

Age UK's September 2011 Policy and Research Bulletin

Dear Readers

Have you ever struggled to answer other's questions about why we should support older people in other countries? Or wondered yourself? Our International Team has put a lot of thought into answering these questions, and has written "[Why does Age UK support international charities? FAQs](#)".

One of the important highlights in policy was that Age UK has joined forces with the NHS Confederation and the Local Government Group to establish a commission on improving dignity in care provided to older people in hospitals and care homes. Read more in the Cross-cutting section. Also, the Government published the responses received to the consultation 'Liberating the NHS: An Information Revolution'; see the Health & wellbeing section.

In research, quite a few reports have been released, among them one by the DWP on jobseekers aged 50+ (see the Work & learning section), and several on dementia (see the Health & wellbeing section).

Finally, Age UK has new 'Knowledge Hub' web pages, with useful information, resources, and links. Please [visit us](#)!

Warm regards
Susan Davidson

This month's Spotlight on:

Decision time for care reform. This important event is the next in our series of free-to-attend mini-conferences designed to stimulate debate on issues affecting people in later life. It's time for social care to be put under the spotlight. **Confirmed speakers include Andrew Dilnot CBE.** Read more below in the 'Events' section.

Below are the topic areas covered this month:

Cross-cutting issues Living to 100; dignity in care; EU population stats; and search to improve the lives of people with dementia.	Health & wellbeing Summary of NHS reform responses; nature vs nurture – new genetics findings; arthritis survey on personal budgets; Alzheimer's in the news; Healthwatch Pathfinders; and experiences of mental health services.
Social care DH framework for personal assistants; and arthritis survey on personal budgets	Communities Response to community rights consultation; Village SOS campaign for rural communities; localising council tax; and Taking Part survey on Big Society

<p>Money matters Workplace Retirement Income Commission report; localising council tax; and Payments Council and the abolition of cheques</p>	<p>Work & learning Age UK response to Modern Workplaces consultation; DWP research on 50+ experiences with Jobseekers Allowance; research on attitudes to workplace health; and older workers face pay freeze.</p>
<p>Housing & homes Report on older people forced to rent; spending cuts and sheltered housing; campaign for an ‘older people’s minister’; housing rights; pensioners moving to cities; fire safety; and a leasehold consultation</p>	<p>Engagement & volunteering New government guidance on minicabs to give volunteers and care workers a smoother ride</p>
<p>Age UK Consultation responses Responses to: consultation on community rights; and Modern Workplaces consultation</p>	<p>Consumers & lifestyle Involving customers in water price setting; and the Payments Council and the power to abolish cheques.</p>
<p>Transport Transport Committee warns about impact of bus spending cuts; and new government guidance on minicabs to give volunteers and care workers a smoother ride</p>	<p>Computers & technology The Ofcom Communications Market 2011 report</p>

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Living to 100

“Sadly current headlines imply that our attitude towards centenarians should change to one of fear and trepidation, with every newly-issued 100th birthday card from Buckingham Palace just one more nail in the coffin for the country’s finances. This is not true, as a nation and as individuals we will need to adapt and make changes but we have adequate time and resources to do so.” [Read more of our Charity Director Michelle Mitchell’s blog...](#)

Improving Dignity In Care - Call For Evidence

Age UK has joined forces with the NHS Confederation and the Local Government Group to establish a commission on improving dignity in care provided to older people in hospitals and care homes.

The Commission on Dignity in Care aims to

- understand what older people and their families want and expect,
- establish what really works to improve care,
- identify good practice from across health and social care and
- find out what needs to happen to improve care for everyone.

The Commission will enable senior leaders across health and social care to come together and take evidence from the full range of relevant groups – from patients and residents and their advocates to specialist clinicians and healthcare leaders – in order to get to the root of what needs to happen to improve care.

The deadline for submitting written evidence is 19 September and full details of the call for evidence can be found [on the Partnership of Dignity in Care website](#).

Population grows in twenty EU Member States

Eurostat has published '[Population and social conditions](#)'. This brief document presents population statistics of 20 European nations in text, graphs, and charts.

National search for new ideas to improve the lives of people with dementia

A national challenge that will fund teams to develop new design-led ideas for products and services that make lives simpler, better and more enjoyable for those with dementia and their carers was launched by The Design Council and the Department of Health.

'Living well with dementia' will offer five teams a share of £360,000 alongside professional support to develop working prototypes and business models over the next five months. The challenge is aiming to recruit teams with a variety of expertise, including designers, social entrepreneurs, businesses, service providers, support groups or individuals who may already have good ideas.

The Design Council has launched [a social network](#) for those interested, to access extensive research on dementia, meet others to form teams, and download the call for entries.

Events

Decision time for care reform

9am – 1pm, Thursday 22 September, London

[This important event](#) is the next in our series of free-to-attend mini-conferences designed to stimulate debate on issues affecting people in later life. It's time for social care to be put under the spotlight. **Confirmed speakers include Andrew Dilnot CBE**. We'll be discussing the recent Dilnot and Law Commission reports, assessing their impact on the care reform debate, and taking a look at how to influence the next steps for reform. Places are limited so book now by emailing eventsdept@ageuk.org.uk or you can call on 020 303 31501.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

An information revolution: Summary of responses to the consultation

[The summary of the responses](#) Government received to the consultation 'Liberating the NHS: An Information Revolution' has been published.

Ensuring that the information revolution benefits everyone and does not increase health inequalities was one of the strongest themes raised in the responses to the consultation. Ongoing equality analysis is informing the development of the Information Strategy. An initial list of equality opportunities and issues is available and we will publish a further equality analysis alongside the Information Strategy.

742 responses were received and will be used, along with input from the NHS Future

Forum, to develop the Information Strategy (which will also form the Government's response to this consultation).

The End of Nurture vs. Nature

A research team led by scientists from the University of Edinburgh who are funded by Age UK, has provided the first direct biological evidence for a genetic contribution to older people's general cognitive abilities.

Read more in [a blog by James Goodwin](#), Head of our research department.

New arthritis research UK questionnaire on personal health budgets

The National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society is working in partnership with Arthritis Research UK (AR UK) to ensure the views of people with Rheumatoid Arthritis are represented within the Government's new Personal Health Budgets initiative, which is currently being piloted in some parts of England.

To try and understand perceptions about the new Personal Health Budget, AR UK is hosting an [online questionnaire](#) asking people with musculoskeletal conditions, including Rheumatoid Arthritis, for their views. We are encouraging all our members and members of the public with Rheumatoid Arthritis to complete this survey.

Alzheimer's in the news

Alzheimer's disease is a major topic of health news stories, which regularly cover everything from potential cures to possible ways to prevent the disease in the first place.

NHS Choices has produced [this report](#) which looks back over Alzheimer's coverage to identify some of the more important stories and some which were wide of the mark.

The report also identifies key themes and common problems in the news reports and, hopefully, will help readers judge future news reports for themselves. Finally, they ask leading experts to predict what research and experimental treatments will be making headlines in the months and years to come.

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Local HealthWatch Pathfinders announced

[Seventy-five local HealthWatch Pathfinders](#) have been announced. The Pathfinders will pioneer plans ahead of the full establishment of local HealthWatch across the country in October 2012. Local HealthWatch will provide a collective voice for patients and carers, and advise the new clinical commissioning groups on the shape of local services to ensure they are informed by the views of the local community.

Survey of people who use community mental health services will help to assess changes in experience of care

[The results of the 2011 survey](#) of people who use community mental health services, published by the Care Quality Commission, are set to play an important role in the Government's new mental health outcomes strategy.

SOCIAL CARE

Framework for Personal Assistants

The Department of Health has published [a framework](#) designed to help accelerate and support growth in the number of people working as Personal Assistants. The framework outlines some of the most common barriers to employment and development of Personal Assistants and gives examples of successful practice. Skills for Care will work with the Department of Health to implement the framework.

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COMMUNITIES

Response to consultation on community rights

The Localism Bill currently going through parliament contains new powers for communities to take control of local services and assets. Earlier this year the government consulted on how this might work and has now published a summary of responses. Age UK wants to make sure these community rights are inclusive and accessible to everyone.

Summary of responses:

[Community Right to Buy](#)

[Community Right to Challenge](#)

[Age UK consultation responses:](#)

[Community Right to Buy](#)
[Community Right to Challenge](#)

Co-operatives UK joins Village SOS campaign to help revive rural communities

Co-operatives UK has joined a new campaign to help people in rural areas reverse the trend of decline by assisting them in setting up and running community enterprises.

The Active campaign will officially launch on Wednesday 10 August as part of a new six-part documentary series on BBC1 called 'Village SOS'. And dedicated expert advisers will provide support and guidance to people inspired by the series to set up and run their own community enterprises - from shops and pubs to broadband services and transport systems.

In addition to the Co-operatives UK advice line, [Village SOS Active has a dedicated website](#) with downloadable materials such as start-up guides, 'How to' documents for different kinds of enterprises and template documents to help people write business plans or market their enterprise. The website also includes a community network area, for communities to share ideas and inspire each other.

Localising council tax support in England

The Government has published [a consultation paper](#) on localising support for council tax in England. This will replace council tax benefit which is being abolished across Great Britain as part of the Welfare Reform Bill. Although expenditure will be reduced by 10 per cent the paper says that current and future pensioners will receive the same support.

Taking Part Survey - Big Society

The [‘Taking Part Survey’](#) includes findings that show levels of charitable giving, volunteering and civic participation, which could be seen as indicators of achieving the government's vision of a Big Society. The results suggest that results, particularly for participation in volunteering, have remained largely unchanged in recent years. In responding to the government's Giving White Paper, Age UK set out a series of challenges the government will need to overcome to get more people giving time and money.

Our Policy Adviser Gemma Bradshaw [has written about this](#) as well.

MONEY MATTERS

Workplace Retirement Income Commission – final report

The Workplace Retirement Income Commission [has warned](#) that private sector workers must get a better deal from their pensions if they are to save enough for retirement. Although the Commission supports the introduction of auto-enrolment into a pension starting from 2012, it warns that even after auto-enrolment up 9 million people may still fall through the cracks in the system.

It makes 16 recommendations for how the system could be improved in relation to

adequacy and risk, value for money, costs and charges, cultural change and stability. The Commission was chaired by Lord McFall of Alcluith and set up by the National Association of Pension Funds.

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Payments Council must not have the power to abolish cheques

The industry-dominated Payments Council should no longer have the unfettered power to decide the future of cheques, or other payment methods that directly affect millions of people, the [Treasury Select Committee says in a new report](#).

The Committee welcomes the belated decision of the Council to retain cheques, but warns the Payments Council to ensure that the banks do not attempt to abandon cheques by stealth, nor deter customers from using cheques.

WORK & LEARNING

Age UK responds to Modern Workplaces consultation

[Age UK has responded](#) to the flexible working element of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills' consultation into Modern Workplaces. We supported the Government's proposal to extend the right to request, and furthermore urge employers to consider allowing staff to work flexibly where appropriate as it has a range of benefits for both individuals and employers.

DWP research on 50+ jobseekers' experiences of Jobseekers Allowance

The DWP has published [a piece of qualitative research](#) evaluating the experiences of older jobseekers who are claiming Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), following a programme to train advisers about this groups' specific needs. The programme ran in 2010 and Age UK was closely involved. It uncovered that Jobcentre Plus support for older jobseekers is inconsistent, with some having good experiences and some bad. The research also identified a number of barriers commonly experienced by 50+ jobseekers, including lack of an up to date CV, and lack of familiarity with the modern labour market.

DWP research into attitudes to workplace health

The DWP has published a series of reports into employer and individual attitudes to workplace health. Findings include that over 80% of people believe work is good for your health, while 79% report having turned up for work despite feeling unwell. People felt employers should have a role in helping people who are long-term sick get back to work.

[The survey of employers](#)

[The survey of employees](#)

[The survey of public attitudes towards health and work](#)

Older workers left in the cold with pay freeze

The CIPD '[Employee Outlook: focus on pay' survey](#) has shown that older workers are more likely to be subject to pay freezes than are younger age groups. 31% of workers aged 25-34 had received a pay rise this year, whereas only 23% of those aged 55+ had done so.

HOUSING & HOMES

Older people forced to rent

[A market report](#) by HomeLet (which represents lettings agents) says that increasing numbers of older homeowners are renting to release equity in their property. Declining pension income and increases to the cost of living are pushing older people towards rented property.

Supporting People cuts - impacts on sheltered residents

[A survey](#) by the Guardian's 'housing network' shows that cuts to Supporting People funding (for housing related support) has reduced the ability of the housing sector to help vulnerable groups. It highlights a decision by Nottinghamshire council to stop scheme managers and emergency alarms in sheltered housing, which will impact on 11,500 older people. A separate survey of 140 housing associations, by the National Housing Federation, showed that older people would be one of the groups worst hit by the cuts.

Older people an asset to housing providers

Emily Bird, policy lead at the National Housing Federation, says that [older people should be considered an asset](#) in terms of volunteering and bringing equity and wealth into the community.

Anchor campaign for an older people's minister

Anchor Housing aim to get 100,000 signatures [for a petition](#) to secure a dedicated Minister for older people. Vince Cable and David Miliband are reported to be backing the campaign.

Almshouse residents seek housing rights

A group of almshouse residents in Southwark are seeking [an amendment to the localism bill](#) to allow the transfer of their scheme to a landlord of their choice. Anchor housing are proposing transferring the scheme to Pathways housing association rather than a local Southwark based charity.

Older people want to move to cities

[New research](#) by Anchor, England's largest not-for-profit housing and care provider, reveals nearly a third of Britons are looking to retire to urban areas.

Fire safety

[A coroner has said](#) that a scheme in Norfolk, whereby social workers assess the risk of fire in older people's homes, should be rolled out across the country.

Leasehold consultation

The Department for Communities and Local Government [is consulting on leasehold valuation limits](#) which are used to determine whether certain rights are available to residential long leaseholders.

AGE UK CONSULTATION RESPONSES

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CONSUMER & LIFESTYLE

Involving customers in water price setting

The Water Regulator Ofwat has recently been considering ways of improving consumer input into the water price setting process. They announced their proposals on 22 August and [published their report](#).

One of their suggestions is that water companies should consider contacting local Age UKs in their areas for their input.

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ENGAGEMENT & VOLUNTEERING

New government guidance on minicabs to give volunteers and care workers a smoother ride

Volunteers, childminders and care workers should be freed from the unnecessary and costly process of being licensed as minicabs following [guidance published by Transport Minister Norman Baker](#).

Changes to the minicab licensing laws in 2006 mean that some councils have been classing people like childminders - who drive children to and from school in their own vehicles, and care workers - who assist elderly people in their homes, as minicab drivers. The new guidance makes it clearer which vehicles the Government believes need minicab licences - and those that do not, removing the burden on Local Authorities of licensing vehicles unnecessarily.

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TRANSPORT

Transport Committee warns about impact of bus spending cuts

MPs have reiterated [Age UK's concern](#) that cuts to subsidies that keep bus routes open will have a huge impact on older people.

In the Transport Committee's report '[Bus Services after the Spending Review](#)' they warn that a combination of spending cuts is creating the "greatest financial challenge for the English bus industry for a generation".

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Authorities of licensing vehicles unnecessarily.

COMPUTERS & TECHNOLOGY

The Communications Market 2011 (August)

The Communications Regulator Ofcom has recently published their [8th annual UK Communications Market Report](#). The Report contains statistics and analysis of the UK communications sector and covers television and radio, the internet and fixed and mobile telephony. In particular it notes significant differences in technology take up between younger and older age groups.

They also have [reports and data](#) available for each of the nations as well as the market sectors.