Older people and the voluntary sector – 14 October 2014

Speakers:

- Lynne Berry OBE - Chair of the Commission to the Voluntary Sector and Ageing
- Caron Bradshaw - Chief Executive of Charity Finance Group
- Jessica Watson and Grace Walker-Lane - My Home Life

Lynne Berry OBE, Chair of the Commission to the Voluntary Sector and Ageing

- The voluntary sector should view the ageing society as an age of opportunity.
- Medical discoveries and levels of education amongst those getting older means a really positive time for the ageing population, a very healthy, well-resourced group and its time to tap into that.
- We should not view the ageing society as a burden and avoid pitting young and older people against each other. This should be a time of great intergenerational exchange.
- Voluntary sector needs to review relationship with ageing population.
- The next generation of older people will be different. This is the generation of the Beatles, not Vera Lynn. They have higher levels of divorce, most women will have had experience of working outside the home, and they have higher expectations from public services.
- Next generation of older people will be best educated, healthiest and ethnically diverse group of older people ever. They also have more calls on their time and resources than before.

Key points:
- Stop thinking of older people as a problem and see them rather as the great resource and opportunity they are.
- Engage older people in the voluntary sector.
- People are living longer, the workforce will change, there will be a greater mix of paid and unpaid work, those older people working could be the most flexible, vibrant sector,
- Voluntary sector could innovate and lead the way in schemes such as, ‘golden gap years’, learning at older age through ‘Teach Later’ schemes.
- Older people may want to be part of organisations that work with all age groups, may not want to be segregated in projects and voluntary work for older people.

Caron Bradshaw, Chief Executive of Charity Finance Group

- Charities engage with older people increasingly but as in recent years there has been less money available and support from local government has been changing, charities have had to be innovative, do more with less, have had to compete with each other. This has naturally impacted on how they interact and engage with the different groups they work with
- We must remember the role charities play as employers involved in pension provision. Auto-enrolment in pension schemes is mandatory but as most charities are small are in the later phases of roll-out.
- The CFG Pensions Maze document is a comprehensive guide for charities on how to deal with pension policy.
- The challenges for now are:
  - Multi-employer pension schemes, where employers pool risk and share administrative costs with other employers are popular but have a higher risk-profile than might expect.
  - Rules of these schemes have been developed with the private sector in mind which is very different from not-for-profit and that needs to be recognised.
- Has been more positive feedback from the pensions’ regulator with regard to these issues. The arguments from the charity sector are gaining traction and it is being more listened to
- There are opportunities arising in this area but we must chose to see them as such.
Grace Walker-Lane, My Home Life

- The ‘My Home Life’ project aims to promote quality of life for those living, dying, visiting and working in care homes through greater community engagement.
- It engages in enterprise initiatives – developing packages to enhance quality of life and research work – piloting ways to improve quality of life.
- It is a knowledge-gathering project and is about embedding community engagement in care homes.
- The research has found community engagement varies considerably by area, particularly between rural and urban areas. A pilot project operating in Kent and Bristol had very different experiences of the level of community engagement that already existed and the appetite for further engagement. It is important to note that engagement is not just about volunteering. It goes wider than this, to include community groups and local businesses.
- They have found that the planning of engagement is vital and there are responsibilities on both sides; those in the care homes to plan for meaningful involvement as well as those visiting.
- Retention of volunteers requires good practice and volunteer management by care homes.

Jessica Watson, My Home Life

- There is little visibility in our society for people who are old and maybe in ill health.
- My Home Life wants to make the boundaries between care homes and outside of care homes more porous.
- The support networks and community links that existed when older people were still at home shouldn’t just end as they move to a care home. This is particularly important for people who do not have family members who are able to visit regularly.
- Essex Council have really embraced the project, seconded staff to it.
- Key findings from the knowledge-gathering thus far:
  - Engagement doesn’t happen on its own, it driven by people who push for it. Need to nurture this.
  - Need to be flexible in terms of how to engage in care homes, no one size fits all.
  - It’s important to work with other organisations and schemes working in care homes, try and bring together piecemeal operations to make more coherent engagement and to share learning.
  - Having a broker position such as Essex Council’s seconded member of staff can be very useful.

About the APPG on Civil Society

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Civil Society and Volunteering exists to provide a forum for discussing issues affecting the voluntary and community sector with Parliamentarians from across the political spectrum.

How to get involved?

- Come to a meeting (details below)
- Join the group - APPG members get advance notice of all of our sessions as well as an invitation to our Christmas Parliamentary Reception. E mail for details
- Give us a call, visit our website or follow us on twitter

Web: [www.ncvo.org.uk/appg](http://www.ncvo.org.uk/appg)  
E mail: civilsocietyappg@ncvo.org.uk

Future Meetings
All Party Parliamentary Group on Civil Society and Volunteering

- Tuesday 18th November 2014 – with Paula Sussex, chief executive of the Charity Commission.

Please RSVP to Pauleen Colligan-Genova on civilsocietyappg@ncvo.org.uk or telephone 020 7520 2473.