

Cross-Party Group on Older People, Age & Ageing AGM

Wednesday 6th March 2024 - 1pm-2.30pm

Minute

Present

MSPs

Jeremy Balfour - Convenor
Christine Grahame
Roz McCall

Non-MSP Group Members

Diana Findley – Borders Older Peoples Forum
Hetty Malcolm- Smith – SOPA
David Paterson - SOPA
Brian Murphy – Fire Scotland
Eileen Cawley - Scottish Pensioners Forum
Rose Jackson – Scottish Pensioners Forum
Kim Stringer – Vegetarians for Life
Alan Gow – Heriot Watt University
Ruiridh Smith – Generations Working Together
Andrea Ma– Age Scotland
Adam Stachura – Age Scotland
Anne Gallacher – Luminare
Barb Fraser - Luminare
Leeann McGurk – University of Dundee
Angus Mclean– Befriending Networks
Rohini Sharma- Joshi – RSJ Equality
Margaret Stewart – Lifecare Edinburgh
Colin Scott – Hourglass Scotland

In attendance

Julia Shillito – Senior Caseworker Jeremy Balfour MSP
Rhona McGrath – Scottish Parliament
Christine Ryder – Outside the Box (Secretariat)
Denis O’Keefe – Voice of Experience Forum
Captioners for Kim Stringer

Apologies

Rhoda Grant MSP
Arvind Salwan – Care Inspectorate
Carolynn Malone – Housing Options Scotland
Dr Anne Hendry – IFIC Scotland
Sarah Murray – Royal Voluntary Service
Kathryn Fraser
Robert McGeachy – Food Standards Scotland
Chloe Fawns- Ritchie – University of Dundee
Rebecca Hoffman – LGBT Health & Wellbeing
Debbie Horne – Independent Age
Liz Lumsden - ROSPA
Tilly Robinson- Miles – Food Train

Agenda item 1

Welcome

Jeremy Balfour MSP welcomed and thanked everyone for their attendance to this meeting and noted that this was also the AGM.

Agenda item 2

AGM -

Minutes 2023 AGM

The Minutes were accepted by the membership as accurate.

Appointment of Office Bearers

Christine Ryder stepped down as the secretariat. Jeremy added that he wanted to say a big thank you on his behalf and on all the members' behalf to Christine. He added that Christine has been keeping him on the straight and narrow in regards to the CPG and has been helpful. In all honesty the group wouldn't be continuing today if it hadn't been for Outside the Box and in particular Christine stepping up. A really big thank you to Christine.

Jeremy Balfour - Convenor
Fulton McGregor – Convenor
Age Scotland – Secretariat
Rose Jackson - Treasurer

Rose raised the issue of the money remaining in the bank account, around £200.

2 suggestions were put forward for what we should do with the money.

1. Put all the member organisations' names in a hat, pull 2 out and they each receive a donation of £100.
2. Give a portion of it to the secretariat for expenses incurred carrying out secretariat work.

Jeremy asked the members to send him any further suggestion and that they would decide at the next meeting.

Agenda item 3

Minutes 7th December meeting

The meeting was not quorate; however, the note of the meeting was agreed as accurate.

Agenda item 4

Matters Arising

No matters arising were raised.

Agenda item 5

New Members

It was agreed that The Voice of Experience Forum would be approved as members.

Agenda item 6

Presentation

A [recent publication](#) by the World Health Organisation (2023) recognises intergenerational contact as one of three key recommendations for tackling ageism. It's vital, that at a time of drastic demographic change, we do everything in our power to (re)connect generations, to combat the growing prominence of ageism. Generations Working Together will share key findings from this report and will also introduce the group to Global Intergenerational Week, a campaign in April that aims to raise awareness for intergenerational practice across the world. – **Ruairidh Smith, Policy Officer, Generations Working Together**

Ruairidh started by saying a big thank you for having him here today to present at the CPG for Older People, Age and Ageing meeting. He explained that he is the

policy officer for Generations Working Together, a centre of excellence in Scotland for intergenerational practice. They look at ways to improve and further intergenerational practice across Scotland so that our communities everywhere can benefit from it. The focus today is to talk about intergenerational solutions to ageism.

Ageism is a form of discrimination towards a person or group of people based on their age, often resulting in negative stereotyping, negative attitudes, and unequal treatment. It can manifest in different contexts, it's quite common in the workplace, within health and social care, but also just in general day-to-day social interactions. In terms of how challenging, it can be quite deeply embedded in our social cultures and institutions.

The reason it's a problem is it creates exclusion and that can lead to limiting lives or activities, aspirations and has a knock-on effect on mental and physical health and well-being. In 2021 the WHO published their global report on ageism, the report offers some fairly concerning statistics and establishes a real urgency around the issue of ageism.

- It states that ageism is associated with lower quality of life, contributes to social isolation and loneliness and it can even lead to early death in some instances.
- One in two people are ageist towards older people which is quite a damning statistic.
- An estimated 6.3 million cases of depression globally are estimated to be attributable to ageism (United Nations)

In Europe, younger people report more ageism than any other age group, which goes against our traditional idea of who ageism is a problem for, we normally consider affects our older generations but demonstrates a need to tackle it in both directions. We can't expect our young people to understand and respect our older generations if those arguments or those attitudes aren't reciprocated by our older generations towards younger generations.

After this report came out it was followed up with a new publication, which is designed less as a report and more as a toolkit for overcoming ageism, called Connecting Generations, Planning and Implementing Interventions for Intergenerational Contact. This toolkit identifies intergenerational contact as one of three necessary cost effective and easy to implement strategies for reducing ageing attitudes. It has 3 strategies.

- Policy and law
- Educational interventions
- Intergenerational interventions.

The report found that intergenerational interventions are key to tackling ageism after a study across 25 EU countries found that cross age friendships correlate with reduced ageism, both towards older and younger groups.

What do we mean by intergenerational contact or intergenerational interventions?

“Intergenerational Practice aims to bring people together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities which promote greater understanding and respect between generations and contributes to building more cohesive communities” (Beth Johnston Foundation)

However we choose to bring generations together, in terms of skills development, the activity is just a vehicle that allows us to achieve the wider objectives and benefits of intergenerational practice. For example, if we had an intergenerational cooking class where an older group teach younger people how to cook. There will be development in life skills, as young people will learn how to cook but crucially, what we're looking for there is for that relationship to grow and hopefully reduce social isolation and loneliness in our older generations, improve confidence in our younger groups and crucially, for the purposes of ageism, it will improve understanding across generations which will lead to a reduction in ageism. The best way to overcome problems of othering or discrimination is by improving understanding and the best way to improve understanding is by actively engaging younger and older people in activities together so that they can learn from one another and about one another which allows them to break the age barriers down themselves.

What do we need?

Age is a protected characteristic in Scotland and at a time where national and local governments are seeking ways to accommodate our ever-growing older population there is:

- Urgent need to address generational tensions and foster intergenerational relationships.
- Increased opportunities to connect generations.
- Policy development across a range of policy areas, including health, social care, education, community development.
- Shift the narrative - the existing narrative looks at intergenerational practice as something that's just nice and heartwarming, but not important – we need to change and to have intergenerational practice recognised as something that's essential.
- Political buy in - research shows intergenerational practice can be extremely useful and a cheap way to combat ageism as well as several other social problems. By investing in it now, we can save the government money in the long run. Therefore, we need to see the promotion and advocacy for funding of intergenerational work in communities across Scotland that will allow for a more prosperous future for people of all ages.

- Cross Directorate support – Generations Working Together have made loads of inroads within equalities and human rights, but we really struggle to reach other directorates such as housing and education are areas, we feel intergenerational practice could bring a lot of benefit however, when we reach out to them, we end up back at college and human rights or the e-mail just gets forwarded on so that's something that we're struggling with trying to seek solutions to. If the membership has any advice that would be greatly appreciated.

These are the key areas that we want to improve to continue to develop and the generational work across Scotland.

Global intergenerational week is an annual campaign. It runs from the 24th to 30th April. The week is full of events both in person and online webinars, discussions around celebrating the value and importance of intergenerational work. Each day of the campaign takes on a different theme, breaking down age barriers is the focus this year. 15 different countries across the world are involved and there are going to be some amazing events this year, it keeps growing each year; this year already looks to be a lot bigger than previous years. To get involved, first register to support if you haven't already this means you'll be able to access all resources and you will be first to hear about any updates, any events that we're planning during the week. You can [Register to support the campaign](#)

Additionally, you can host an intergenerational Mix and Mingle which is essentially any event that takes place during the week that brings people together of different generations. examples of Mix and Mingle could be: if you work in a care home or are closely connected with older, with older groups of any sort consider how during the week you can either continue some intergenerational work that you already do, or introduce an intergenerational element to some of the work that you already do and [Host an Intergenerational Mix and Mingle](#)

Political engagement is something we're hoping to get our membership involved in during the campaign. We are putting together a guide for political engagement to guide our members and anyone else who wants to get involved on how they can approach elected representatives and advocate for and encourage them to promote and invest in intergenerational projects. Keep an eye on our website for that and our social media channels for that.

Finally, if you're unable to do any of the above, just please get involved online using the hashtag #GIW24 to share any intergenerational stories that you have and just help us generally further the intergenerational movement.

Discussion and Questions

Following the presentation the discussion and questions covered the following areas:

- Older people regularly facing age discrimination in different sectors. Examples of people being degraded by being called 'darling', being offered seats that are wipeable rather than others in the waiting room, being patronised and assumptions being made about them before they have even spoken a word.
- How older people need to challenge when they are faced with ageism and people making assumptions about them.
- How in other parts of Europe culturally older people broadly are more respected and tend to be more extensively involved in the family whereas in the UK we have a different kind of society where family can live far away from each other therefore not have the same unity or cultural attitude.
- Intergenerational opportunities in faith groups, how it varies across different faith groups, the work Generations Working Together are doing with faith groups but also how sometimes faith groups don't see it as intergenerational work but just 'what they do'.
- Ideas both in Europe and here in Scotland where sheltered housing/care homes are on same site as nurseries etc, but most seem to be older people and nursery children not older children or teenagers and how they seem to be more open to trying it out in other countries whereas we play it safe.
- The removal of Older People from the Minister's title, the proposal for an Older People's Champion and how the Government needs to do more to tackle ageism and encourage more intergenerational practices.
- Older people are a huge demographic of voters and how the political parties need to start paying attention to them.

Agenda item 7

AOCB

Elizabeth Lumsden from ROSPA is leaving her post due to a restructuring and wished to have noted her best wishes to the Convenor and all those involved in the CPG and congratulate them on the sterling work they do to improve the lives of older people.

Tilly Robinson-Miles is also leaving her post at Food Train and would like to thank the group for their support of this work over the years and to publicly thank Jeremy Balfour MSP for sustaining the group.

Christine Grahame MSP raised that around this time of the year you get your letter informing you about the changes to your State Pension come April, but it doesn't mention that you may be entitled to pension credits, this feels like a missed opportunity.

Around 40% of people in the UK do not claim pension credits which is a gateway benefit to other benefits and payments to take you to hospital for example. Pension credits is an entitlement, £1.7 billion of unclaimed pension credits is retained by the Treasury, we need to change that. Adding information to pension letters which go out to everyone receiving a state pension about how they may be entitled to pension credits would be a way to encourage more people.

Christine mentioned that she had figures for the Lothians and Borders regarding pension credits. She suggested emailing her team for the figures her email address is Christine.Grahame.msp@parliament.scot

Action – Jeremy agreed to write to the Chancellor on behalf of the members suggesting information be added to pension letters about possible entitlement to pension credits.

Next meeting will be on Wednesday 5th June 1-2.30pm. The meeting will be online on MS Teams.