



EnglishAgeNetwork: the positive voice of older people

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## Who are we?

English Age Network is a new national organisation that will enable the direct voices of older people across England to be heard by those who create the policies, strategies and services that affect their lives.

Based on the long established English Regional Forums on Ageing, the network already embraces local groups and activists with an estimated reach of over 300,000 older people.

Our ambition is to expand this substantially by welcoming other groups, forums and individuals who share our aims and provide a unique resource for the public, private, third and academic sectors to tap into the opinions, knowledge and experience of older people.

## What do we offer?

The English Age Network provides an opportunity for genuine engagement through a body with no political affiliations, commercial interests or agenda other than seeking to improve the quality of life of older people.

Our long-term relationships with local groups, forums and affiliates allow us to function differently from any other representative body to reach those whose voices are often ignored.

We can access the views and input of people across the complete spectrum of society with direct experience of ageing... of all political persuasions and from diverse ethnic, religious and socio-economic groups. This includes "hard to reach" individuals and those not online.

The English Forums on Ageing have a long track record of collaborating with local, regional and national bodies to inform decision making. Our new network builds on this to provide informed individuals across the country willing to take part in surveys, focus groups and facilitated meetings.

As well as enabling all levels of Government and public services to fulfil their equality obligations when developing policies in areas such as health, social care, transport, employment, benefits, housing and digital inclusion, English Age Network will help the business community address both "ageing workforce" issues and the needs and aspirations of older consumers.

There is also an opportunity for academic and think-tank researchers to access the diverse expertise, experiences, opinions and concerns of older people.

## Our offer to those in the later life sector

- Direct insights into the lives of older people in the UK for strategists, researchers, politicians, civil servants, think tanks, health bodies and local government
- Focus groups, surveys and research collaboration
- An estimated 'reach' of over 300,000 older people
- A panel of speakers and commentators on key issues
- Political and commercial independence

## Why is what we do important?

We live in an ageing society, which demands a sea change in the way many services are delivered, with (potentially) significant cost implications.

We maintain that by working with us, policy makers and decision takers will provide better-designed strategies and services that will function more efficiently and more cost-effectively. No one knows what it is like to be old except the old themselves.



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## Speaking up for older people: English Age Network calls for a new narrative

We believe that if society is better informed about the value and contribution of older people and hence more willing to draw on their experience and wisdom, there is a greater likelihood of much needed change in social policy and of a more 'age friendly' approach on the part of the business community.

To achieve this, the way older people are represented and portrayed needs to be corrected. We are committed to driving a narrative that will:

- Challenge the perception that ageing and longevity is a socio-economic problem and that people in later life are a burden on the rest of society;
- Celebrate the ageing process, the contribution made by older people and the achievements that have resulted in more of us living longer and healthier lives;
- Confront the negative portrayal of older people and the underlying ageism within wider society;
- Contribute to a better understanding of the real implications of an ageing population in a changing society, recognising that ageing and longevity are intergenerational issues, with younger and older people needing to develop a shared vision of ageing well.

We will be able to offer informed, non-partisan comment to the media on issues, regionally and nationally, based on our "constituency" of older people throughout the country.

## How will we work?

Each Regional Forum, although remaining autonomous, will affiliate to the new national organisation and representatives from each Region will form part of our governance structure. Local forums will work with groups and forums in their region to help them participate - ensuring their voices will be heard at both local and national levels.

One avenue will be the use of Panels, already being successfully used in some regions, where each Panel member is part of a wider network and able to bring the views of others to the table. These can be brought together on a local, regional or national level to assist policy makers and researchers.

In addition, ad-hoc focus groups and surveys will gather a later life perspective on age related issues. Regional and national conferences also provide an opportunity to address major policy issues.

## What do we stand for?

English Age Network will promote a positive, anti-discriminatory and non-stereotyped view of ageing across society.

We believe in collaborative working – engaging all sides of society to work together towards common benefits. As part of this we will work closely with charities and other support groups operating in the later life zone.

We also stand for an intergenerational approach – working with other age groups to establish solutions that will be fair to all and sustainable.

## Your next step

Talk to English Age Network and you will be talking directly to people in later life across the country. In the first instance, contact:

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