

Press Release

For Immediate Release

Tuesday 23rd April 2013

New charity sector coalition urges Government to respond more effectively to demographic change

Government should face up to our ageing society and better address its implications, argues the Ready for Ageing Alliance.

Six major national charities: Age UK, Anchor, the Centre for Policy on Ageing, Independent Age, the International Longevity Centre-UK and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation have today formed the Ready for Ageing Alliance to urge the Government and all political parties to face up to the major changes and challenges from our rapidly ageing society.

Last month's 'Ready for Ageing' report by the Public Service and Demographic Change Committee argued that there has been a lack of vision and coherence in the ageing strategies of successive governments. The Committee accused the Government of "woeful unpreparedness" for our ageing society.

The Ready for Ageing Alliance believes that living longer is potentially a great gift but that politicians must do more to make the most of this huge societal change. The Alliance believes that Government failure to respond to demographic change will have significant and major negative impacts on the future of the UK, not just in terms of health, care and pensions, but also in relation to the future success of the UK's economy. A failure to respond adequately now could also foster unhelpful intergeneration tensions and division into the long term.

The Ready for Ageing Alliance will be launched at a major public debate, to be attended by over 350 people on 23rd April, which will consider how Government should respond to our ageing society.

The Ready for Ageing Alliance has come together to:

- Urge Government to respond positively to the House of Lords' 'Ready for Ageing' Report and set out a plan for addressing the policy challenges of demographic change.
- Urge political parties to ensure that the challenges of our ageing society are prominent within their election manifestos.
- Urge the political parties to work together to deliver cross sector/party agreement on Commissions on "income and pensions" and "health and social care" in an ageing society.
- Urge Government to contribute and support a broader societal debate, actively engaging all relevant stakeholders about the need to reform public policy in the light of demographic change.

Michelle Mitchell, Charity Director General at Age UK said: “Some policymakers may think they can afford to put off addressing the long term trend towards ageing, but the challenges and opportunities longevity brings are already with us and effective responses need developing now. Age UK is pleased to be working with the Ready for Ageing Alliance to encourage politicians right across the spectrum to engage positively with the fact of an ageing society, from which potentially we have a great deal to gain.”

Jane Ashcroft, Chief Executive, Anchor said: “The policy issues that affect older people are wide-ranging and complex; and being made more so by demographic change. They span almost all government departments and several Ministers’ portfolios, yet individuals are being let down by a collective failure to address the needs of our growing older population. It is crucial that long-term solutions are developed and there is accountability within Government for action, to drive improvements for current and future generations of older people.”

Gillian Crosby, Director, Centre for Policy on Ageing, said: “We live in a diverse and ageing society and our attitudes need to change to reshape our approach to the changing demographics. Public policy and service provision should encourage partnership, co-production and take heed of the evidence base of ‘what works’ and ‘what does not’ so that ageing becomes a positive experience rather than something to be feared.”

Janet Morrison, Chief Executive, Independent Age said: “We have known about the demographic changes to our society for a long time. There is no excuse for delays in preparing for these changes - engineering a fundamental shift in societal attitudes, tackling ageism and ensuring independence, choice and equal voice for all our citizens whatever their age.”

Baroness Sally Greengross, Chief Executive, ILC-UK said:

Our society is in denial of the inevitability of ageing. Yet this issue is one of the biggest public policy challenges facing our society. We have put off the difficult decisions for far too long. Government must begin to take the ageing of our society seriously. Demographic change is an issue for all of us not just those interested in older people. If Government fails to act to respond to demographic change, the long term impact on today’s younger people will be severe.

Claire Turner, Head of Team (An Ageing Society), Joseph Rowntree

Foundation said: “The question - are we ready for ageing? - is one for all of us. Our ageing society provides opportunities as well as challenges for individuals, communities and government and it is vital that we don’t ignore, but celebrate ageing. As part of this, we need a bold, broad and long-term vision on how best to respond to demographic change.”

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Notes:

The Ready for Ageing Alliance is a group of organisations with a common interest in ensuring public policy more adequately responds to the challenges of an ageing society.

Lord Filkin, the Chair of the House of Lords cross party Committee that produced *Ready for Ageing*, will speak on 23rd April (4pm to 7pm) at an event organised by ILC-UK and the Actuarial Profession and supported by JRF (Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, London, SW1H 9NH).

This public event will be attended by over 350 people.

A limited number of spaces are available for journalists. If you would like to attend please contact Jessica Watson or David Sinclair at ILC-UK.

For more information about the Ready for Ageing Alliance, contact David Sinclair at ILC-UK on 02073400440 (davidsinclair@ilcuk.org.uk)

About the Ready for Ageing Alliance Members

Anchor is England's largest not-for-profit provider of housing and care to older people.

Age UK aims to improve later life for everyone through our information and advice, services, campaigns, products, training and research.

Centre for Policy on Ageing, established by the Nuffield Foundation in 1947, is an independent charity focused on raising awareness about ageing and the radical changes that are needed in public policy and practice to ensure better later lives for all. Our unique approach is through the systematic collection and dissemination of evidence in a variety of forms and our overarching focus is to discover and advocate what older people themselves want and need.

The International Longevity Centre-UK is the leading think tank on longevity and demographic change. It is an independent, non-partisan think-tank dedicated to addressing issues of longevity, ageing and population change. We develop ideas, undertake research and create a forum for debate.

Founded 150 years ago, **Independent Age** is a growing charity empowering older people across the UK and Ireland through the 'A, B, C' of advice, befriending and campaigning. We offer a national telephone and email advice service focusing on social care, welfare benefits and befriending services, which is supported by a wide range of printed guides and factsheets. This is integrated with on-the-ground, local support, provided by a network of over 1,500 volunteers offering one-to-one and group befriending. For more information, visit our website www.independentage.org Speak to one of our advisers for free and confidential advice and information. Lines are open Monday to Friday between 10am - 4pm. Call 0845 262 1863 or email advice@independentage.org

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation is an endowed foundation funding a UK wide research and development programme. We are independent, but we are not neutral: we are on the side of people and places in poverty. We want lasting change for people and places in poverty, communities where everyone can thrive and a more equal society. Now and for future generations