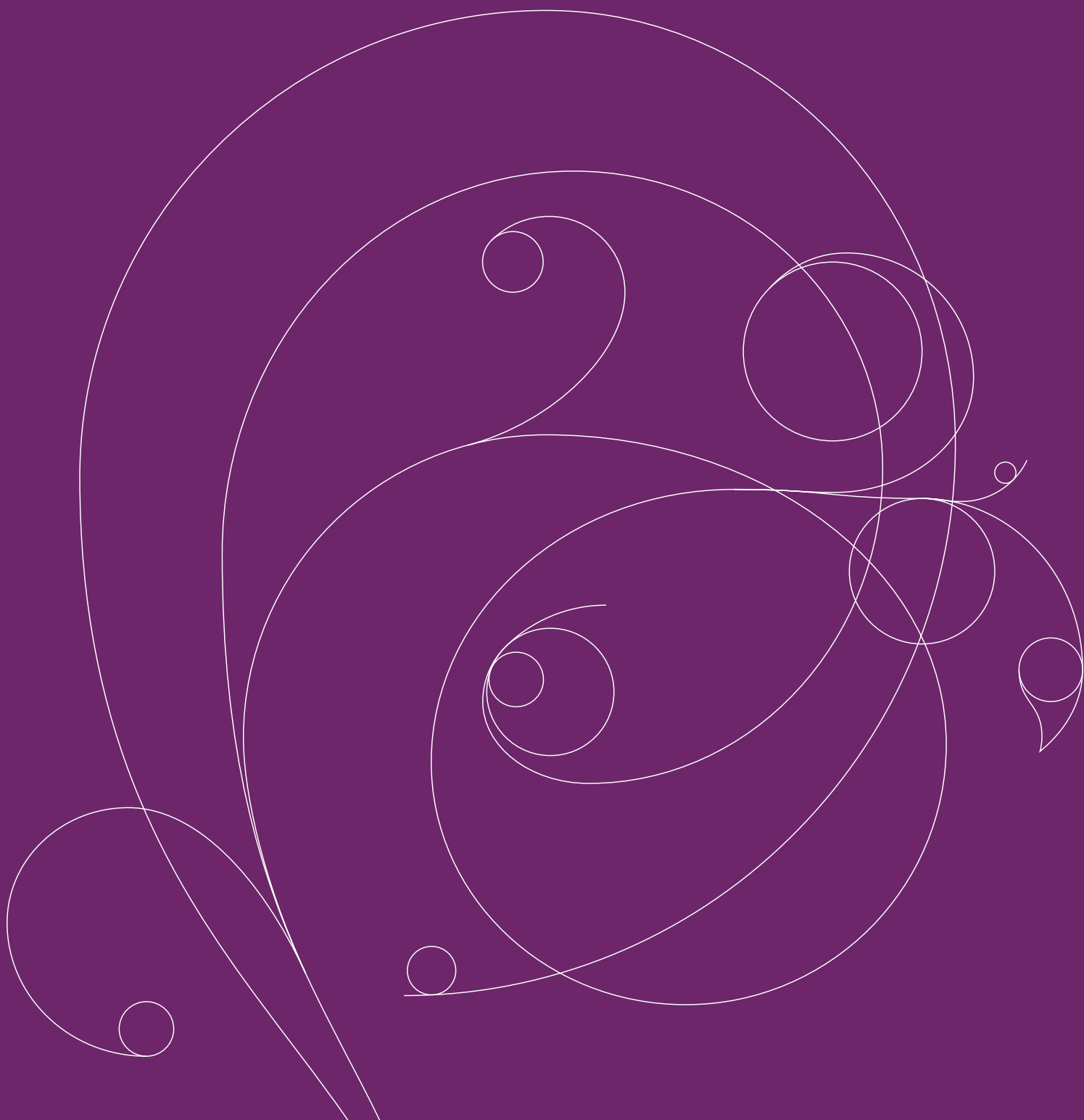

overview

from the Older People Action Learning Sets

improving the
quality of life for
older people

the older people's
shared priority



overview

from the Older People Action Learning Sets

title	page	title	page
foreword from the Older People Shared Priority Steering Group	1	members of Older People Shared Priority Action Learning Sets 2004-2006	10
abstracting the learning	3		
key lessons identified	3		
connecting information and action	6		
the overarching patterns and lessons	8		

This document provides an overview of the Older People Shared Priority project, its aims and objectives, how it worked and who was involved. It also contains a summary of the overarching lessons resulting from the Action Learning Sets taken from research commissioned to draw out the learning.

The outputs of the Older People Shared Priority project are included in a series of accompanying documents designed for use by policy makers, commissioners, managers and practitioners, consisting of:

- summary of key messages
- a set of linked guides:
 - why bother?
 - engaging with older people
 - working as a whole system
 - developing quality of life strategies
 - case studies
- turning policy into outcomes

foreword from the Older People Shared Priority Steering Group

Improving the quality of life for older people was one of seven shared priorities agreed between central government and the Local Government Association (LGA) in July 2002.

The Shared Priorities Action Learning Set programme was established with funding from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, now the Department for Communities and Local Government (capacity building funds), Department of Health and Department for Work and Pensions. A steering group comprised of the Association of Directors of Social Services, LGA, Audit Commission, IDeA, Better Government for Older People, Department of Health, Department of Work and Pensions and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister was drawn together in June 2004.

This has been a unique partnership seeking to bring about new ways of integrating the public sector, relating to local citizens, and delivering more efficient and effective citizen focused services. The focus has been moving from prevention of illness, and the need for intensive support, towards a more positive emphasis on well-being and engagement with the wider community. This anticipated the publication of *Opportunity Age: Meeting the challenges of ageing in the 21st century*, Age – the cross-government strategy on ageing published in March 2005.

The purpose of the programme was to bring together people working in local communities to explore how services for older people might be developed and organised differently in order to meet the challenges of the new policy agenda.

The specific objectives of the Shared Priority Project were:

- to recognise the vital role that older people play in our society, and to improve the participation and engagement of older people in policy and service issues
- to encourage healthy lifestyles for older people; to break down the barriers to employment, and ensure that older people can access the general services provided for all of us – all with the aim of promoting independence
- to have a joined-up partnership approach to how services are delivered and ensure the integration of key services such as health, housing, social services, transport, leisure and lifelong learning, planning, regeneration and the environment
- to ensure specialist services are responsive, flexible, integrated and of high quality; and
- to ensure that there are sustainable communities in vulnerable parts of the country, such as in rural areas.

foreword from the Older People Shared Priority Steering Group

Some 50 Local Authorities and their partners participated at the outset of the learning sets in September 2004 (for a full list of those who participated, see page 10-16) until April 2006. The final products reflect the learning and practice shared from the sets and are very much the work of the sets themselves rather than the steering group.

Earlier this year *Living well in later life* was produced jointly by the three inspectorates, the Healthcare Commission, the Audit Commission and the Commission for Social Care Inspection. The report assessed progress five years into the ten year Government plan to improve services for people over the age of 50. Amongst the findings the report highlighted that:

- partner organisations involved in providing health and local government services need to work together to develop a joint strategy for the promotion of good health and well-being for older people; and
- partner organisations need to work together to ensure that there is a systematic and coordinated approach to engagement that recognises the diversity of the population served.

In August this year the Audit Commission published its report 'Learning from CPA in 2005/6'. It found that 'Most councils have yet to develop broad strategies for older people. Almost all have mechanisms to engage older people but these are not yet systematic and do not always reach minority or isolated groups. Councils provide a range of services to older people but are missing opportunities to enhance their independence and well-being'¹.

What do you need to do to make better progress on this agenda, drive continuous improvement and achieve better outcomes for older people?

We believe that this set of guides and messages from the action learning sets provides valuable and timely examples, tools and insights from practitioners to peers, policy makers and leaders seeking to implement this new vision for modernising services for today's let alone tomorrow's older citizens.

¹ Learning from CPA in 2005/6; Findings from assessments, Audit Commission 2006

abstracting the learning

The LGA and the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) commissioned CPEA to abstract the lessons from the work of 'Sets' associated with the Older People Shared Priority Project. The full report 'The Older people Shared Priority Project: Abstracting the Learning' can be viewed on the IDeA Knowledge website at www.idea.gov.uk and the key points from this research are summarised in this document².

Key lessons identified:

The lessons from the Sets share a common political and multiple policy context. While it would be premature to suggest that they offer comprehensive explanations, wide-reaching generalisations and definitive answers, a number of lessons have emerged:

- Older people's lives tend to be viewed through the narrow lenses of health and social care service provision, which means that the majority of older people who are not long term users of either health or social care provision are excluded from consideration in policy and planning. There needs to be more emphasis on development in later life with a focus on 'ordinary' as well as 'exceptional' ageing³.

In addition, custom and practice needs to be influenced by local debate in which the voices of older people, their experiential knowledge and expertise, are prominent.

'I've had requests for our older people's strategy as it's written from the perspective of older people. Their involvement is meaningful and they responded to the Social Care Green Paper. We involve people in residential care and those who are rurally isolated and those from Black and Minority Ethnic communities... We have a broad-based partnership with older people that required a whole systems approach. They've helped us in tracking resources and they endorse Nottingham County Council's promotion of independence. There is a wealth of practical, partnership initiatives developed with older people. There are challenges keeping it alive but we are working across departments.'

² Margaret Flynn and Vic Citrella The Older People Shared Priority Project: Abstracting the Learning, CPEA, 2006

³ M.Nolan S.Davies and G.Grant (Eds.) Working with older people and their families: key issues in policy and practice. Buckingham, Open University Press, 2001

abstracting the learning

- The negative images and stereotypes of ageing, which portray a downward trajectory in terms of health, functioning and competence need to be contested as they suppress the diverse voices and experiences of older people and the way that older people themselves see the ageing process.

'We've challenged each other and we've learned from each other, even though at the start we were at different levels.'

- Themes of engagement, participation and involvement are part of national policy rhetoric. They offer new challenges to managers and practitioners in shifting the health and social care orientation from the acute care of frail older people to the promotion of the well-being of all older people. It is important therefore, to be familiar with national policy as it is a powerful engine for change, most particularly when employed as a rationale for embarking on, and sticking with, purposeful, collaborative activities. Similarly, the adoption of a historical perspective can be useful in beginning the process of stimulating across-organisational change, i.e. what individual services have been encouraged to do has shown up the frailties of planning familiar services in familiar ways.

'A few projects have got off the ground which will benefit older people indirectly: the older people's strategy, an action plan for the whole county and two conferences for older people.'

- The facts of lengthening life-spans and increasing numbers of older people build a compelling case to adopt different tools and approaches to ensure that individual and collective life gains are not lost at the end of the life course.
- A plurality of approach is needed to ensure the quality of strategic planning. There is a danger of relying too heavily on a single organisation or a single professional group to lead on strategy development. Older people themselves have to be central to the process because strategies **for** rather than developed **with** older people are unlikely to engage with their relevant concerns and perspectives.

'The [Set] reinforced the importance of involving older people and the significance of this [in relation to] the Comprehensive Performance Assessment was especially important for us.'

abstracting the learning

- The standardisation of 'outcomes' of Quality of Life domains often fail to engage with the subjective components of people's lives. Locally developed older people's strategies can help to inform Quality of Life domains and there are growing numbers of examples of planning with older people to create information-rich and accessible interventions and services which credibly reflect the known aspirations of older people.
- The process of learning and knowledge creation is highly dependent on group discussion. Facilitative leadership within most Sets enabled people to work constructively, to create a process in which Set members had confidence, and which sustained their involvement and engagement irrespective of the inevitable set backs and frustrations.
- Practical examples of interagency collaboration and of involving older people in service development assists in shared learning. Organisational structures need to be adapted through collaboration, which inspires a sense of novel possibility and increases their value to older people in the long and short term.

'It gave our work a different kind of kudos saying we were part of a government [Set] – rather than saying we've had an idea!'

- Whole systems working is a means to improve public services with and for older people. However, the promotion of *whole systems working* is difficult terrain to navigate as it blurs a sector's mission and sectorised services get in the way of more joined up ways of thinking and working. It requires no less than a change of *cultural mind-set*; recognition of the damage arising from territorial wars between organisations, including the wasteful politicking as sectors push for differentiation and recognition of their distinctive contribution rather than integration⁴.

'The refrains about involving older people led to a decision to strengthen our support to the Older People's Forum, complete with a dedicated post.'

⁴. Hudson B. (2006) *Whole Systems Working: A Guide and Discussion Paper*. London, Care Services Improvement Partnership, Integrated Care Network

abstracting the learning

- A strategic perspective may have as much merit as a strategy, as a free standing strategy may be too connected with older people's services and excluded from mainstream considerations. What is important is that the concerns and interests of older people are known across sectors and identified as corporate priorities against which progress can be checked.
- Searching for, processing and presenting information about local circumstances and population profiles is essential preparatory work, which should clarify the issues on which the whole system needs to work. It is rarely the case that quantitative information is sufficiently persuasive, qualitative information such as case studies and narratives is just as compelling.

'I found the meeting about mapping useful and when I returned to District Nursing I tried to get others to think about some of the ideas.'

Connecting information and action

The Sets' understanding of what constitutes successful action broadly has two strands. The first concerns the use of demographic and policy information to challenge the status quo of specialist services for narrowly defined populations. Secondly, the Sets endorse the 'cross-cutting' oversight of all government initiatives regarding older people. The resulting reform agenda has to identify the common ground among the missions and goals of across government initiatives, and formally and overtly, engage with older people and their experiences. The factors that make this possible are diverse:

Being part of horizontal and vertical networks/alliances is a form of cooperation that has been valued by the Sets' 'frequent attendees'. The networking has been conducive to them accessing and sharing complementary ideas so that over the timescale of the Shared Priority Project, they fostered a free exchange of information; explored the links across policies pertaining to older citizens; and considered the connectedness of these to their own work. The significance of being part of Communities of Practice cannot be underestimated⁵.

⁵ Drath W. and Palus C. (1994) Making common sense: leadership as meaning making in a community of practice. Greenboro, North Carolina, Centre for Creative Leadership

abstracting the learning

Developing a knowledge base that is worthy of sharing appears to have emerged from each Sets' incremental learning as individuals got to know and trust each other. It seems to be a demanding kind of learning as participants were at different positions and stages in their own work contexts and immersed in different but familiar professional organisations and cultures i.e. some had created the conditions necessary to enable older people to draft a Strategy for Older People while others aspired to doing so. The resulting programme of continuing education provided an important platform for discussion, exploration and action.

Adapting national policies to the realities of localities and environmental influences and referencing such policies was regarded as an important means to make progress in developing new partnerships and service responses. Discussions within each Set, sometimes inspired by invited speakers, confirmed the belief that the pursuit of improvements in the lives of older citizens is fundamentally inter-sectoral i.e. it is not the exclusive domain of local authority adult social services. In turn, the Sets appreciated privileged access to national policy influence.

'Being connected beyond the adult social care ghetto to reinforce universal services helped to steel our resolve locally.'

'It meant I was about to exert some influence with our corporate people. It was good to know about people's experiences of Partnership Boards.'

Although time and energy are finite, knowing that effective, purposeful collaboration is a state that emerges slowly, during which time political, personnel, financial and policy shifts are likely to occur, was reassuring to Set members. Similarly, strategy development and the creation of strategic approaches were recognised as emergent, integrating and ongoing processes, which at their best, draw on the knowledge of older people and clearly demonstrate engagement with their concerns and aspirations.

Sets were attuned to variable performance within the whole system. Some Sets sought out information intermediaries or facilitative leaders who assumed active roles in sharing knowledge and skills and obtaining information. By introducing Sets to existing conceptual tools and measures, from policy, research and practice, Set members were liberated to use and adapt these in their own localities.

abstracting the learning

The overarching patterns and lessons

Taken together, the Sets covered a range of issues – from challenging negative and incomplete images of ageing to eliciting the interest and participation of an array of stakeholders, and to acknowledging that public services are not rational systems operating as efficiently as possible. That the whole is greater than the sum of the parts is no mere cliché for the **Older People Shared Priority Project**. Similar concerns and preoccupations cut across the Sets and in this Section we attempt to illuminate the core lessons.

‘When I became a councillor I spent a day with one of our visiting officers... He reassured a bereaved elderly woman that he’d sort out her finances and he did; and he made sure that another was not evicted. People in London really need to go out in the real world. They should be aware of what staff are spending their days doing... We’re hoping to get a radio station for older people and an 80 year old has done most of the preliminary work on the bid.’

The title, **Older People Shared Priority Project** implies a known and recognisable population. This is not the case however. Ageing is a lifelong process that has not been given adequate attention as policy making fails to take a life course perspective. Contested ‘start’ dates of when ageing commences is unhelpful when seeking to foster better engagement with older citizens. While chronological age is an important factor, it must be considered in other contexts, such as disability and ageing⁶.

It is striking that during times of unprecedented longevity the familiar default position of services focuses on the minority of older citizens known to them using health and social care services. Changing the service culture from independent to interdependent operators and developing knowledge across services, sectors and older citizens, made possible within the Sets, have catalysed an array of improved processes and developments. Many of these have effectively exploited the policy agendas of the Department of Health, the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Department for Work and Pensions for example. Only time will tell whether the processes that have been ‘seeded’ have taken root and flourished.

⁶ B.J. Kemp and L. Mosqueda (Eds.) (2004) *Ageing with a Disability: What the Clinician Needs to Know*. London, The John Hopkins University Press

abstracting the learning

'It's about going back and arguing the case, signing up to activities and getting everyone involved.'

Necessarily, work promoted via the Shared Priority Project brings in its wake unfinished business, not least because the work of the Sets is emergent and exploratory. As ageing is not a uniform phenomenon there can be no substitute for dialogue with older citizens if local priorities are to be negotiated. While such work has been associated with social care and voluntary sector services, it is the province of all. It is right that the inclusiveness of 'engagement' processes exercises individuals aspiring to steer whole systems in directions identified by all older citizens. However, as it is difficult for anyone to represent an experience not identical to ones own, who should speak and from what perspective? How can equal access to strategic planning opportunities be realised for excluded constituencies of older people?

'If I'd only read about (activities elsewhere) I might not have been so confident...It seems fluffy to say you got a lot out of meetings, but I did!'

The Older People Shared Priority Project has confirmed the importance of a paradigm of civic reconstruction. The starting point for this is authentic engagement i.e. recognition of the need to listen attentively and relinquish unilateral authority. All the Sets confirm that passive conformity with the plans of others is light years away from authentic engagement. There are no short cuts and time is required to learn from sharing authority and experience.

'The engagement study of the Policy Studies Institute and Better Government for Older People is a really good outcome for older people (for which I was able to get more resources from the Association of London Government) as this is engaging older people as research Buddies...Camden hosted an event for older people to network across boroughs...we're producing a directory of information so older people will indirectly benefit from this.'⁷

⁷. Policy Services Institute and Better Government for Older People [2006] Census Survey to collect baseline information on existing engagement activity with older citizens

members of Older People Shared Priority Action Learning Sets 2004 – 2006

The success of the older people shared priority is a result of the hard work and contribution of a many individuals. Those who participated in the action learning sets are listed in the following pages. Membership of the Sets has reflected the reality of policy and service development in local government where the people round a table reduce or change over time. Those highlighted in bold represent those in membership at the end of the life cycle and were involved in the preparation of the final products.

SET 1 – South East, themes: engaging older people; performance and outcome measures; partnership working

Heather-Ann Worrell-Cahill

Policy & Partnerships Coordinator,
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council

Dave Martin

Associate Director, Better Government
for Older People (BGOP)

Sophie Martin

Development Manager, Promoting
Independence Group, Camden Council

David Gardner

Community Projects & Revitalisation
Officer, Chiltern District Council

Warren Leigh

Junior Consultant, Local Government
Services (South), Improvement and
Development Agency (IDeA)

Penny Philips

Policy Officer (Health and Social Care),
London Councils

Mary Foster

Surrey 50+ Manager,
Surrey County Council

Penny Haysom

Head of Policy & Performance,
Woking Borough Council

Hilary Thomas

Older Persons Community Development
Manager, Woking Borough Council

Sheila Davies

Health Promotion Coordinator,
Wycombe District Council

Dr David Furze

Senior Community Development Officer,
Wycombe District Council

Eime Tobari

Greenwich University

Val Dawes

Essex County Council

members of Older People Shared
Priority Action Learning Sets
2004 – 2006

SET 2 South West, themes: commissioning for future needs
of older people; prevention agenda; engaging users

Mike Langshaw

Contracts & Services Development
Officer, Cornwall County Council

Jeff Pattison

Head of Corporate & Legal Services,
Hampshire County Council

Warren Leigh

Junior Consultant, Local Government
Services (South), Improvement and
Development Agency (IDeA)

Matt Barton

Assistant Chief Executive,
Penwith District Council

Cllr Chris Goninan

Penwith District Council

Nick Bishop

Strategic Partnerships & Prevention
Manager, Portsmouth City Council

Jeanette Longhurst

Assistant Director
(Older People/Physical Impairments),
Wiltshire County Council

Belinda Bryan

Consultant, IDeA

Julia Clarke

Service Manager,
London Borough of Havering

Nigel Druce

Strategic Advisor, IDeA

Barry Manning

Chief Executive,
Kerrier District Council

John Merriman

Head of OP and PD services,
Bristol City Council

Anthony Newson

Inclusion Manager,
Penwith District Council

Christina Sell

Partnership Manager,
Hampshire County Council

members of Older People Shared
Priority Action Learning Sets
2004 – 2006

SET 3, North East, themes: prevention agenda;
promoting independence; social inclusion

Sally Gould
Chief Officer,
Age Concern Hull

John Howarth
Manager, Strategic Commissioning
& Service Improvement, Bradford
Metropolitan District Council

Gordon Elliott
Director of Corporate
Administration & Policy,
Derwentside District Council

Marion Usher
Divisional Commissioning Manager,
Durham County Council

Julie Walls
Modernisation Manager,
Gateshead Council

John Lovatt
Acting Head of Business Unit
(Older People),
Hartlepool Borough Council

Angela Dunn
Head of Community Health,
Hull City Council

Alec Pearson
Head of Adult Services,
Hull City Council

Martin Hutchings
Consultant, Local Government Services,
Improvement and Development Agency
(IDeA)

Tom Boyd
Change Manager,
Middlesbrough Council

Rita Davies
Social Regeneration Manager,
Newham London Borough Council

Jane Tilston
Integrated Commissioning Manager
for Older People, Newham Primary
Care Trust

Cllr The Hon Joan Taylor
Nottinghamshire County Council

Jenny Burgess
Project Manager, Social Care & Health,
Shropshire County Council

members of Older People Shared
Priority Action Learning Sets
2004 – 2006

SET 4 theme: whole systems approach

Rex Humphrey
Chief Executive,
Age Concern Norfolk

Marion Harper
Director, Age Concern Sutton

Dave Martin
Associate Director, Better Government
for Older People (BGOP)

Cath Galaska
Director of Service Development, Burnley
Pendle Rossendale Primary Care Trust

Sheelagh Connolly
County Manager Older People Services,
Cheshire County Council

Bill Wragge
Health Policy Officer,
Cotswold District Council

Jessie McArthur
Policy Officer,
East Sussex County Council

Jess Harris
Programme Coordinator,
Help the Aged

Martin Hutchings
Consultant, Local Government Services,
Improvement and Development Agency
(IDeA)

Alex O'Neil
Principal Research Manager,
Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Pat Huntingford
Project Director, Health Innovation,
Kent County Council

Olive Carroll
Director of Older People Services,
Lancashire County Council

Tony Pounder
Head of Supporting People,
Lancashire County Council

Paul McGarry
Principal Programme Manager,
Manchester Joint Health Unit,
Manchester City Council

Harold Bodmer
Director of Adult Services,
Norfolk County Council

members of Older People Shared
Priority Action Learning Sets
2004 – 2006

SET 4 theme: whole systems approach

Liz Mandeville

BGOP East Midlands Regional Consultant,
Nottinghamshire County Council

Charlie Hislop

Later Years Partnership Coordinator,
Southampton City Council

Nigel Riglar

Strategic Director,
Stroud District Council

Mariette Akkermans

Acting Executive Head of Service,
Older People,
Sutton London Borough Council

Rita Cheatle

Joint Planning Officer – Older People,
Thurrock Council

Ian Murphy

Acting Assistant Director,
Warrington Borough Council

Louise Sutton

Assistant Director – Commissioning,
Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council

members of Older People Shared
Priority Action Learning Sets
2004 – 2006

SET 5 themes: LinkAge approach

Alison Hibberd

Senior Manager for Services,
Age Concern Islington

Paul Searle

Project Leader Care Direct/Link Age,
Care Direct Devon

Halima Finn

Department for Work and Pensions
(DWP)

Carol Habberfield

Department for Work and Pensions
(DWP)

David Huxstep

Department for Work and Pensions
(DWP)

Fiona Berry

Downham Neighbourhood Management

Vareta Bryan

Assistant Director, Community Services,
Gloucestershire County Council

Steve Beety

Regional Community Safety Officer,
Government Office for the South West
(Bristol Office)

Chandra McGowan

County Manager Strategy Older People,
Hampshire County Council

Warren Leigh

Junior Consultant, Local Government
Services (South), Improvement and
Development Agency (IDeA)

Paula Cooze

Public Health & Prevention Manager,
Islington Primary Care Trust

Elizabeth Sclater

Lewisham Council

Susan Price

Development Officer, Joint Teams,
London Councils

John Hannam

Project Manager,
Nottinghamshire County Council

Carole Northmore

Customer Service Development Manager,
Plymouth City Council

Sue Feldman

Partnership Development Manager,
The Pension Service

Dave Page

National Developments Manager,
The Pension Service

Andrew Holmes-Smith

Systems 4 Consultants

others

The other 18 authorities involved

Bristol City Council	Lewisham London Borough Council
Bucks County Council	Local Government Employers
Durham & Chester-le-Street Primary Care Trust (County Durham PCT)	Luton Borough Council
East Sussex Primary Care Trust	Merseyside Fire
Essex County Council	Northamptonshire County Council
Havering London Borough Council	South Bucks District Council
Hull Primary Care Trust	Sutton London Borough Council
Islington London Borough Council	Swindon Borough Council
Kerrier District Council	Vale of Aylesbury Primary Care

Members of the Older People Shared Priority Steering Group

Thanks is also due to those who participated in the Older People Shared Priority Steering Group at different stages throughout the work, namely:

Jane Carrier Audit Commission	Stephen Hogan LGA
Helen Taylor Audit Commission	Caroline Green LGA
David Bird Audit Commission	Chris Paley Association of Directors of Social Services
Dave Martin Better Government for Older People	Ros Dalby Department of Work and Pensions
Nigel Druce IDeA	Elaine Stewart Department of Work and Pensions
Christina Sell IDeA	Alison Matthews Department of Work and Pensions
Mona Sehgal LGA /IDeA	Sue Younger-Ross Office of Deputy Prime Minister
Catherine Mangan LGA	Janet Walden Department of Health

contact

IDeA
Layden House
76-86 Turnmill Street
London EC1M 5LG.

telephone:
020 7296 6600
facsimile:
020 7296 6666

www.idea.gov.uk

credit

© copyright in all
images and text
is the property of the
respective copyright
holders. Unauthorised
reproduction is
prohibited.

