

NOTES FORUM11/11/09

Shelagh Marshall welcomed everyone to the meeting and set the scene for “Challenges facing the ageing population in a rural setting”
Shelagh talked about her involvement with Future Years, the Regional Forum on Ageing.
Shelagh then went on to present “Building a Society for All Ages” the Government Strategy for our Ageing Society.

Christine Morton – Government Office Leeds, Head of Work & Later Life presented the demography, setting the scene for the region.

Q&A on these 2 sessions

Chris Pilkington – Future Years

The presentation does use the new definition of rural.

Geraldine Carter - Calderdale MBC

West Yorkshire is more rural than urban within the partnerships. It isn't true that the ageing in rural areas have more buying power. Income figures come from forms people fill in. The ageing population are not on high incomes, many people in my area can't afford to pay for basic repairs to their houses. The figures put people at a disadvantage. Buying power is not the case. Many with bus passes are the ones that have cars in garages at home. We need to be careful how we word things.

Shelagh Marshall – Vice Chair

The average salary is a concern. Many people live in the Dales and commute to Leeds. An ex-council house in Grassington has just sold for £285,000.

Geraldine Cater – Calderdale MBC

The M62 makes commuting easy as do the local trains which are full of people commuting.

Tony Cooper – Parish Councils Association

Figures state that pensioners are the wealthiest they have ever been. Of the 12 million pensioners in the Country 6-7 million require Government handouts. Social care in homes could go out to the private sector, who will regulate the quality and standards of care?

Shelagh Marshall – Vice Chair

10-20 years ago pensioners were well off but not now.

People needing care will be assessed and offered a direct payment to source their own care.

Tony Walker – DWP Pension Service Harrogate
presented reaching remote rural areas

Tony explained that he was one of the visiting officers who can meet customers in their own homes.
He also outlined some of the benefits people may be entitled to.
Shelagh mentioned to remind friends and relatives they may be entitled to benefits.

John Basnett – RABI Regional Welfare Officer
John outlined the purpose and aims of RABI to help and alleviate hardship and stress in the farming community.
80% of his work is with elderly or disabled farmers and farm workers. They receive referrals from many organisations and concerned neighbours or friends although 20% of calls are from working farmers themselves. It is sometimes harder for farmers to apply for benefits because they don't have up to date accounts.
A pilot scheme in the South West is currently underway where farm secretaries are going into farms and sorting out paperwork.
The Gateway Project is helping farmers to gain new skills such as HGV, dry stone walling, bookkeeping etc to provide an additional income source.
Shelagh mentioned that the average age of a farmer is 62 with an average income of £7,000

Q&As on these 2 sessions

Geraldine Carter – Calderdale MBC
Q – Is RABI something farmers pay in to?
A – No it is a charity

Karen Walker – East Yorkshire Council
Q – 10% of people don't have Bank accounts how do they get their benefits paid?
A – A small proportion are paid by cheque which can be cashed at Post Office, or use a power of attorney
KW – There is an assumption by staff at DWP that everyone can access their services
TW – Resources are limited but we do try and get to the hard to reach areas and have had some positive results.

Geraldine Carter- Calderdale MBC
Could GOYH pass information to the powers that be that not everyone can access finance?
Christine Morton – I will take that back to the pensions office.

Graham Ward – Chair
It is very difficult dealing with the voluntary section, information is not shared, you can only deal with certain people. How do you relate to the voluntary sector re confidentiality?

TW – Confidentiality is high profile. We make certain checks on any one over 60 who calls the office.

It would be in order for us to speak to a direct relative, there is a system called appointeeship. Pension centres should be prepared to speak to representatives, or if you have a power of attorney that can be lodged with the pension dept.

Dorothy Fairburn – We have barely scratched the surface doctors, carers, shopping, transport we have not addressed the real issues but just skirted round them. We have failed to get to grips with the real issues.

Graham Ward – We need to deal with issues we have influence on. Village Agents are a good idea

Future RAF

We now have funding from Yorkshire Forward and GOYH. FERA has been appointed as the accountable body.

11 applications have been received for the Technical Coordinator/Secretariat 4 have been chosen for interview on 20th November.

The Steering Group structure will change and will have 18 representatives including elected councillors and practitioners. 8-10 people will be elected by members. The changes should happen by the end of January.

It is hoped a new Chair will be in place by January.