit should recognise the devolved aspects of government in the UK, and the need for cross-nation discussion on reserved issues. Figure 1 shows how the coverage of devolved nations' strategies for older people and an ageing society will contribute to a UK Strategy. The UK Forum's remit should be aligned with the coverage of *Opportunity Age*, i.e. reserved issues and devolved issues for England.

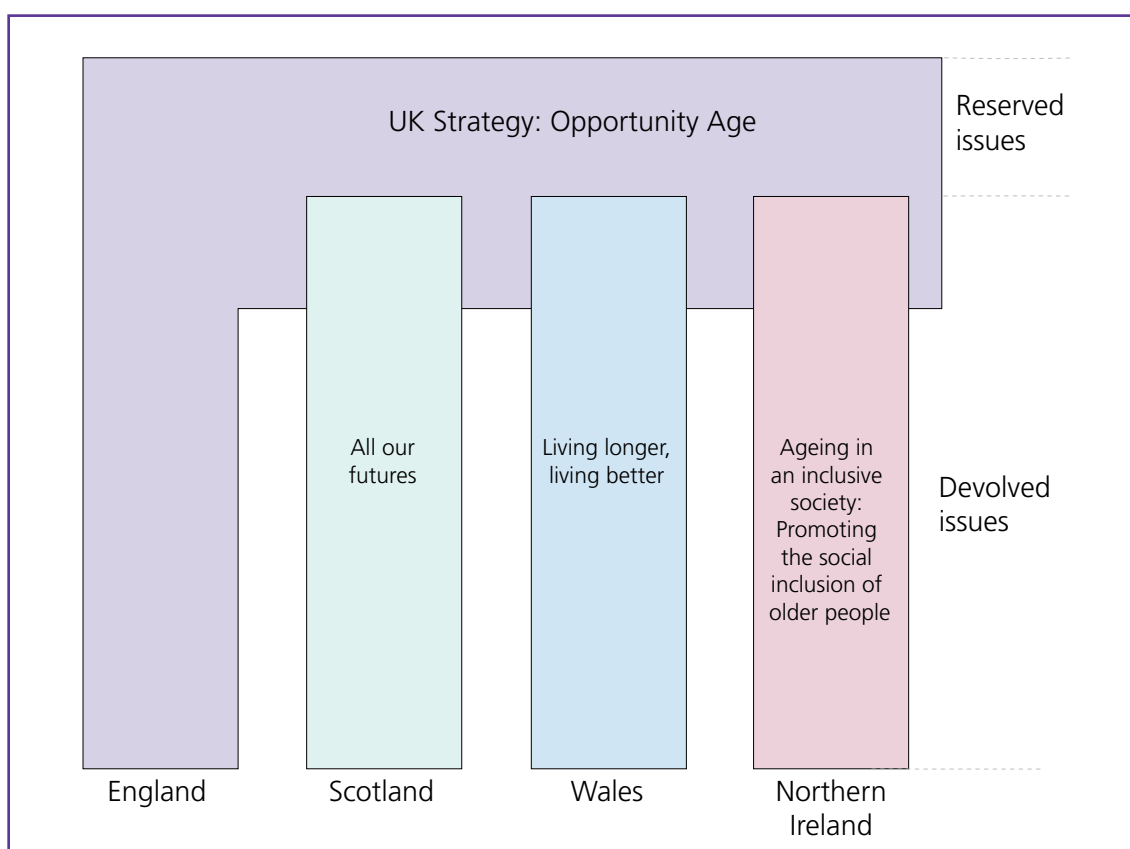


Figure 1: UK strategies for older people and ageing society

- 2.17 **Membership:** In order to listen to, and allow the Forum to act as a representative voice of, older people in a structured way, membership will consist of Ministers and representatives from devolved administrations, older people and organisations of and for older people, local government organisations and regional forums on ageing. Other potential members might include unions/employer organisations, academics, service providers and other third-sector organisations. Figure 2 provides an illustration of how membership of the Forum might be composed.

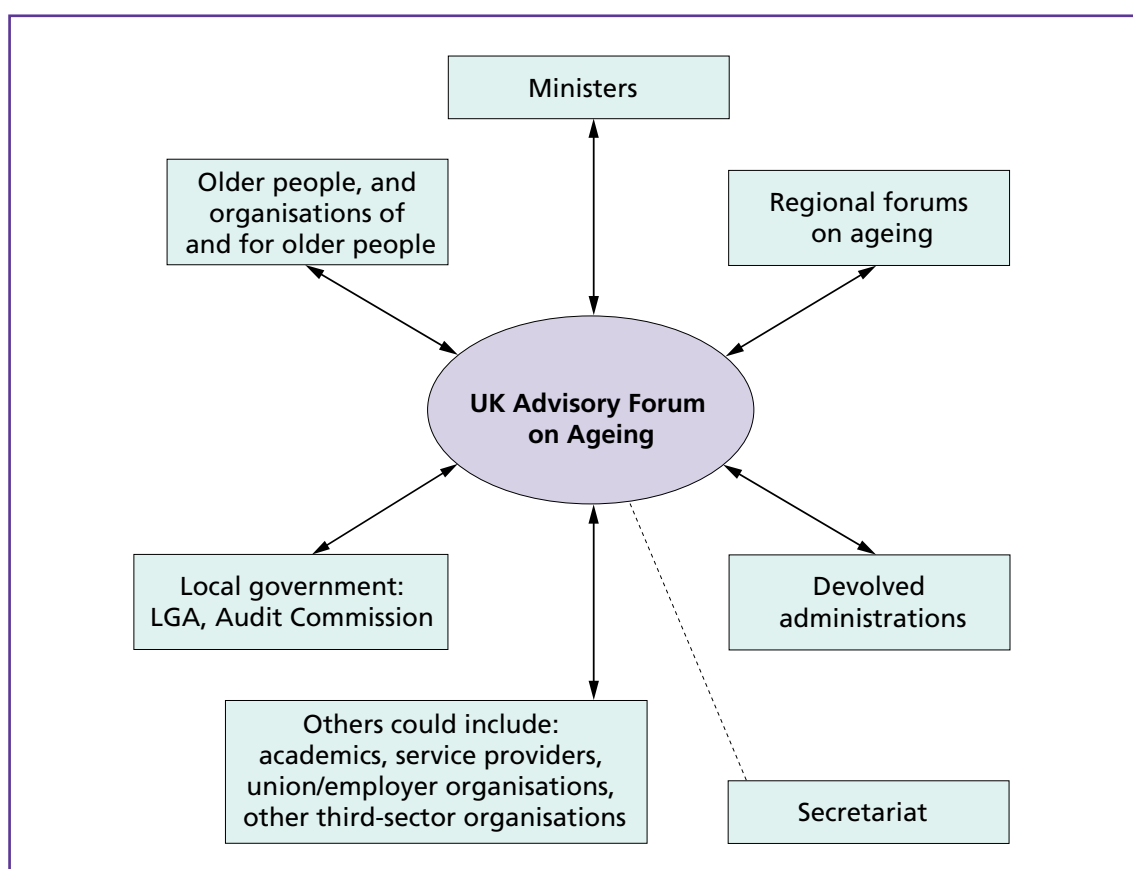


Figure 2: Illustration of model for national engagement

- 2.18 **Links to devolved nation and regional forums:** Responsibility for engagement is a devolved issue alongside responsibility for local government, and devolved administrations have established their own forums at national and local level. An important function of the Forum will be to build links between the forums in the devolved nations and the English regions (see Figure 3).
- 2.19 **Frequency of meetings:** It is proposed that the Forum should meet roughly quarterly. It would have standing items of reviewing progress with strategy implementation and progress against outcomes and indicators.

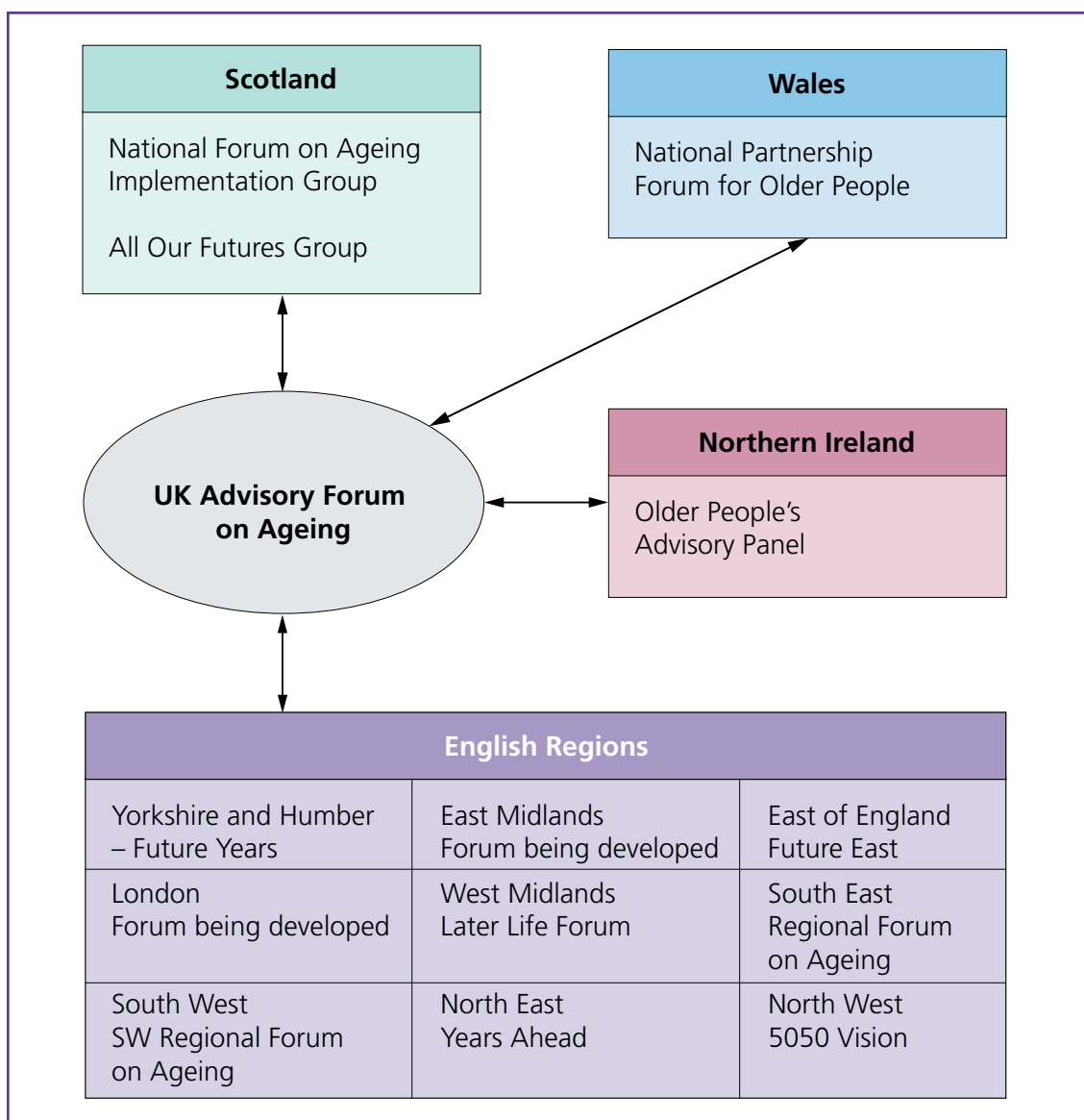


Figure 3: UK forums for older people and ageing society

- 2.20 **Inputs to the Forum:** This could include for example, progress reports from DWP and other government departments on strategy implementation, advice from regional forums, reports from sub-groups, information from surveys, research and focus groups as well as views of individual members and the organisations they represent.
- 2.21 **Outputs:** The Forum's co-chairs will ensure that advice on policy development is communicated to Government Ministers and departments and any relevant Cabinet Committees.
- 2.22 **The Secretariat:** Will be established in the DWP. In addition to servicing meetings of the Forum, it could help channel input from members into wider national consultations, and interact across the network of regional structures and coordinators to ensure effective feedback mechanisms are in place.



- 2.23 The terms of reference will be decided by the Forum at its first meeting. A detailed draft will be developed through the ongoing work to refresh the Government's Ageing Strategy. Best practice from existing, similar arrangements will be considered; and DWP stakeholders, Forum members and their organisations, and other older people's engagement groups will be encouraged to contribute.

## Devolved administrations

- 2.24 The UK Government will continue to work closely with the devolved administrations, while recognising that each have their own national arrangements for engaging with older people. We would welcome their membership at official level of the UK Advisory Forum on Ageing and will work with the administrations to ensure that all UK citizens have the opportunity to influence and input into policy decisions. DWP officials will also support the devolved administrations and the English regions through a small central team in order to help spread good practice, support existing work programmes, and coordinate strategies.

## Empowering a regional voice for older people

- 2.25 There are three key roles at regional level which can contribute to improving older people's engagement with government. The Government will seek to develop these, including:
- **A communications channel between local, regional and national levels.** Seeking to ensure that, where there are common themes among the issues facing older people in their communities, these are brought to the attention of national government. This will also ensure that the implications of government policy are communicated and discussed in their own regional and local context.
  - **Facilitating a dialogue on regional priorities for older people.** Helping to develop a clear sense of strategic direction for the region's older population and providing leadership on specific issues that affect the region; building relationships between older people, key stakeholders, local services and different arms of government across the region.
  - **Helping to spread good practice locally.** Working with local authorities to spread good ideas, for example by working with Beacon Councils.
- 2.26 The key players here include the Government Offices and the Regional Ministers. Government Offices can provide the administrative hub for much of this activity and are well placed to develop the necessary relationships with other partners; and the Regional Minister has a crucial leadership role, especially through their direct link to national government.

2.27 An enhanced role for Government Offices in extending and strengthening engagement with older people at a local and regional level will help to embed ageing-society issues firmly in regional planning and strategy development. The aim will be to ensure that there is strong local engagement across each region and this effectively informs the regional level (see Figure 4). At a local level this should build on developments such as the Local Involvement Networks (LINKs), which local authorities are setting up to coordinate engagement in health and social care.

2.28 Figure 4 indicates the wide range of different groups and forums who feed into local authorities. The nature of this diverse coverage is, however, very variable between local authorities. An enhanced regional role is intended to help local authorities to ensure good practice and effective models are spread widely.

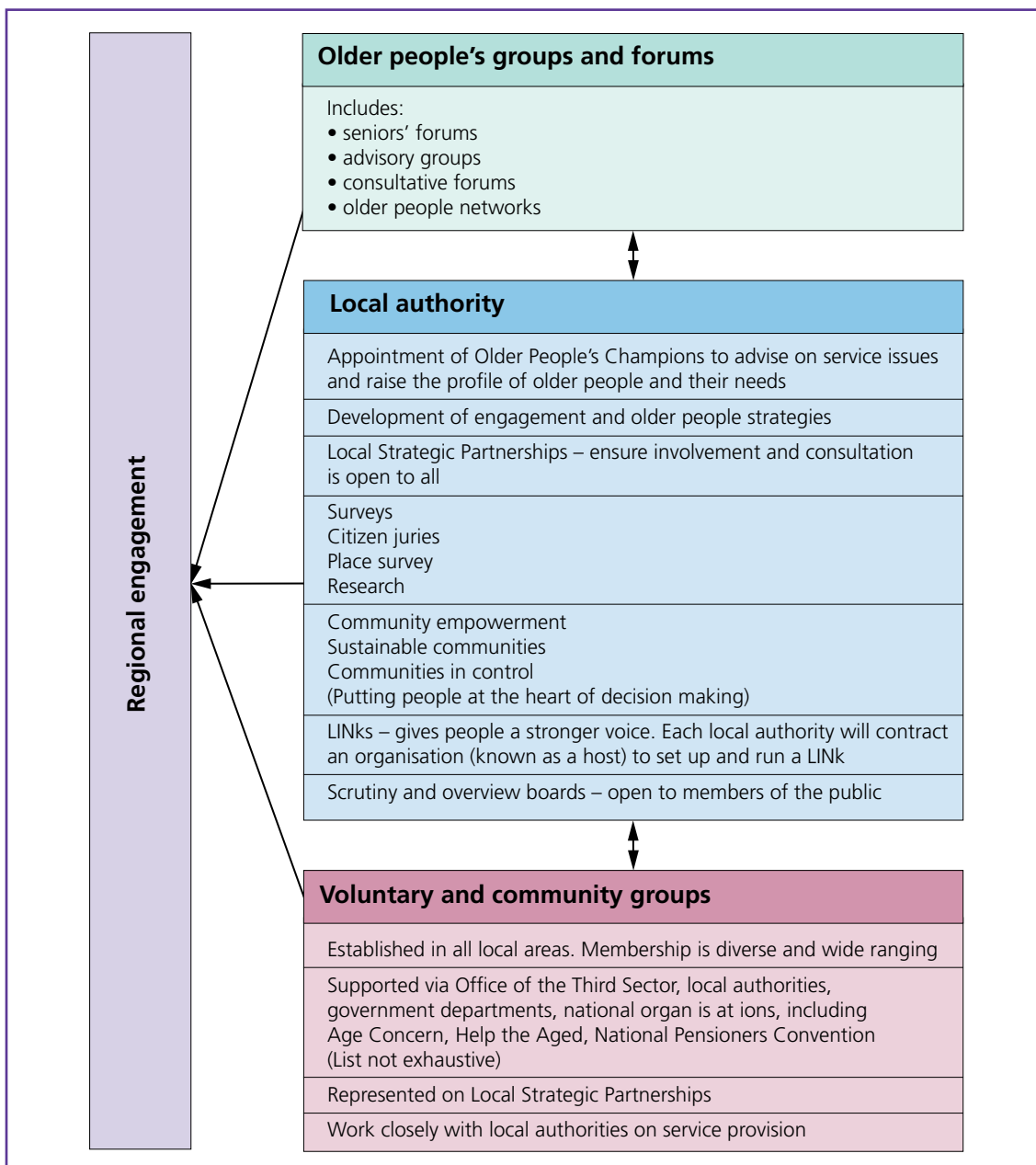


Figure 4: Mechanisms for local engagement

- 2.29 This will complement other regional structures, for example, in the OPAGs and third-sector organisations.
- 2.30 The arrangements will need to be flexible to accommodate any changes arising from the Sub National Review<sup>5</sup>, including working with the new Leaders Boards that will be set up in every region to replace regional assemblies.
- 2.31 The Government has agreed new responsibilities for Government Offices to incorporate these three roles. DWP will provide funding for this from 2009/10. This will include:
- providing funding to **support OPAGs and other forums**;
  - supporting the establishment and operation of **Regional Forums and Coordinators**; and
  - building a direct **relationship with a national forum**, and establishing systems to ensure the voices of older people are heard.
- 2.32 The Government has already announced its intention to refresh the *Opportunity Age* strategy and envisages regional and local forums will play a key role in helping to deliver the improved outcomes for older people from this strategy.
- 2.33 The exact role of each Government Office will vary between regions according to needs, existing infrastructure and Regional Minister preferences. This is a new role for Government Offices and the Government recognises that its support will be critical in establishing the role effectively.
- 2.34 The Government will work with Government Offices to identify outcomes that will lead to the delivery of the refreshed Ageing Strategy, and, in particular, effective engagement at a local and regional level. To support this each Government Office will:
- appoint a named senior officer to lead on older people's engagement, specifically to provide an effective contribution to the UK Advisory Forum on Ageing;
  - put in place a regional coordinator to strengthen the network of local authority forums and to champion older people;
  - work with local authorities and other key stakeholders to develop engagement mechanisms and to support implementation of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill and the new single public sector duty extended to cover age from the forthcoming Equality Bill;
  - undertake a mapping exercise to identify the extent of engagement within each region, and then take steps to encourage gaps to be filled by new forums;

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<sup>5</sup> *Sub National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration*, July 2007. The Government response to the consultation was published in November 2008.

## 22 Government response

- work with local authorities and others to develop methods of two-way engagement and capturing views from diverse and minority groups;
- work with the Regional Ministers to ensure visible leadership at the highest level; and
- create a planned programme of work according to regional needs including, for example: 'an audience with' for older people within different regions; the development and launch of a communications strategy; and annual meetings with Older People Champions.

2.35 The Government is committed to directing the bulk of ongoing funding to support: the development of these new arrangements; a new enhanced role for Government Offices and the extension of local and regional arrangements for engagement.

2.36 Figure 5 provides an overview of the future structure and relationship between forums at a local, regional and national level. The Government acknowledges that processes will need to be developed to ensure the systematic capture of views of older people. By building a structured relationship, it is intended to provide not only the means to hear views but also to have a two-way dialogue with older citizens.

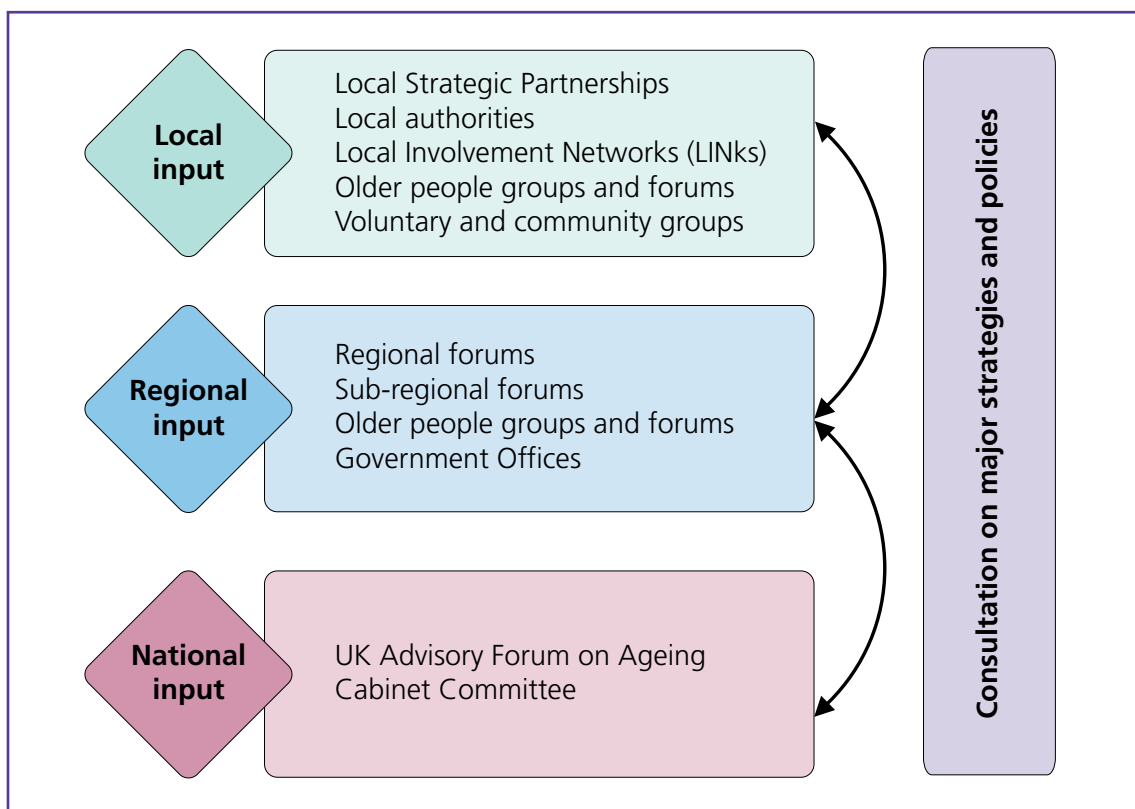


Figure 5: Overview of the future structure for older people's engagement

## Better Government for Older People

- 2.37 BGOP was established in 1998 to improve public services for older people by promoting their engagement with Government and was instrumental in the setting up of OPAGs – a network including over 200 older people's forums. BGOP and its associated funding was underpinned by a Consortium Agreement between DWP, Age Concern England, Help the Aged, and Anchor Trust, who made up the financial partners and sat on the BGOP Partnership Board. Non-funding partners – the OPAG and the Local Government Association – also sat on the Partnership Board.
- 2.38 When the Consortium Agreement expired on 30 April 2008, Help the Aged and Age Concern England withdrew from the partnership. John Elbourne's Review identified a range of factors suggesting that it was time to move on. These included: changes in the landscape of government and non-government activity; increasing difficulties in operating BGOP's complex governance structure; and partners identifying different ways to move forward on engagement.
- 2.39 BGOP's response to the challenges from John Elbourne's review has been to develop a proposal for a new independent body to carry forward their aims. This would be the start of a new phase for them. The Government will no longer provide ongoing core funding for BGOP but will help them to make a strong start to this new phase by providing funding to OPAGs, via Government Offices.
- 2.40 Such a new organisation could play an important part alongside the new arrangements set out in this document. This could include: further developing local forums; working with Government Offices at regional level; and using the tiered structure of UK OPAG to escalate issues and engage at regional and national level.
- 2.41 DWP intends to support BGOP into independence and will discuss with BGOP about providing one-off funding for infrastructure and other start-up costs which will establish strong support for the OPAG network. In addition, government departments will discuss with BGOP funding for specific pieces of work they will be undertaking.





## 3. Next steps

- 3.1 The Government will take actions to deliver the necessary changes set out in this response, including:
- Development of a UK Advisory Forum on Ageing as part of the work to update the Government's Ageing Strategy:
    - ◆ to provide a clear focus on improving the wellbeing of older people and addressing the opportunities and challenges of an ageing society;
    - ◆ as a key asset for providing advice and support for the implementation and development of the Government's UK-wide Strategy for Older People and an Ageing Society;
    - ◆ to recognise the devolved aspects of government in the UK;
    - ◆ with potential to establish sub-groups to consider specific policy issues; and
    - ◆ for membership to include Ministers, local government organisations, older people and organisations of and for older people, Regional Forums on Ageing, with membership from other interested parties to be consulted upon and developed further.
  - Putting in place a secretariat to support the Advisory Forum by 1 April 2009:
    - ◆ with key functions to include servicing meetings of the Forum, interacting across the network of Government Office leads and ensuring effective feedback mechanisms are in place.
  - Providing funding from April 2009 to support of OPAGs and other forums through enhanced regional structures.
  - Establishing or developing Regional Forums on Ageing in each region, through Government Offices:
    - ◆ to embrace existing Regional Forums and provide impetus to establish forums where they do not exist already.
  - Putting in place regional coordinators to strengthen the network of local authority forums and to champion older people.
  - Providing a new structure so that local and Regional Forums feed into and inform the UK Advisory Forum on Ageing:
    - ◆ specifically to encourage all Regional Forums to be represented on the UK Advisory Forum on Ageing.

- Developing communication channels to support discussion between all forums and the sharing of notable practice.
- Developing a central register of the Forums in regions and local authority areas in which older people can participate.
- Working with local government to enhance awareness and understanding of the new duties contained in the forthcoming Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill and Equality Bill. Setting up new processes to ensure the views of older people at a local level are systematically captured to inform government at all levels and to support implementation of these Bills:
  - ◆ to include a mapping exercise to identify the extent of engagement coverage within each region.
  - ◆ to work with local authorities and other key stakeholders to develop engagement mechanisms.
- Providing guidelines for the strategic engagement of older people for the benefit of local authorities and other organisations.
- Appointing Dame Joan Bakewell as an independent and informed advocate on age equality issues, with a remit to facilitate public debate on age discrimination in advance of and during the passage of the Equality Bill, which the Government intends to introduce in 2009.
- Working with Regional Empowerment Partnerships.
- Engaging all Regional Ministers with their regional forums.
- Supporting BGOP to become an independent entity.





## Annex 1

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

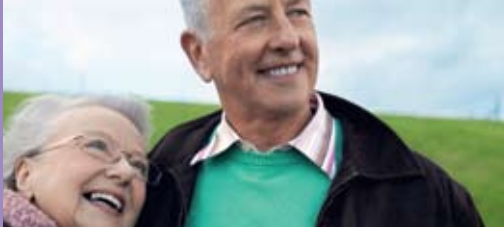
Minister for Pensions Reform (Mike O'Brien) announced on 22 May 2008 that John Elbourne had been asked to:

*'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 2

### Executive summary of John Elbourne's final report (reprinted from the report)

#### 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.

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.
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 grass-roots 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;
  - 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.

## 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.
- 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.
- 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 on 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**



## Annex 3

### Full list of respondents

- Age Concern Eastern Region
- Anne Gorton
- Audrey Brightwell
- Better Government for Older People
- Better Government for Older People North Yorkshire
- Better Government for Older People South Lanarkshire
- Buckinghamshire Fifty Plus Forum
- Bury Older People's Forum
- Chris Greenhalgh
- Counsel and Care
- Cumbria County Council
- D Brown
- Dave Martin
- Derby City Council
- Elsie Richardson
- Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Florence Lyons
- Future Years, Yorkshire & Humber Regional Forum on Ageing
- Lancashire County Council
- Liverpool Primary Care Trust
- Local Government Association

- Manchester City Council
- Marlow People's Action Group
- Merseyside Pensioners Convention
- National Pensioner's Convention
- North Yorkshire County Council
- Nottinghamshire County Council
- Nottinghamshire County Council Adult Social Care & Health Department
- Older People's Advisory Group Lane End
- Older People's Advisory Group North East
- Older People's Commissioner for Wales
- Pendle Senior Forum
- Professor Brian Groombridge
- Scottish Government
- Stevenage Borough Council
- Suffolk Coastal District Council
- Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council Older People's Partnership
- Telford & Wrekin Council
- Transport and General Workers Union Retired Members' Association
- UK Older People's Advisory Group
- UNISON Devon County Retired Members' Branch
- UNITE Retired Member's Association Cleveland – Darlington
- Vera Bolter
- Welsh Assembly Government
- Welsh Local Government Association
- Wirral Older People's Parliament





## Annex 4

### Equality impact assessment

#### **Name and contact details of the officer responsible for this assessment:**

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*From 9 February 2009:*

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**Name of senior responsible officer:** Charlie Massey

#### **Purpose and aims:**

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 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 those needs.'*

### **Emerging findings (October 2008):**

1. *To establish a UK Advisory Forum for Older People, supported by regional forums.*
2. *To enhance the role of Government Offices in supporting and developing engagement with older people.*
3. *OPAGs around the UK should be supported and built upon.*

### **Final recommendations to Government (18 November 2008):**

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.*
2. *Secretariat services for the UK Advisory Forum for Older People be provided by government officials.*
3. *Enhance the role of Government Offices in supporting and developing engagement with older people, supported by the UK Advisory Forum for Older People secretariat.*
4. *Address relevant findings from the Audit Commission 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.*
5. *Older people's forums around the UK, including OPAGs, should be supported and built upon.*
6. *BGOP is funded by DWP at current levels until the end of March 2009.*
7. *The main funding for these proposals should come from DWP's current funding for older people's engagement.*

### **Government Response (3 February 2009)**

The Government will take actions to implement the necessary changes set out in its response, including:

- developing a UK Advisory Forum on Ageing to advise on cross-Government policy development for older people with a particular focus on the implementation of the Government's updated *Opportunity Age* strategy;
- putting in place a secretariat to support the Advisory Forum by 1 April 2009;
- providing funding from April 2009 to directly support OPAGs and other forums through enhanced regional structures;
- establishing or developing Regional Forums on Ageing in each region;
- putting in place regional coordinators to strengthen the network of local authority forums and to champion older people;

- setting up processes to ensure the views of older people at a local level are systematically captured to inform Government at all levels;
- providing a structure so that local and regional forums feed into and inform the UK Advisory Forum on Ageing;
- developing communication channels to support discussion between all forums and the sharing of notable practice;
- developing a central register of the Forums in regions and local authority areas in which older people can participate;
- working with local government to enhance awareness and understanding of the new duties contained in the forthcoming Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill;
- working with local government to enhance awareness and understanding of the new duties contained in the forthcoming Equalities Bill;
- providing guidelines for the strategic engagement of older people for the benefit of local authorities and other organisations;
- working with Regional Empowerment Partnerships;
- engaging all Regional Ministers with their regional forums; and
- supporting BGOP to become an independent entity.

### **Who will benefit:**

Older people themselves, and, in particular, the 'harder to reach'. For example, John Elbourne recommended '*Regional Forums supporting their respective local authorities to develop effective engagement strategies, to ensure a true diversity of older people's voices are heard*'. Regional strategies could identify and embrace different approaches to ensure the views of all older people are heard, i.e. including BME elders, faith groups, older lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups.

Local authorities should also benefit – they will have the opportunity of supplying goods and services that older people actually want, thereby effectively directing resources and saving waste and poor take-up.

### **Impact of changes:**

Current systems for capturing the views of older people are patchy. 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. Structured processes need to be put in place to ensure that all older people, and especially isolated or hard-to-reach minority groups, have the opportunity and easily accessible access routes to be able to do this.

For example, some respondents to John Elbourne's Emerging Findings made the point that a majority of forums meet in large towns and cities and therefore remain inaccessible to many older people. By enhancing the role of Government Offices, and by developing effective engagement strategies, it is envisaged that this will bring together older people's groups of different types and facilitate other ways of older people having a voice.

The Government will, as part of the process of implementing its response, be engaging actively with stakeholders, including existing forums, and the wider community to identify effective ways to capture the diverse views and perspectives of all older people. Government is particularly concerned to develop structures and processes that will open the opportunity of engagement with government at a national, regional and local level to all older people, including those currently unheard, under-represented or difficult to identify, for example older people in the transgender community, older gypsies and travellers, and older homeless people.

### **Consultation and involvement:**

John Elbourne commenced his review on 22 May 2008, holding one-to-one meetings with:

- Camden Council
- Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS)
- Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)
- Edinburgh Council
- Audit Commission
- Office of Disability Issues and Early Years Equality
- Improvement and Development Agency for local government (IDeA)
- Senior managers of:
  - ◆ Better Government for Older People (BGOP)
  - ◆ Older People's Advisory Group (OPAG)
  - ◆ Centre for Policy on Ageing (CPA)
  - ◆ Help the Aged (HtA)
  - ◆ Age Concern
  - ◆ the Local Government Association (LGA)
  - ◆ Anchor Trust
- Senior officials at DWP.

He also held meetings with other groups such as:

- National Pensioners Convention
- Scottish OPAG
- Scottish and Welsh Assemblies.

Larger meetings and focus groups were held with:

- OPAGs
- Age Concern
- Nottinghamshire County Council
- BGOP in Lancashire
- UK OPAG in Blackpool.

John Elbourne also gave one-to-one feedback sessions of his Emerging Findings during the period 6-8 October 2008 to:

- BGOP/OPAG
- CPA
- HtA
- Age Concern
- LGA
- Anchor Trust.

Written responses to his published Emerging Findings were received during the period 9-31 October 2008 from a range of individuals and organisations.

John Elbourne's Final Report to Government was published on 18 November 2008.

Written responses to John Elbourne's Final Report to Government were received during the period 18 November 2008 – 9 January 2009 from a range of individuals and organisations. The following comment from the Equality and Human Rights Commission reflects the view of the great majority of respondents: *'The Commission supports the Elbourne Review's approach and the principles which underpin it, and agrees strongly that, in an ageing society, engagement with older people is essential and needs to be improved.'*

The Government Response was published on 3 February 2009. Work will now commence to deliver a UK Advisory Forum on Ageing and supporting regional and local forums that will enable the voices of older people across all the English regions and the devolved administrations of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to be clearly heard in the development and delivery of national, regional and local policy.

### **Changes to original proposals:**

As a result of responses to his Emerging Findings, John Elbourne reflected and expanded on some of his earlier recommendations.

For example, he considered BGOP's alternative option, i.e. BGOP becoming an independent entity and included this in his Final Report. He also acknowledged that OPAGs are not the only vehicle for engagement and that one-to-one, outreach and other activities are equally important; Beacon Councils are not the only means of promoting good practice; GOs would be more effective if they worked with Regional Forums to help them develop, rather than just in supporting local OPAGs. He also acknowledged that financial support should be more readily available at grass-roots level to enable smaller groups and forums to develop.



This report can be accessed online at:

[www.dwp.gov.uk/resourcecentre/ind\\_review\\_older\\_peoples\\_eng\\_with\\_govt.asp](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/resourcecentre/ind_review_older_peoples_eng_with_govt.asp)

Alternative formats of this publication are available on request.

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