



## **WRVS Response to ‘Age and experience: developing a strategy for a Scotland with an ageing population’.**

WRVS exists in Scotland and across the UK to help people maintain independence and dignity in their homes and communities, particularly in later life. In Scotland, with the support of over 12,000 local volunteers, WRVS runs over 250 community-based projects for housebound and older people; more than 60 hospital services for patients, visitors and staff, and 230 emergency service teams to assist communities affected by crises or disasters. WRVS is one of the largest charities in its field in Scotland.

To develop this organisational response we ran a series of focus groups among WRVS volunteers and employees aged 50+ and invited all Scottish volunteers and employees to contribute comments and ideas to the process in writing, by email and by phone. In addition we used our website and internal communication channels to encourage all of our Scottish supporters to complete separate response forms and return them to the Scottish Executive in a personal capacity.

Our consultation participants generated a wealth of ideas to inform the Executive strategy: some were ideas for changes that could take immediate effect; others would deliver results over the medium to long term as our demographics change. This WRVS organisational response offers a solution-focused approach to the consultation paper.

### **3.1 Contribution and opportunity:**

Older people already play many valuable roles in Scottish society and contribute enormously to the economic, cultural and social well-being of our nation – although this is often overlooked by wider society and the media in overwhelmingly negative portrayals of older age and ageing.

For example, of the 12,000 WRVS volunteers in Scotland, 11,000 are aged 50 or over. These men and women deliver essential low-level support services to their home communities right across Scotland. Removing this bank of skills, commitment and time would result in key local services, such as community transport and Meals on Wheels, disintegrating.

Indeed, some of our focus group participants described older people as the “glue of society”: providing day care for grandchildren, home care for elderly parents and sick partners, volunteer hours for essential community projects, support to the economy through spending power, advice and guidance to younger generations and a community resource of wisdom and cultural values (although most participants recognised that the last of these often left them at odds with young people).

Despite recognising so many of the positive contributions made by older people, our participants voiced a crisis of confidence in our ageing population underpinned by their experiences of the public perception of ageing and older people.

“When I hit 60 people will think I am less viable as a person.” WRVS employee.

“There is a feeling that 60 is a cut off point and it’s all downhill from there.” WRVS volunteer.

Many of the proposals we put forward in this paper are aimed at addressing issues of exclusion, lack of regard and inadequate support, which result in older people experiencing life negatively – and are aimed at building on the areas in which they show confidence and enjoyment.

**3.1.1 The Executive should fund independent organisations / agencies to roll out a series of specific campaigns focused at key target groups to challenge negative views of ageing.**

WRVS is not suggesting that the Executive runs an expensive, large-scale advertising campaign to overcome negative stereotypes across the whole nation - we feel this is likely to have little demonstrable impact on the issues and barriers facing our ageing population and will not be an effective use of public funds. Instead we are suggesting a series of more low-key, targeted campaigns. Later in this response we suggest awareness-raising and education campaigns aimed at employers, medical professionals and at public transport providers. In addition, we would like to see the Executive lead on negotiating a compact between the statutory sector, key older people's charities and major players in the Scottish media to agree and monitor a voluntary standard on the reporting of news and issues relating to older people.

The level of culture change needed to overcome barriers to opportunity and well-being is great and change must start with those in the greatest positions of influence.

**3.1.2 The Executive should make a clear statement of what is meant by "older people" and ensure consistency in the application of the definition across all departments.**

The definition of "older people" was a contentious issue throughout our internal consultation process; we never resolved this issue. Some objected to its use at all; others recognised the need for a definition in policy, but could not agree on the starting age. What was clear was that everyone was confused by the variety of definitions on offer by policy makers – over 50, over 60, over 65. WRVS calls on the Executive to clarify the age at which it considers "older age" to begin and ensure that all future outputs conform to this point.

**3.2 Work:**

***Volunteering:***

WRVS is one of the biggest volunteer organisations in Scotland and our volunteers were key contributors to the development of this response. The benefits of volunteering to communities (in increasing local connection and social capital) and to older individuals (in developing confidence and self-worth and reducing isolation) underpinned much of our debate. These opportunities to contribute to society are particularly important to older people who often have the time and experience to give and the desire to find a new productive role in society, post-retirement. As our population ages more people will be in search of active involvement in their neighbourhoods after retirement and more older people will be in need of the types of low-level services well-suited to volunteer involvement. Volunteering should be key to this strategy.

However, clear concerns were also raised that the contributions of volunteers were not well recognised by local councils and that public interest in volunteering is reducing.

"In some areas volunteering is almost a dirty word, perceived as doing something for nothing.... Volunteering is not going to be in crisis in 20 years time, it's going to be in crisis in 2 or 3 years time."  
WRVS employee.

**3.2.1 Local authorities must do more to engage with, fully understand and appreciate the volunteers, services and operational distinctiveness of the voluntary sector.**

In some parts of Scotland local authorities and the voluntary sector are working well together, but this is not the case across the whole country. If local authorities do not take an enabling and inclusive approach to voluntary sector service delivery it is easy for those freely giving time to their communities to lose heart in the face of overwhelming obstacles. Opportunities for respectful and equitable dialogue must increase. Ensuring that voluntary sector representatives are engaged in the central local planning process (CPPs etc) would also help to ensure that culture change is taking place at all levels. Local councils could engage in more, and more high profile, reward schemes for community-level volunteers. With an increasing reliance on the voluntary sector to provide front line services for our ageing population, continuing to improve relationships between the statutory and voluntary sector will be essential if services are to meet the needs of older people.

**3.2.2 More opportunities are needed for older people to share their experience with and support younger people**

Inter-generational contact is important for the cohesion of our communities and our contributors were acutely aware of the difficulty of maintaining this in the face of an increasingly mobile society

and the fracturing of family ties. Targeting opportunities for older volunteers to engage in projects aimed at younger people - in schools, families, youth groups and universities - could provide new ways for young and old to meet and learn from each other outside of traditional family bonds. In point 3.2.7 we offer one proposal for taking such a scheme forward.

**3.2.3 The Executive should recognise the benefits of volunteering for older people by explicitly linking volunteer messages to the healthy ageing agenda.**

More must be done to publicise the benefits of volunteering in the community to overcome what is, anecdotally, increased hostility to community engagement. Volunteering should be promoted as a key component of the healthy ageing agenda across all Executive departments, providing purpose and social interaction, improving mobility and reducing depression. The Executive could usefully fund new research in this area in Scotland.

**3.2.4 The Executive should ensure that it does not raise barriers to volunteering for older people – for example through complicating disclosure processes.**

WRVS is seriously concerned that the current vetting and barring proposals could result in older people facing major barriers to volunteering. We have responded to these proposals separately.

**3.2.5 The Executive should fund a publicity campaign and national training programme to help engage more older people as charity Trustees in Scotland.**

Many older people have the skills and talents to become successful and valued Trustees in the charitable sector – and yet more and more charities are struggling to fill vacant board posts. With new duties on Scottish charity boards, this gap has serious consequences for future legal compliance. The Executive could support change and best practice by helping to highlight the valuable role of Trustees in our communities and targeting recruitment messages at those with financial, legal, policy and marketing skills who are approaching retirement. Trustee training would ensure that both Trustees and charities get the most from any future match-making scheme.

***Paid work:***

Contributors to our internal consultation spent a great deal of time discussing issues around paid employment.

With fewer younger people available to fill posts, and the experience of senior workers much needed in many organisations, major reforms are required to ensure that employees aged 60+ who wish to continue to work are given support to do so. Also, with many people approaching retirement with inadequate pensions, securing paid employment may be a necessity for more older people in the future. Some WRVS contributors to this response were clear that they simply didn't feel ready to retire at 60 or 65, but instead were still open to new learning, career progression and the sharing of skills. Many were also acutely aware of how their status in society was clearly linked to their professional standing – and they feared, or had experienced, society de-value them as a whole person the moment they retired.

“I am still viable in the workplace. At 57 I am still eager for work and want to develop. This isn't diminishing as I grow older.” WRVS employee.

**3.2.6 The Scottish Executive should offer incentives to companies to offer part-time and / or flexible working opportunities to older employees in positions commensurate with the employee's skills and experience.**

Many older people could continue to contribute actively in our paid workforce if their terms and conditions were altered to take into account their needs as they age – much as the needs of new parents are taken into account already. In addition our economy – and the self-esteem and earning power of older people – is not well served if flexible working equates to automatic demotion for skilled workers. We are concerned that many of the employment opportunities targeted at older people are unskilled and poorly paid. Whilst these schemes do provide welcome openings for some, they do not give adequate opportunity to those from skilled or professional backgrounds and do not ensure that the experience of senior employees are fully utilised in the Scottish workforce. WRVS contributors were concerned that older employees are beginning to be seen as cheap labour for the Scottish workforce. Incentives to encourage employers to retain skills in senior and professional positions would ensure the best opportunities for all and secure a full Scottish workforce as our demography changes.

**3.2.7 The Scottish Executive should fund and widely publicise a national mentoring scheme. The scheme, including major Scottish employers and colleges, will ensure that suitable older employees approaching retirement, or those who have recently retired, can share experience and give support to younger members of the workforce.**

The consultation events within WRVS repeatedly highlighted missed opportunities for older people to share their experience and knowledge, particularly as traditional inter-generational family contact breaks down. Many contributors were clear they still had much they could do to support younger people if there were channels for them to engage with them. The benefits to the professional development of young members of the workforce and to the self-esteem of older people of such a scheme would be great. We feel that the popularity of programmes such as The Apprentice, indicate that the time is ripe for this project.

**3.2.8 The Scottish Executive must work with employers to ensure that there are sufficient training / re-training opportunities for older employees, targeted in the right areas for Scottish growth, and at minimal or no cost to employees.**

The pace of technological change, alongside the potential for age discrimination in allocation of training budgets, can leave some older employees struggling to compete or to maintain performance in today's workplace. For those working in physically intensive jobs, additional support may be needed to re-train and re-balance daily workload as the ageing process makes some tasks more difficult. The Executive must work with businesses to ensure that older people are given every opportunity to take part in relevant training to allow them to remain well-skilled employees within a competitive environment.

In addition, the Executive must target new, funded training opportunities at older people who find themselves without a job and who wish to return to the workplace. One WRVS contributor recalled facing redundancy at 50 and finding that there was no suitable, government-funded re-training scheme open to him to help him find a new job in a new sector. If Westminster forge ahead with changes to Incapacity Benefit then such situations will become even more acute. This must be addressed now.

**3.2.9 The Scottish Executive should undertake an awareness raising campaign, aimed at employers, to promote the value of older people in the workforce.**

Many of our contributors felt that age discrimination in the workplace was re-inforced by employers, either through condoning a culture in which older people were viewed as "not up to the job", or through discriminatory company policies. Whilst some consultation participants felt that there had been improvements in this area during the last 10 years (importantly, during a period of low unemployment where competition from younger people was less acute) there is more still to be done to change the culture of valuing youth over age and experience in some sectors. The Executive must not rely on new age-discrimination legislation alone to resolve these issues. A positive campaign, supported by leading members of the Scottish business community, would help to consolidate culture change in this area.

**3.2.10 The Executive should prepare guidelines for pre-retirement programmes and should encourage these to be made available to all older employees who wish to engage with them.**

Retirement advice and support should be offered as part of an employee's ongoing professional development plan – much as careers advice is part of the start of working life. This would assist older people to better prepare for retirement and ensure that their skills, knowledge, energy and confidence are not lost as soon as they leave paid employment. Such a plan should include options, wherever possible, to move to flexible working patterns, as per proposal 3.2.6 above. They should also signpost employees towards alternative activities and provide time and space for older people to experiment with new opportunities before their paid work comes to an end. Any such programme should be built around the needs of the individual concerned and would be best delivered by the employer. However, we appreciate that this may require incentives to be offered. Employers could be encouraged to offer such schemes by, for example, making pre-retirement programmes part of the Investors in People Award.

**3.2.11 Government departments in Scotland and across the UK should be mindful of the language they use and distinguish clearly between "retirement age" and the "receipt of pension" age.**

Whilst we agree that there should be a set age at which every British citizen is eligible to receive a state pension, it is imperative that politicians and policy makers (and the media where it is possible to influence it) do not inadvertently set in the minds of the public and employers an equivalent set

retirement age. Whilst no-one should be forced to work beyond the age at which they are entitled to receive a pension (including being forced to work due to pension-poverty), everyone should have the option to choose to continue to work if they so desire and are able. The Executive, in its own use of language, could do much to model a positive culture change in this area.

**3.2.12 The Scottish Executive must negotiate with the DWP to ensure benefit / taxation policies do not provide disincentives for older people to continue to work.**

Many WRVS consultation contributors were concerned that continuing in paid employment results in negative impacts on taxation and age-related benefits for older people, often resulting in continued employment being a poor financial choice. Whilst we appreciate that benefit reform is outwith the direct scope of this strategy, we would encourage the Executive to negotiate with Westminster colleagues for a better balance to ensure the attractiveness of continued employment as our population ages.

**3.2.13 The Scottish Executive must work with insurance companies to ensure that opportunities for older people to contribute in the paid (or unpaid) workforce are not diminished by high-cost or unavailable insurance policies.**

Too often older people are discriminated against in the paid and the volunteer workforce because of insurance companies' blanket age-related policy exclusions. This can be a serious barrier to opportunity, particularly for the over-70s. As age and health expectancy increase such exclusions become ever-more arbitrary and unfair. The Executive must engage with insurance brokers on this issue if older people are to be allowed to continue to contribute to society fully.

### **3.3 Services for older people**

All of our participants could name local services that were working well, but it was clear that high-quality service was not universal across all local authorities or service-type. Whilst our discussions covered many types of service from low-level home support to acute interventions, many of the active older participants focused on services that do not usually get a high profile in strategic discussions. For example, in one focus group grass cutting, gardening services, large-item refuse collection and house cleaning were seen as vital to the well-being of older people – although funding for such services is often lost to crisis-based services. Older respondents felt that taking pride in their home and their visible contribution to the upkeep of their community were central to their feelings of self-respect and connection. They described feelings of shame if their gardens were allowed to go to seed or rubbish accrued outside their home. One participant related the story of a local older resident who was no longer able to keep his house as tidy as he would have liked and had stopped inviting friends to visit. He had become isolated and depressed as a result. The message is clear – simple services can often have a very great impact; they should not be ignored.

Quality and respect in service delivery were key issues. The older people we consulted were unwilling to accept a low-quality or disrespectful service simply because that is what they were being offered. If we are to go down the path of truly person centred services, all providers in the statutory and voluntary sector will need to adapt – and be able to fund – services that are acceptable to customers used to choice, recognition and high standards.

“In an ideal world people would just come forward and ask: what can I do to help?” WRVS volunteer.

**3.3.1 All organisations involved in providing services to and for older people must engage in meaningful consultation with older people on the types of services they need and want – and organisations should be evaluated on the quality of their consultation programmes and the ensuing actions they take.**

All of our respondents were clear that older people must be directly involved in the development of services. Too often it was felt that the views and opinions of older people were not respected or given due weight. Service providers could take a major role in driving forward much needed culture change in attitudes to older people by engaging in meaningful consultation on service development – and, consequently, ensure that investment is targeted appropriately to meet real and not perceived need. Processes could be reviewed as part of any organisation's inspection / evaluation regime.

**3.3.2 Service provision must be truly integrated, with cross cutting management structures and full involvement of the voluntary sector in strategic service development.**

WRVS welcomes measures being developed in some areas, such as Edinburgh, to develop shared management systems to break down service barriers – particularly between local authorities and the NHS in Scotland. Such partnerships should be encouraged and best practice shared across the country. However, there must be a statutory role for key voluntary sector service delivery partners to be represented in the core strategy planning groups for Community Planning Partnership, Community Health Partnerships and Regional Transport Partnerships. We await the Audit Scotland review of Community Planning Partnerships to see whether anecdotal evidence of sparse voluntary sector involvement in some areas holds up to scrutiny. We would also call for increased focus on cross cutting work between the NHS, Local Authorities and the voluntary sector in training courses for professionals who will, in practice, work together. Focus groups participants voiced concerns that a lack of understanding of roles and expertise between professions, such as community nurses and social workers, is resulting in poor joint working and leaving older people to fall through gaps in service provision.

**3.3.3 More work is needed to encourage young people to work in the caring professions – including an improved pay settlement for care workers and improved methods of recognition and reward.**

Many participants felt that the low wages given to support staff are indicative of the low importance placed on care for the elderly. Others noted that services are not available or are poorly delivered because there is a lack of trained employees. Whilst we appreciate that work has been carried out to increase the numbers of trained social workers in Scotland, the need for staff to deliver services to older people will go beyond the remit of qualified social workers. As our population ages the current crisis will get worse unless action is taken now to make support work for older people an attractive career choice for people who are committed to the field.

**3.3.4 Clearer information and better signposting is needed if older people are to make the most of all the opportunities and services available to them.**

Local services for older people can be hard to find. Small projects often have little budget for, or experience of, marketing services. Short-term funding means that services regularly come and go. Isolated older people in the most need of support are inevitably the hardest to find and hardest to reach.

Tender processes, and funders, should allow for budgets to include realistic levels of funding for publicity to reach hidden potential service users. Better training in marketing should be available to very small projects – or a central service should be set up and funded to produce basic marketing materials and offer distribution advice to small charities and user groups. All local communities should have a recognisable older people’s information hub located in an area frequented by seniors. This would also provide a simple central marketing focus for local service providers. Service like SHOP need continued support to develop over the long-term.

**3.4. Health and well-being**

The first overwhelming message from our consultation participants is that loneliness and isolation must be better addressed if older people are to remain well through their later years. The second clear message is that it is not sufficient to focus a health and well-being policy on older people, but that good health in older age is dependent on good health maintained from early years. The proposals below should be prefaced by a lifetime of health improvement measures and regular free checks to ensure the health expectancy of our ageing population.

“Loneliness is a terrible thing, I don’t think people realise just how bad. It’s something that has to be tackled.” WRVS volunteer.

“When you reach a certain age, doctors just don’t want to know.” WRVS volunteer.

**3.4.1 The provision of low-level services to enhance social networks must not be de-prioritised in the face of financial pressure to provide home nursing and medical care**

If older people are to remain well and healthy then support to engage in activities, new learning and social events is essential. Loneliness and isolation were raised as key barriers to healthy well-being in older age. As people age, keeping up interests and social networks can get harder: work activities and connections are lost; mobility is reduced; friends and family get ill and die; disposable income can reduce significantly. Structured support to engage in communities is therefore essential for many older people and must be funded and appreciated as a long-term investment. In addition, all geographic and interest communities must have access to local spaces to meet, socialise and pursue interests. Engaging “younger” older people as volunteers to deliver such services to their near-peers is, in itself, a way to ensure our ageing population remains active and well-connected and that communities are well-resourced to help themselves. This is the WRVS model that is in place in neighbourhoods right across the country.

**3.4.2 More projects are needed to allow older people to stay connected through technology – particularly through projects that promote peer-learning.**

WRVS volunteers and clients are already benefiting from the advantages of increased access to technology, including peer-led internet training in some areas of the country. Free or very low cost broadband access, access to technology in the home and training from peers who can take lessons at an appropriate pace are all key to allowing people with limited mobility, and those with families far away, to stay connected to their communities and take advantage of the benefits of the internet. Whilst this should never be a substitute for person-to-person contact, it can help to overcome the loneliness and isolation cited by many of our respondents as a key issue of ageing. Funders must note that grants for technology must include software as well as hardware; charities can often find themselves gratefully in receipt of computers but without high quality software (including updates) and sufficient licenses to make projects work effectively.

**3.4.3 Free personal care for the elderly must be made to work.**

Current issues over funding, waiting lists and disputes over what is and is not included in free personal care packages must be resolved, with clarity, as a matter of urgency. Currently a universal scheme is being implemented in an ad hoc manner across Scottish local authorities. Older people are facing unfair postcode discrimination and there is widespread confusion over the scheme. People who should be recipients are losing out on services and suffering as a result. If free personal care cannot be made to work now, it will certainly not work as our country’s older population increases. Trust in future initiatives for older people will be measured against this flagship policy.

**3.4.4 The NHS must provide and publicise annual MOT checks for everyone aged 50+ with a medical professional other than their own GP.**

Many of our older volunteer contributors proposed this as a positive potential development for both men and women. Participants reported that they were aware of the opportunity of taking up scheduled health checks once a problem, such as high blood pressure, had been diagnosed. But this proposal is for a universal annual check initiated by age not medical condition. Some participants were particularly concerned about the reluctance of older men to seek medical help and advice and felt that gender-specific clinics, focusing on good health – such as local well-man clinics – would encourage more men to take preventative action. Participants were clear that they wanted this to be a focused service, delivered by professionals with a clear understanding of older people’s needs. Many had experienced rushed GP appointments, dismissive attitudes, poor explanations and fears over repeat prescriptions of multiple drugs not being clearly monitored in their local practice. These annual appointments would give time to explain issues, check medication regimes, give preventative healthy living advice and ensure illnesses are diagnosed as early as possible. Surgeries should be mobile and located in or near places frequented by older people – much as blood donor and mammogram services are currently.

**3.4.5 The Executive should work with the NHS to develop a new education programme for GPs to improve community services for older people.**

A number of our participants reported concerns that some GPs were ill-informed and lacking in compassion in their treatment of older people. Too often, it was felt, local doctors approached older patients with an attitude that making life bearable in older age is sufficient – rather than striving to work with an older patient to get the most out of life. The pre-conceptions of such GPs, and other health professionals must be challenged and we would call on the NHS to develop training for doctors (beginning with doctors in training) on working with older patients that *includes* older people in its development and delivery.

### **3.4.6 Investment in transport for centralised specialist NHS services must increase to meet the demands of proposed NHS reform.**

WRVS broadly welcomes the Executive's blueprint for NHS reform in Scotland. However, we are concerned that the increased centralisation of specialist services – services used frequently by older people – will result in an increase in the number and distance of required hospital transport trips; these must be adequately funded. In addition, it will make it harder for family and friends to visit, particularly those who are also elderly and find it difficult to travel. Ongoing community support is essential to the well-being, recovery and rehabilitation of older people requiring hospitalisation. We are concerned that centralised in-patient services could well result in increased isolation and depression for the frailest patients. We urge the Executive to ensure that projects to transport hospital visitors are well resourced from central budgets.

## **3.5 Housing, transport and surroundings**

Transport featured heavily in WRVS discussions on this consultation paper, partly as a major provider of community transport in Scotland and partly in relation to the particular needs of Scotland's rural communities raised in two of our focus groups. WRVS acknowledges the Executive's commitment to funding free public transport facilities for older people, air travel to Scottish islands and community transport services. However, for those least able to access services, and to meet increasing need in the face of NHS reform, further transport developments are required.

### **3.5.1 Public transport must be affordable, frequent, integrated and accessible for all. The Executive must look to develop schemes to support free transport for the elderly to ensure universal access.**

"They give us free bus passes and then cut the bus service." WRVS volunteer.

Whilst WRVS welcomes the Executive's commitment to providing free Scotland-wide public transport for the elderly, we know that many of our service users simply cannot access the new scheme. Sometimes this is because those living in rural areas have no public transport service at all; sometimes it is because timetables are spartan and do not link easily to appointments or activities; sometimes it is because rural services have been cut so heavily that journeys are circuitous and impossible for those with limited mobility to bear; sometimes it is because buses or trains are not accessible; sometimes it is because older people are not mobile or confident enough to travel on public transport alone; and finally, many bus drivers, under pressure of targets, are unable to accommodate the needs of elderly passengers sufficiently by waiting for them to sit down before leaving a stop or giving them adequate time to exit.

The Executive must look to develop link-access schemes to free public transport through, for example, older people's public transport buddy schemes, or connecting community transport schemes from home to bus stop / rail station. The Executive should also develop an education initiative with bus and train companies to ensure that targets are adapted and drivers trained to accommodate the service needs of their older customers.

"We had one older couple who used their free bus passes to go from their village to the local town. Getting there was great as they got on a low-level bus. But when they tried to get home, the return bus wasn't set up for mobility-impaired passengers and they simply couldn't get on it. They ended up having to pay for a taxi back to the village." WRVS employee.

### **3.5.2 Community and patient transport schemes must be integrated into a single non-acute transport fund for Scotland.**

Community transport should be about getting from A to B for those unable to use private or public transport – whatever the reason for the journey. Current funding mechanisms are confusing for service users. For example, if a regular service user calls a purely RCTI funded transport scheme to attend a hospital outpatient appointment, their request must be turned down and re-directed as such a journey would break funding agreements; similarly it is difficult to explain why an older person in one large village can use community transport, while another in the neighbouring rural town cannot because the population is slightly higher. A person-centred funding scheme would mean that an

older person requesting transport would be able to ring a local number and be offered a suitable transport service, whatever their need or location.

**3.5.3 Local authorities must do more to ensure that road surfaces are in good condition to ensure older people can travel safely and comfortably, particularly in rural areas.**

Older people, particularly in rural areas, rely on private cars to stay engaged with their communities. However, participants reported that in some areas the state of public roads is so bad that journeys are very uncomfortable for those who experience some frailty and trips are regularly resulting in expensive repair bills and near accidents. Pain, fear and additional motoring expenses all act as a disincentive to travel in affected areas and can increase isolation among those already cut off from near neighbours. Good quality roads could do much to ensure that older people are able to remain mobile for as long as possible.

**3.5.4 The Executive must co-ordinate work with local authorities, house-builders, developers, architects, businesses and transport providers to ensure that ALL new developments include essential local amenities such as shops, bus services and community spaces, and that all homes are built now to be warm, well-insulated and accessible to those with limited mobility.**

With an ageing population, a concurrent rise in the number of single-occupancy homes and ever increasing fuel costs, planning of new housing must adapt today to ensure suitability for the next generation of older people. Furthermore, with many older people experiencing isolation and depression, the design of communities must encourage ease of mobility for pedestrians and provide local places for people to meet and pursue interests and activities.

This agenda must be driven by central government guidance, planning legislation and financial support as such long-term planning is rarely the primary focus of profit-making business. Joined up thinking at the centre is crucial. For example, without long-term planning now for new-build homes, future Scottish political leaders will be unable to deliver on planned NHS reform effectively: Older people will be unable to remain at home to receive community based health support without expensive adaptations and costly home support to access basic amenities such as transport and shops. Exorbitant fuel and transport costs will increase pensioner poverty, The planning agenda must take into account now the needs of the next generation of older people.

**3.5.5 The Executive must do more to address the high cost of housing for young people now.**

Concerns were raised in two WRVS focus groups that high rates of mortgage borrowing and long loan-terms taken out by younger people, due to the high cost of housing, could have serious adverse affects on their ability to avoid poverty in older age. The Executive must do more to ensure the wider availability of low-cost housing for young people now and open dialogue with lenders to ensure that lending options do not result in poverty for the next generation of older people.

**3.6 Conclusion – finance**

3.6.1 WRVS welcomes the Executive focus on long-term planning to ensure Scotland can meet the needs of its increasingly elderly population. In many areas we are struggling to meet the needs of today's older generation and there is much to be done to avert a crisis in the very near future. We know that many changes and positive developments can be achieved with minimal cost, but this is not true across the board. This strategy, if it is to make a difference, must come with ring-fenced, central government funding to deliver on practical proposals for change, as has been the case in Wales. Without this, we fear that this much-heralded strategy simply will not see the light of day after the 2007 parliamentary elections.

**Summary of proposals:**

**3.1 Contribution and opportunity**

3.1.1 The Executive should fund independent organisations / agencies to roll out a series of specific campaigns focused at key target groups to challenge negative views of ageing.

3.1.2 The Executive should make a clear statement of what is meant by "older people" and ensure consistency in the application of the definition across all departments.

### **3.2 Work**

#### Volunteering:

- 3.2.1 Local Authorities must do more to engage with, fully understand and appreciate the volunteers, services and operational distinctiveness of the voluntary sector.
- 3.2.2 More opportunities are needed for older people to share their experience with and support younger people.
- 3.2.3 The Executive should recognise the benefits of volunteering for older people by explicitly linking volunteer messages to the healthy ageing agenda.
- 3.2.4 The Executive should ensure that it does not raise barriers to volunteering for older people – for example through complicating Disclosure processes.
- 3.2.5 The Executive should fund a publicity campaign and national training programme to help engage more older people as charity Trustees in Scotland.

#### Paid work:

- 3.2.6 The Scottish Executive should offer incentives to companies to offer part-time and / or flexible working opportunities to older employees in positions commensurate with the employee's skills and experience.
- 3.2.7 The Scottish Executive should fund and widely publicise a national mentoring scheme. The scheme, including major Scottish employers and colleges, will ensure that suitable older employees approaching retirement, or those who have recently retired, can share experience and give support to younger members of the workforce.
- 3.2.8 The Scottish Executive must work with employers to ensure that there are sufficient training / re-training opportunities for older employees, targeted in the right areas for Scottish growth, and at minimal or no cost to employees.
- 3.2.9 The Scottish Executive should undertake an awareness raising campaign, aimed at employers, to promote the value of older people in the workforce.
- 3.2.10 The Executive should prepare guidelines for pre-retirement programmes and should encourage these to be made available to all older employees who wish to engage with them.
- 3.2.11 Government departments in Scotland and across the UK should be mindful of the language they use and distinguish clearly between "retirement age" and the "receipt of pension" age.
- 3.2.12 The Scottish Executive must negotiate with the DWP to ensure benefit / taxation policies do not provide disincentives for older people to continue to work.
- 3.2.13 The Scottish Executive must work with insurance companies to ensure that opportunities for older people to contribute in the paid (or unpaid) workforce are not diminished by high-cost or unavailable insurance policies.

### **3.3 Services for older people**

- 3.3.1 All organisations involved in providing services to and for older people must engage in meaningful consultation with older people on the types of services they need and want – and organisations should be evaluated on the quality of their consultation programmes and the ensuing actions they take.
- 3.3.2 Service provision must be truly integrated, with cross cutting management structures and full involvement of the voluntary sector in strategic service development.
- 3.3.3 More work is needed to encourage young people to work in the caring professions – including an improved pay settlement for care workers and improved methods of recognition and reward.
- 3.3.4 Clearer information and better signposting is needed if older people are to make the most of all the opportunities and services available to them.

### **3.4 Health and well-being**

- 3.4.1 The provision of low-level services to enhance social networks must not be de-prioritised in the face of financial pressure to provide home nursing and medical care
- 3.4.2 More projects are needed to allow older people to stay connected through technology – particularly through projects that promote peer-learning.
- 3.4.3 Free personal care for the elderly must be made to work.
- 3.4.4 The NHS must provide and publicise annual MOT checks for everyone aged 50+ with a medical professional other than their own GP.
- 3.4.5 The Executive should work with the NHS to develop a new education programme for GPs to improve community services for older people.
- 3.4.6 Investment in transport for centralised specialist NHS services must increase to meet the demands of proposed NHS reform.

### **3.5 Housing, transport and surroundings**

- 3.5.1 Public transport must be affordable, frequent, integrated and accessible for all. The Executive must look to develop schemes to support free transport for the elderly to ensure universal access.
- 3.5.2 Community and patient transport schemes must be integrated into a single non-acute transport fund for Scotland.
- 3.5.3 Local authorities must do more to ensure that road surfaces are in good condition to ensure older people can travel safely and comfortably, particularly in rural areas.
- 3.5.4 The Executive must co-ordinate work with local authorities, house-builders, developers, architects, businesses and transport providers to ensure that ALL new developments include essential local amenities such as shops, bus services and community spaces, and that all homes are built now to be warm, well-insulated and accessible to those with limited mobility.
- 3.5.5 The Executive must do more to address the high cost of housing for young people now.

### **3.6 Conclusion – finance**

- 3.6.1 The strategy must be accompanied by ring-fenced central government funding if it is to succeed.

Rachel Cackett  
Media & Public Affairs Manager  
WRVS Scotland

## **4 Extra information**

It would be helpful if you were able to complete the information below. The ageing population is likely to affect different age groups in different ways, and we're interested to find out if there are any differences in opinion between age groups. The ageing population may also affect different social groups in various ways. Therefore we are also asking questions on gender and ethnicity. These questions are voluntary, and will be held in confidence.

- If you are answering as an individual, please go to section (i)
- If you are answering on behalf of an organisation, please go to section (ii)
- If you are answering following a group discussion, please go to section (iii)

### **(i) Individuals**

#### **What is your age group?**

Up to 21  21-34  35-49  50-64  Over 65

#### **What is your ethnic group?**

Choose ONE section from A to E, then tick the appropriate box to indicate your cultural background.

#### **A White**

- Scottish
- Other British
- Irish
- Any other White background, please write in:

---

#### **B Mixed**

- Any Mixed background, please write in:

---

#### **C Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British**

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Any other Asian background, please write in

---

#### **D Black, Black Scottish or Black British**

- Caribbean
- African

Any other Black background, please write in:

---

**E Other ethnic background**

Any other background, please write in:

---

**Please can you tell us your gender?**

Male

Female

Other  please write in: \_\_\_\_\_

**(ii) Organisations**

If this response is on behalf of an organisation, did you consult with your members or interest groups?

Yes  No

If yes, how many people did you consult? 26 (volunteers and employees almost all aged 50+)

Does this organisation represent minority ethnic communities as its main focus?

Yes  No

Does this organisation represent women or men as its main focus?

Yes, women  Yes, men  No

**(iii) Discussion groups**

If this response is following a group discussion, how many people contributed to the response?

\_\_\_\_\_ What was the approximate age range of most of the people in the group? (please tick): Up to 21

21-34  35-49  0-64  Over 65

Mixed age

Does this group represent minority ethnic communities as its main focus?

Yes  No

Does this group represent women or men as its main focus?

Yes, women  Yes, men  No

Please can you now complete the **RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM** to provide us with essential information on how to deal with your response.

**RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM:  
STRATEGY FOR A SCOTLAND WITH AN AGEING POPULATION**

Please complete the details below and return it with your response. This will help ensure we handle your response appropriately. Thank you for your help.

Name: Rachel Cackett, Media & Public Affairs Manager

Postal Address: WRVS, 6 Hill Street, Edinburgh

.....Postcode: EH2 3JZ

1. Are you responding: (please tick one box)

(a) as an individual or following a group discussion

go to Q2a/b and then Q4

(b) **on behalf of** an organisation

go to Q3 and then Q4

**INDIVIDUALS OR GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

2a. Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Executive library and/or on the

Scottish Executive website)?

Yes (go to 2b below)

No, not at all  We will treat your response as confidential

**2b. Where *confidentiality is not requested***, we will make your response available to the public on the following basis

(**please tick one** of the following boxes)

Yes, make my response, name and address all available

Yes, make my response available, but not my name or address

Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address

**ON BEHALF OF ORGANISATIONS:**

3 The name and address of your organisation **will be** made available to the public (in the Scottish Executive library and/or on the Scottish Executive website). Are you also content for your **response** to be made available?

Yes ✓

No  We will treat your response as confidential

**SHARING RESPONSES/FUTURE ENGAGEMENT**

4 We will share your response internally with other Scottish Executive policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for the Scottish Executive to contact you again in the future in relation to this consultation response?

Yes ✓

No

*Thank you*