

## **DEVELOPING AN INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE ON AGEING AND OLDER AGE**

**THE CENTRE FOR POLICY ON AGEING** is a provider of information and resources on issues around ageing. It fulfils a special role for policy makers, academics and practitioners seeking to use research evidence to support policy and services for older people. However, many within the field appear unaware of the value and indeed the very existence of specialist information resources.

The stated objective of many funded research programmes is to provide a sound evidence-base to inform policy and practice, but looking at the references cited, it is clear that much of the existing evidence-base of past research remains ignored and unexploited to the detriment of the new research and the outcome of the research findings. How, then, can systematic reviews and secondary analysis be comprehensive and thorough? How can policy and practice be evidence informed to ensure that the needs of older people are met without robust research and literature reviewing?

CPA is addressing these issues through working in partnership to develop an 'information infrastructure' - gathering, summarising and disseminating research evidence and good practice for users in all sectors, including older people. It has over many years built up an unrivalled multidisciplinary resource comprising books, policy reports, government publications, official statistics, journals and 'grey' literature on matters around ageing and older age. It offers a range of databases, known as AgeInfo – available on the Internet – and customised services so that information on a wide spread of topics can be accessed quickly and accurately.

Specialised information sources and databases, which cover the diverse social care literature, are often not available on major commercial databases currently purchased by universities or indeed made available to those working in government departments and other research organisations. Researchers can therefore be denied access to important 'evidence'. The CPA information service enables researchers to access the available body of evidence to cut down on wasteful research duplication and to ensure that funded research is undertaken which truly advances our understanding of the needs and aspirations of all older people.

The Centre's goal is to develop a comprehensive, proactive information infrastructure to parallel and support new moves in policy and service. However, it is critical that all sectors sign up to this goal to make it work. For further information contact Gillian Crosby, CPA's Director.

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