

A BRIGHT HORIZON FOR OLDER PEOPLE?

THE CENTRE FOR POLICY ON AGEING (CPA)¹ calls for a more serious approach to the collection and dissemination of knowledge on ageing issues in its recent annual report *A Bright Horizon*.²

Dr Eric Midwinter, CPA's Chairman, said at the AGM "It is imperative that policymakers, practitioners and all professionals draw on the substantial body of research evidence which exists on ageing issues. Policies and practices need to reflect what older people themselves need and want. Their voices can be heard in report literature but will remain ignored until this precious and unique information resource, housed at CPA, is made widely accessible. It is not good enough that a national resource remains under threat³ at a time when exchange of information from the numerous excellent ageing initiatives is the very key to ensuring their success."

CPA is an independent charity that gathers, summarises and disseminates research evidence and good practice for users in the research community, the voluntary sector, local and central government, public agencies and commercial organisations. It takes a proactive role identifying information sources that are specific to the interdisciplinary nature of ageing, and offers a unique range of databases (known as *AgeInfo*⁴) and customised services so that data can be accessed quickly, accurately and comprehensively. The reference library is open to everyone. In addition, CPA acts as an agency for the exchange and sharing of information to help organisations engaged in similar and allied areas achieve their goals.

The challenge of bringing about a sea-change in attitudes towards older age remains a matter of paramount national importance. The Centre's focus, ever since it was established by the Nuffield Foundation in 1947, has been to promote older people as valued citizens with the same rights as the rest of the population.⁵

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Dr Midwinter concluded, "There is much talk about 'choice' and older people being enabled to determine their lives as active and included citizens in older age. At CPA we call on those in government, the research councils and the practice community to make this a reality – a bright horizon – for all older people now and future generations. Professionals need timely, valid and relevant information to be available at the point of decision-making and this is the cornerstone of CPA's work.

"The continuance and development of CPA's information databases and services are critical to ensuring that the interests of older people are best served. As well as seeking core funding, the Centre is actively looking to form partnerships⁶ with all those that have an interest in and responsibility for promoting the independence and well-being of older people."

END

Notes

1. The Centre for Policy on Ageing (CPA) is an independent centre for research and information serving policymakers, practitioners and researchers working on issues affecting older people. Since 1947 the Centre has been concerned with spreading good practice, improving services for older people and promoting public policies that further their interests. Gillian Crosby is the Director. The governing body comprises Dr Eric Midwinter, Chair; Nigel Appleton (Contact Consulting); Dr Kate Davidson (University of Surrey); Tessa Harding (Help the Aged); Terry Philpot (consultant editor, *Community Care*); Jim Soulsby (NIACE).

2. CPA held its Annual General Meeting on 13 October 2003. Copies of its Annual Report, *A Bright Horizon*, are available from the Publications Officer, Angela Clark.

3. CPA has suffered serious financial setback due to the recent downturn in the stock market. It has undergone a period of review to consolidate and rebuild its unique activities for the future. In order to continue its work, the Centre must secure funding and partnerships for its core information resources.

4. The *AgeInfo* bibliographic database contains over 40,000 references to books, articles, statistical sources, reports and government publications about older age, all held in the CPA library.

5. CPA's current programme includes work on older prisoners, housing choices for older people, pensioner poverty, and age discrimination. CPA supports new methods of research and systematic information retrieval that promote the needs of older people. In May 2004, CPA, with *Community Care*, is holding a national conference on services for older people with learning difficulties.

6. A central part of CPA's work is to encourage the creative exchange of thinking and information. To this end it works with many organisations and has formed a strategic alliance with Better Government for Older People; and is seeking to establish closer working relationships with – among others – the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), National Collaboration on Ageing Research (NCAR), the Department of Health, and the Department of Work and Pensions. The international journal *Ageing and Society* was launched jointly in 1981 by CPA and the British Society of Gerontology.

For details of CPA's activities, visit www.cpa.org.uk. For further information, contact Gillian Crosby, Director, email gcrosby@cpa.org.uk, tel: 020 7553 6500.

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