

# Age Concern Pocket Campaign Guide



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# Section 1:

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# The Work of Age Concern

## What does Age Concern do?

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Society today is made up of many diverse groups. One key sector is older people, who are the most rapidly growing age group of the population. But all too often older people are marginalised or ignored. Age Concern represents all older people in the UK

today; seeking to make life more fulfilling by giving them a voice in decisions affecting their lives and to win recognition for the



contribution every older person brings to society. We work with older people across the country – listening to their views, campaigning for change on their behalf and providing a wide range of services and opportunities.

There are Age Concerns in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and internationally.

In England, Age Concern is a federation of over 400 independent charities which share the same name, values and standards. As the National Council on Ageing, Age Concern England brings together over 100 national bodies, including charities, professional organisations and representative groups with an interest in ageing and older people, taking a lead role in campaigning, parliamentary lobbying, policy analysis, research, specialist information and advice provision, publishing, and a wide range of training. Our work is based on substantial research and a careful analysis of current Government policy. Our approach recognises and celebrates the diversity of our ageing population.



## Helping to change public policy

This guide provides information about the issues affecting older people, highlighting the Government's record in these areas, Age Concern's position and the action that is urgently needed.

This is a UK-wide campaign guide. However, some of the policies we recommend are also relevant to the devolved institutions in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The overarching themes of empowerment, rights and responsibilities are relevant to older people – regardless of where they live.



We hope this guide will help older people who want to campaign to influence public policy in areas affecting their lives. The information could be used to write to MPs, local councillors and the media, or to take part in local radio and Web debates.

We believe that if enough older people make their voices heard we can create a better society for older people now and in the future.



## Older voters: A real voice

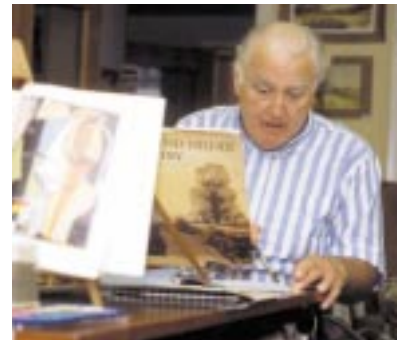
There is a large proportion of older people in our society – and this number is growing every year. Older people are more likely to be politically active than younger people. It is important that the Government takes action to help older people and recognises the power of their vote. This power is considerable – just take a look at the facts:

- **Older people are more likely to vote in General Elections than any other age group.**
- **At the last General Election, in more than half the seats in the UK, people over pensionable age cast more than a quarter of the total votes.**
- **People over 50 cast a third of the votes.**

## The current situation

The UK population is ageing. There are nearly 11 million people over pensionable age in the UK. In 2021 this will rise to 12.2 million.<sup>6</sup> What is being done to take these figures into account? We need policies to be put in place that meet the needs of older people, and also give younger people the opportunity to plan for their future.

Older people can face immense barriers to playing a full part in society. They face overt discrimination in employment, in the health service and as consumers. Other barriers are more subtle and based on the assumption that older people are less capable in the modern world. Many older women and ethnic minority elders face a double prejudice.



Age Concern believes that older people must be heard both individually and collectively in relation to decisions that affect their lives. They must be given the dignity, security and opportunity every citizen deserves.

## Key facts

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- Average life expectancy is 75.1 years for men and 80 years for women.<sup>(ii)</sup>
- In 1996 there were 5,523 people aged 100 and over in England and Wales. This will increase to 39,000 in 2036.<sup>(iii)</sup>
- One in five pensioners remains in poverty.<sup>(iv)</sup>
- In 2000-2001, 69% of pensioner households depended on state benefits for at least half their income.<sup>(v)</sup>
- More than £1 billion in means-tested benefits currently goes unclaimed.<sup>(vi)</sup>
- In 2001 there were 142,500 registered beds in nursing homes intended for use by older people.<sup>(vii)</sup>
- Almost one fifth (19%) of people aged 60 and over lived in poor housing in 1996.<sup>(viii)</sup>
- Age discrimination costs the UK economy £31 billion in lost production.<sup>(ix)</sup>
- 2.8 million people over 50 were economically inactive in the late 1990s.<sup>(x)</sup>



## Section II:

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# Issues for older people



Government policies, for example on transport, health and education have a marked effect on all citizens – older people included. This section, however, takes a closer look at:



**A Pensioner Poverty**

**B Age Discrimination**

**C Health**

**D Social Care**

**E Housing**

**F Transport**

**G Crime and Safety**

## A Pensioner Poverty

Older people have the right to an income that provides an adequate standard of living. They should not have to choose between food and warmth – and they should have the income to stay healthy, sociable and active. All older people should share in the rising prosperity of the nation.

Age Concern believes that the role of the state is to guarantee people an adequate income in retirement, through a combination of direct state provision and well-regulated private provision. We believe action is urgently needed to help provide for both today's and tomorrow's pensioners.

### Government Activity

Since 1997, the Government has introduced measures to improve pensioners' incomes.

Measures have included:

- ▶ A rise in the Basic State Pension of at least £100 per year. In 2002 this will rise by £3 per week for single people and £8 a week for couples.
- ▶ A rise in the means-tested Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) for the poorest pensioners – to £98.15 in 2002 and to at least £100 a week from 2003.

- ▶ Pension Credit: a new benefit to give pensioners on average £400 a year more per household from October 2003. An average of £8 per week.

## Action Needed

Despite these gradual improvements one in five pensioners remains in poverty. Age Concern is calling on the Government to:

- 1. Provide a basic state pension that covers basic living costs.** The basic pension should be increased each year to give all pensioners a share in the nation's rising economic prosperity, and provide a decent minimum income in retirement for all older people.
- 2. Commit to pledges to reduce and ultimately abolish pensioner poverty.** As a start, the Government should consult on a definition of poverty, making it possible to assess the success of the Government's efforts to attack pensioner poverty. With an agreed way of measuring poverty in place, we would then urge the Chancellor to commit to clear anti-poverty targets for older people, as he has for children.
- 3. Consult with and listen to the views of the most disadvantaged older people,** who are often ignored.

## 4. Take action to prevent pensioner poverty in the future.

The Government should ensure that people of working age are able and encouraged to build up an adequate income for retirement through a combination of state and non-state provision.

Pensions systems should make sure that even those with low earnings or interrupted working lives are able to save enough money to provide an adequate income in retirement so that they do not have to rely on means tested support in retirement.



## B Age Discrimination

Older people are often disadvantaged in our society simply because of their age. For example many employers still mistakenly assume that older people will be unwilling or unable to retrain for new posts. Age discrimination impoverishes not only older people, but society as a whole, since older people's skills and experience are not used.



The cost of age discrimination to the UK economy is calculated at £31 billion in lost production.<sup>(x)</sup> Older people should have the opportunity to participate in society, including through employment and volunteering, and should not have to overcome age barriers to achieve this.

## Government Activity

Since 1997, the Government has introduced measures which aim to tackle age discrimination in the UK.

Measures have included:

- ▶ A Department for Trade and Industry voluntary code on age diversity introduced in 1999. It sets out a standard of non-ageist practice which employers should aim for regarding recruitment, selection, training, promotion and redundancy.
- ▶ The creation of a National Service Framework (NSF) for Older People that aims to root out age discrimination in health and social care.
- ▶ A commitment to implement the EU Directive on Equal Treatment in Employment (Article 13) by December 2006. This will outlaw age discrimination in the workplace.

- ▶ A consultation on establishing a Single Equalities Commission which would establish a framework for equality legislation in Great Britain.

## Action Needed

Age Concern is calling for the Government to show its support for older people's demands and produce a detailed plan on how it will end age discrimination in five key areas where thousands experience ageism on a daily basis.

1. **Employment:** older people should be judged on skills, knowledge and commitment, not on the basis of age. With present employment rates and the growth of the older population, one million more over 50s will not be working by 2020 (Winning the Generation Game 2000).
2. **Health:** older people should be treated according to clinical need, not refused treatment on account of age. One in six people over 65 say they have been discriminated against in healthcare or health insurance because of their age (Age Concern/ICM poll December 2001).
3. **Social Care:** support at home can be vital to maintain independence. But services can be restricted or even stopped simply because of age. Funding limits for care provided at home are usually lower for older people than for younger adults.

- 4. Learning:** lifelong learning should be a reality for all of us. Training and education should not just be concentrated on younger people. There is an upper age limit of 54 on student loans in higher education.
- 5. In the marketplace:** older people should be recognised as major consumers and contributors to the economy and not refused services. The Consumer Credit Act 1974 does not prevent discrimination on the grounds of age by credit card companies and lenders.

The Government must clearly set out how age discrimination will be dealt with on a level playing field in any Single Equalities Commission. Age discrimination must not be the poor relation of race, religion or gender.



## C Health

Health is more than an absence of illness. It cannot be separated from living standards, housing and general status in society. If older people are poor, badly housed and socially excluded, their physical and mental health is at risk. Health services should work with other services and sectors to help older people lead longer, healthier lives. Older people are the main users of the NHS. They should be treated according to clinical need and should not have treatment refused on the basis of age. They should not have to deal with out-dated attitudes that ignore the diversity of their needs and concerns.



### Government Activity

Since 1997 the Government has introduced measures to improve health care for older people in the UK.

Measures have included:

- ▶ The announcement in Budget 2002 of a significant increase in health care expenditure (an annual rise of 10%).

- ▶ A commitment in the NHS Plan for England and Wales (2000) to address age discrimination in the NHS.
- ▶ A pledge to abolish 95% of mixed sex wards in English hospitals by the end of 2002.

## Action Needed

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Age Concern is calling on the Government to:



2. **Introduce comprehensive age discrimination legislation that makes it illegal to refuse or delay treatment, or to provide inferior care solely on the basis of age.** Money, time and effort need to be invested into training and staff development to ensure that age discrimination is rooted out of the health and social care

1. **Ensure that the new money allocated to the NHS is effectively targeted.** Inside the NHS we want to see money targeted on prevention, not just acute hospital care. Investment in primary health care can help people before they reach a crisis point and make significant savings in other parts of the health system, as well as in other public services.



workforce. There should be quick and fair remedies for victims of age discrimination in health care.

3. **Increase the funding and provision of services for older people with mental health problems** to tackle the current under-provision in the NHS.
4. **Involve older people** in devising, monitoring and updating how the NHS should best meet their needs, and in decisions relating to their own treatment and care.

## D Social Care

Current community care often falls short of providing older people with even their basic human rights and fails to treat older people with dignity. They are often given little choice in care and are faced with navigating a complex system. In addition, the cost of care often falls upon them and their families.

We believe that investment needs to be made in social care if older people are to be able to lead healthy and independent lives. Older people need to be given choices and the opportunity to receive a range of care and support – in their own homes as well as in care homes.

### Government Activity

- ▶ The announcement in 2002 of £1 billion extra for social services for older people by 2006.
- ▶ The introduction of ‘free’ nursing care from October 2001 for those who pay for their own care in a nursing home. These people should receive a weekly contribution of between £35 and £110 dependent on the extent of their nursing care needs. The Government rejected the Royal Commission’s proposals for free personal care which has been accepted and introduced in Scotland.



- ▶ Introduction of the Care Standards Act to raise standards in care homes.

### Action Needed

Age Concern is calling on the Government to:

1. **Invest more resources** in social care so that older people are able to lead healthy independent lives. Personal choices regarding care and support, either in their own home or in care homes should be met and not restricted because of age.
2. **Provide essential personal care** at no charge, whatever the setting. This would follow the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Long-Term Care in 1999.
3. **Address the problems facing residents of homes that are closed down.** To prevent older people being evicted with only a few days notice, local authorities should have a duty to manage their local care home market effectively. Consultation with residents should take place and longer notice periods regarding closure should be mandatory.

## E Housing

Housing quality is particularly important for older people as they may spend a lot of their time at home. However significant numbers of older people live in poor quality accommodation. For example a 1996 survey of housing stock in England found that almost one fifth (19%) of single people aged 60 and over lived in poor housing.<sup>(viii)</sup>

### Government Activity

- ▶ The Older People's Housing Strategy (2001) aims to provide closer coordination between local councils, the NHS, housing associations and the voluntary and private sector, with the aim of ensuring older people get the housing and support that they need.
- ▶ A new funding regime for housing related support services, 'Supporting People' from 2003.



### Action Needed

Age Concern is calling on the Government to:

1. **Encourage a wide range of housing options and support services** to enable people to lead independent lives in the community through the implementation of the Older People's Housing Strategy.
2. **Provide increased grants** for older people to adapt, repair and maintain their homes and more choice for those who want to move.
3. **Provide help and information** to increase awareness of local housing services to improve the quality of life.
4. **Provide enough funding** to ensure that the housing support needs of older people can be properly met, for example for home security services and help with practical tasks around the home.

## F Transport

Older people need access to dependable local public transport services that enable them to get to the places they need. An accessible, affordable public transport system can provide a lifeline for older people, providing them with the ability to visit family and friends, take part in their religious or cultural activities, go shopping, attend hospital appointments, pursue leisure interests and undertake work or volunteering.

### Government Activity

- ▶ The Transport Act (2000) provides concessionary travel for older people within their local authority area.



### Action Needed

Age Concern is calling on the Government to:

1. **Extend the travel concession** to any journey within England and Wales.
2. **Commit to making residential areas safer** for pedestrians (eg reducing traffic speeds).
3. **Develop smaller-scale transport projects** including bus services as the Government's ten year transport plan concentrates almost solely on major transport projects (eg road building and railways).

## G Crime and Safety

Older people wish to live safe and secure lives both at home and in the community. However, crime and the perception of crime can play a significant part in undermining the well-being of older people and contribute to making them feel excluded from the community they live in. The fear of crime can also lead to isolation which can prevent older people from living active and fulfilling lives in the community.

### Government Activity

- ▶ The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 provides a national framework for crime prevention. It gives local authorities, the police and key partners new responsibilities for developing strategies for tackling crime and disorder in their local communities.
- ▶ The Crime Reduction Strategy (1999) outlines plans to reduce crime and requires that each Public Authority publish a five year crime reduction plan to tackle burglary, vehicle crime and robbery.



- ▶ The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and Action Plan sets out the plans to tackle social exclusion by reducing crime and delivering neighbourhood improvements across a wide range of services in the most deprived neighbourhoods in England.

### Action Needed

Age Concern is calling on the Government to:

1. **Ensure that older people are consulted and involved** in neighbourhood renewal projects so that the right steps can be taken to make local areas become better places to live.
2. **Provide good practice on crime prevention** within local Crime and Disorder Partnerships in order to develop campaigns to raise awareness of crimes targeting older people.
3. **Continue to raise awareness** of distraction burglary and publicise information to help older people improve the security of their homes.

## Notes

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- i National Population Projections: 1998-based. National Statistics, Crown Copyright 2000, table 3.2 (Actual and projected population by age, UK, 1998-2021).
- ii Population Trends 101. Autumn 2000, table 5.1.
- iii Thatcher R. The Demography of Centenarians in England and Wales. Population Trends 96, Summer 1999; 5-12 (annex 1: Number of Centenarians in England and Wales, figure 1).
- iv Age Concern defines poverty relatively, stating that 'in a society such as ours, all citizens should have resources that are not only sufficient to cover basic essential items such as food, warmth and shelter; but to enable participation in the social and economic life of the community'. Statistics taken from Social Inequalities, 2000 edition, ONS, The Stationery Office, London 2000.
- v Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Pensioners' Income Series 2000-2001.
- vi Department for Work and Pensions Income Related Benefits estimates of take-up 1999-2000.
- vii Department of Health Statistical Bulletin: community care statistics 2001, residential personal social services for adults, England, November 2001, Residential care homes: client groups.
- viii English Housing Condition Survey 1996. DETR 1998, chapter 7.
- ix Rickard, S (2001), Ageism – Too Costly to Ignore, Cranfield School for Management for the Employers' Forum on Age. May 2001, London Employers' Forum on Age.
- x Cabinet Office and Performance and Innovation Unit (2000), Winning the Generation Game: Improving Opportunities for People Aged 50-65 in Work and Community Activity. London, The Stationery Office.
- xi Rickard, S (2001), Ageism – Too Costly to Ignore, Cranfield School for Management for the Employers' Forum on Age. May 2001, London Employers' Forum on Age.

