

**‘we have
the voice**

**do you have
the ears?’**

the way ahead

**Elders Council of Newcastle
Action Plan**

July 2003

**no
discrimination**

the Elders' Tree

**better
services**

**no
discrimination**

**joined up
services**

**joined up
services**

**older people
having
their say
participating
sharing
views
joining
groups
working
together
getting involved
campaigning**

**better
services**

**older people's
lives and experiences**

**older people's
lives and experiences**

older people's lives and experiences

**How I would like others
to see me**

**‘independent -
not a liability -
treated with
respect -
treated as
an asset’**

what

is the Elders Council of Newcastle?

The Elders Council is a membership organisation open free to elders organisations and individual elders (i.e. a person aged 50+) resident or active in the City of Newcastle upon Tyne.

The Elders Council was established in 2001 when a constitution was agreed. **The Elders Council** is currently applying for charitable status.

The Elders Council was established in response to a need to address the challenges and opportunities presented by an ageing society. In Newcastle upon Tyne 31% of the population is aged over 50, the fastest growing group being those aged 80+. But older people are not a homogenous group, as they span more than one generation with widely varying interests and expertise. Addressing their needs and opening up opportunities for this diverse group of people, with so much to offer, is an ambitious and exciting challenge.

Aim of the Elders Council

To promote the benefit and social inclusion of elders by providing a voice for elders' organisations and individual elders resident or active in the City of Newcastle upon Tyne on issues concerning their quality of life, health and well being. To realise the potential of elders as a creative and active resource for the community.

Principles of the Elders Council

- to recognise, encourage and value the contribution made by older people
- to support older people in putting forward their views, wisdom and expertise
- to develop partnerships between agencies (public, private and voluntary) and older people
- to develop practical projects which make a difference

Support for the Elders Council

The Elders Council receives support from the 'better life in later life' programme (formerly Newcastle's Better Government for Older

what? continued

People programme) in the form of development work and administration. 'a better life in later life' receives funding from Single Regeneration Budget VI and the Primary Care Trust.

The Elders Council gratefully acknowledges the direct financial support it receives from the Northern Rock Foundation and Help the Aged

how does the Elders Council work?

Locally

The main work of **the Elders Council** is carried out by an elected Committee and through working groups. Currently there are working groups on Health and Social Care (led by Action for Health - Senior Citizens in Newcastle), Lifelong Learning, Housing, Older Person Friendly City Centre and the Older People and Carers Readers Group. From time to time events are held or specific pieces of work undertaken to progress particular issues e.g. Image conference and exhibition.¹ **The Elders Council** also hosts information days to provide members with the opportunity to become informed about new service developments e.g. Pensions Service and Pension Credit.

(¹ A report on the Image event is available from **the Elders Council** at the address on the back cover.)

Nationally

The Elders Council developed as part of the Newcastle Better Government for Older People (BGOP) pilot and as such became part of a regional and national network of Older People's Advisory Groups. The structure of the network is shown in Appendix 1. Through this mechanism older people are able to ensure that issues raised locally are addressed at Cabinet sub-committee level when appropriate.

the way ahead

Aim

The aim of **The Way Ahead** is to improve the quality of life of older citizens in Newcastle upon Tyne. It is a statement of the issues which older people themselves have identified as being important to their quality of life, health and well being. It is also an Action Plan which states the ways in which **the Elders Council** will endeavour to address those issues over the next 2 years by working in partnership with agencies both locally and nationally.

Objectives

The Way Ahead is divided into themed sections, some of which are more comprehensive than others. This reflects the issues on which individual members of **the Elders Council** have chosen to take a lead and have developed extensive programmes of work. Taken together, these themes aim to fulfil the following objectives:

- to promote positive images of older people
- to enable older people to play their part as full and active citizens
- to ensure that older people are able to access a range of opportunities and meaningful activities
- to ensure that older people have equal access to the full range of services (statutory, voluntary and private) which help to maintain their health and well-being
- to ensure that older people feel safe and secure in their homes and their communities
- to develop joined up policies and joined up services for joined up people with no discrimination on grounds of age

The Way Ahead has been developed by members of **the Elders Council** over a period of 18 months and will be regularly updated. It is a statement of the issues from older people's perspectives. It does not therefore respond directly to government targets or strategies, but rather seeks to shape these into being more responsive to the needs of older people e.g. through contributing to the Newcastle Plan.

(A separate report on the Newcastle Plan event hosted by **the Elders Council** is available from the address on the back cover.)

the way ahead continued

The Elders Council recognises that some new strategies such as the National Service Framework for Older People and the Older People's Housing Strategy do take major strides towards improving services for older people, and is working closely with agencies in implementing these strategies.

Many of the issues raised in **The Way Ahead** are endorsed by a recent consultation exercise on the Newcastle Plan carried out by Age Concern (Newcastle) with groups of frail older people. In particular issues relating to transport, lifelong learning and safety and security were highlighted.

How I would like others
to see me

**'still
developing
and growing'**

1 Lifelong Learning

The Elders Council wishes to see effective, well-organised educational provision for all sectors of the population from nursery children through to that of the very old.

We feel that the needs of the 50+ age range are just as valid as those of the young, especially as the proportion of older people in the population increases. We know from personal experience as well as from recent research that taking up new learning interests in later life and discovering latent or lapsed talents is not only satisfying and life enhancing, but also health promoting (see schemes in other parts of the country offering 'Learning on Prescription' - rather than Prozac - as a remedy for depression.) Older people these days are much more able to make a contribution to society rather than be a drain on resources if the right programmes and facilities are - preferably freely - available to them.

However, constraints of age do have to be catered for to allow everyone to engage in these activities and extend them to those who are less confident, motivated or physically capable than the core of older people who regularly go to courses and join in programmes of self-help. We feel there is a large but currently unquantified and un-catered for 'silent majority' to be addressed, possibly through education rather than, or as well as, health and social services.

Issues

This holistic view of 'learning for life' will only be possible if the practical needs of older people are addressed. Consultation with older people and the 'Image' event (May 2002) and at the Newcastle Plan Event (April 2003) highlighted the following issues:

- preparing for retirement is important in equipping people with the attitude and information to enable them to continue to lead full and active lives.
- accessibility: local provision, physical access, more support for people with particular requirements e.g. visual impairment, stroke etc.

1 continued

- appreciation of older people's range of interests and wishes about provision of content, assessment, duration, timing, location and social context for learning
- advice and publicity e.g. personal advice from a sympathetic and knowledgeable 'adviser', preferably an older person, at a one stop shop
- cost: uniform low or waived fees for retired people from all learning providers
- transport: consider the importance of convenient, affordable transport, especially for people who are unable to use public transport (see Section 5 Transport)

Action

- older people already offer their skills and experience in delivering pre-retirement courses through the NE Pre-Retirement Association. It is recognised that such courses are only available to a small percentage of people and the **Elders Council** seeks to encourage all employers in the City to offer such courses. Courses open to people who have reached retirement age but are unemployed would also be welcomed.
- continue to work in partnership with agencies (e.g. Learning City Partnership) to ensure that the aspirations of older people are included in lifelong learning plans
- liaise with health services in promoting Active Ageing as a contribution to the delivery of Standard 8 of the National Service Framework for Older People
- promote the role that older people can play both as providers of learning (e.g. U3A model) or in supporting their peers through advice, buddying schemes and as role models
- promote the contribution that older people can make in supporting and mentoring people of all ages in educational and community settings

2

Arts and Culture

Older people welcome many of the developments which contribute towards enhancing the cultural life of the city: **'I like the buzz'; 'good cultural facilities - cinemas, concerts, plays'; 'the Quayside is wonderful'**

Their main concern is that these wonderful opportunities are not always accessible to everyone.

Issues

- access (physical and financial) to leisure facilities, including leisure centres, theatres, cinemas, galleries and concert halls
- lack of appropriate transport to cultural events and activities, particularly in the evening, deters older people from being able to attend
- escort services are needed for some older people (e.g. for cultural reasons or for people with sensory impairment) to enable them to visit cultural centres
- recognising diversity and providing appropriate food, venues etc. to meet different cultural needs
- information about events and activities required in different languages and formats
- need for more flexible use of community spaces to provide a common meeting place for cultural/community activities e.g. libraries, schools, community centres
- develop relationships with galleries, libraries etc. so that they engage older people in their activities e.g. hold a 'happy hour' specifically for older people
- enjoyment of the architecture and public art in the city centre could be enhanced for all citizens and visitors alike by the provision of information leaflets, and 'city trail' maps showing easy walking routes and places to sit and enjoy the city centre environment

Action

- work with the relevant agencies to ensure that older people's needs, aspirations and contributions are taken into account in the City of Culture initiative

2 continued

- work with galleries, libraries etc. to develop the 'happy hour for older people' concept
- support the work of the Elders Council Older Person Friendly City working group in identifying ways in which access to cultural activities and venues can be improved

**How I would like others
to see me**

**'elderly
in body
but lively
in mind'**

3

Health and Social Care

Issues

- public policies should focus on the promotion of healthy ageing so that increased life expectancy means adding life to years and not merely adding years to life
- there should be access to a full range of health services - diagnosis, treatment and preventive services - without discrimination on grounds of age
- improvements are needed in hospital out-patient and in-patient services, in waiting times for appointments and admission; in standards of hygiene; in transport services to and from hospital; and attitudes to older people
- we need better integration of primary health, social care and housing services to promote real person-centred care, especially to improve hospital discharge arrangements, intermediate care and rehabilitation services.
- assessments for services should include the needs of carers, many of whom are older people themselves.
- an increase, not a reduction, in home care services is needed to support independent living at home.
- social care should include access to a range of stimulating activities to promote mental health and physical well-being and reduce social isolation and depression. (see Section 1 - Lifelong Learning)
- improvements are needed in standards of care homes, both residential and nursing, with regular inspections and lay members included in the visiting team.

Action

- support older people willing to serve as representatives in the new organisations for patient and public involvement
- older people need to make known their views to decision makers, share experiences, participate in service planning and advisory groups, and liaise with Older People's Champions
- service planners need to attend 'Listening Events' to hear - and act upon - the views of older people.
- encourage the provision of clear, 'older person friendly'

3 continued

information through a Readers - and Writers - Group.

- monitor progress in implementing the National Service Framework (NSF) for older people on all eight standards, with a special contribution to Standard 6 on Falls and Standard 8 on the Promotion of Health and Active Life
- Action for Health - Senior Citizens in Newcastle (AFH-SCIN) will continue to use drama through the Old Spice Drama Group, to highlight health and safety issues for older people at events for older people and professional workers, and in training programmes for students, with a major contribution to an Older and Safer Programme (recently selected as a 'good practice' example in the Audit Commission Report on "Connecting with Users and Citizens" January 2003.)

How I would like others to see me

'I want people to see me as friendly and cheerful. Set an example to others on how you can be after hip and knee surgery by swimming and exercise'

4 Housing

Issues

- local and national policies should focus on encouraging the building of houses to lifetime homes standards e.g. in Newcastle Great Park and elsewhere
- local and national policies should encourage improvements (e.g. to House for Life standards) to existing housing stock by working with the private, independent and social housing sectors through grants, loans, improvement trusts etc.
- a significant percentage of older people living in Newcastle are owner occupiers. We need to ensure that the needs of older owner occupiers are adequately reflected in the Private Sector Strategy and in the administration of grants for repairs and adaptations.
- Newcastle City Council should seek to improve its own housing stock, especially out of date sheltered housing complexes
- older people seek quality and choice in their housing. Newcastle City Council and local housing providers should ensure they are working to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) guidelines - Quality and Choice in Housing.
- older people need good information and advice on the housing options available to them.
- quick and easy access to items of equipment and/or adaptations are essential to enabling older people to remain in their own homes. Improvements are needed in waiting times and access to essential items of equipment.
- having a warm home is essential to an older person's health and well-being. All housing providers in the City should be encouraged to implement the affordable warmth strategy.
- an increase in low level, preventative support services is needed. Services which provide 'that little bit of help' to older people (e.g. handy person, gardening, shopping schemes) can make all the difference in enabling them to live independently.
- new technology (e.g. Community Care Alarm Service) can help older people to live safely and securely in their own homes. Attention needs to be paid to introducing new equipment where appropriate.

4 continued

Action

- work closely with Newcastle City Council's Community and Housing Directorate on the development and implementation of the Housing Strategy for Older People
- support the 'little bit of help' feasibility and development study commissioned by 'a better life in later life' and being carried out by Peter Fletcher Associates
- support the Audit Commission/Better Government for Older People project on 'Promoting Independence'. Newcastle upon Tyne is a pilot site in the study.
- work with Newcastle City Council on the House for Life 2 proposal
- through the Readers Group work to develop information written from the older person's perspective on housing adaptations and living independently.
- take part in Listening Events which help to ensure that older people's issues are taken into account in policy and service development.

How I would like others to see me

'It's possible for older people to offer good advice and feel part of the community'

5 Transport

Transport is the issue most commonly raised by older people as having a significant impact on their quality of life. Car ownership reduces as people get older for a variety of reasons including cost and health. Efficient public and community transport services which are accessible to people with varying needs are therefore particularly important to older people.

Issues

- concessionary fares - recent substantial increases in concessionary fares have had a negative impact on many older people's ability to go out and about
- there is no uniformity in concessionary fares across the country
- accessible, low floor buses should be available in all parts of the City and efforts should be made to reduce congestion at bus stops so that they can draw right up to the pavement
- signage on buses is poor, particularly for people with visual impairment.
- there should be greater provision of 'peripheral bus routes' for travel around the City rather than simply in and out of the city centre
- there should be a safe, comfortable transport system where attention is given to considerate behaviour by drivers and other passengers. Conductors who can provide assistance to older and disabled people and children may help with this.
- there is a need for a co-ordinated, reliable, accessible and affordable community transport system serving members of the community who are unable to use public transport. This should include improvements to the Care Bus provision, taxi voucher schemes and Patient Transport Services.

Action

- to support local and national campaigns for free public transport for older people
- to support local and national campaigns for uniformity in concessionary travel throughout the UK
- to attend the Transport Advisory Committee and lobby for an

5 continued

increase in accessible buses and improved bus routes

- to work with other agencies in the City, including NEXUS, to develop a community transport system.
- to work with bus companies on driver training

How I would like others
to see me

**‘So much of my
life depends on
having good
transport’**

6

Finance

Issues

- older people want an adequate state pension linked to earnings
- 1 million older people do not claim all their entitlements and benefits
- some older people are concerned that they contribute more than a fair share towards Council Tax whilst not being able to access many of the services provided (See Section 1 Lifelong Learning and Section 5 Transport)

Action

- **the Elders Council** will support national organisations such as the National Pensioners Convention, ARP 050, and locally the North East Pensioners Association with their campaigning efforts to achieve an adequate state pension linked to earnings
- **the Elders Council** will advise members of their rights through newsletters, information days and through the work of the Older People and Carers Readers Group
- **the Elders Council** will research the views of all members regarding older people's Council Tax contributions

**How I would like others
to see me**

**‘As a senior
citizen I still feel
young and active,
but I realise
I can’t be as
quick as I was.
Usually the
younger people
treat me as
an equal,
with respect’**

Crime and **7** Community Safety

Issues

- older people's fear of crime outweighs the crime statistics but the impact of crime on older people is significant, sometimes precipitating major changes in lifestyle such as a move into sheltered housing or having a significant impact on an older person's health.
- sensationalist portrayal by the media of older people as victims of crime contributes to older people's fear of crime
- older people are particularly vulnerable to particular types of crime e.g. bogus callers/distraction burglary
- there is a need for more policing and more support for the police
- there is a need for more supervision on parks and green spaces so that older people can enjoy these areas
- additional safety features (e.g. door entry systems; CCTV etc.) are welcomed by older people
- anti-social behaviour, vandalism, graffiti and litter all contribute to older people's feelings of insecurity.
- the condition of pavements and parking on pavements are a major problem for older people, particularly those with visual impairment or disability.

Action

- to provide older people with the information, confidence, and 'tools' to reduce their vulnerability to crime and the impact of crime
- to work with the media to reduce the portrayal of older people as victims of crime
- to ensure that the Community Safety Strategy takes account of the issues which particularly affect older people
- Action for Health - Senior Citizens in Newcastle are preparing a programme which includes safety tips and advice to older people on going out and about safely, and on handling bogus callers. This programme will be taken to older people's groups throughout the city.
- older people already play a major role in neighbourhood schemes such as Neighbourhood Watch which help to increase people's sense of safety and security.

**How I would like others
to see me**

**‘active -
contributing to
community
issues -
helping to
preserve
green open
spaces for
the general
well-being of all’**

8 Environment

The Elders Council is seeking a cleaner and safer city for all its citizens. The Older Person Friendly City Centre group¹ has been conducting an audit of the city centre to find out how accessible and supportive environments can be created so that older people can enjoy the amenities and culture of the city. An interim report of the work was published in June 2003.

Issues

- greater attention needs to be paid to more environmentally friendly ways of disposing of waste in the City, including kerbside collection schemes
- the condition of pavements e.g. broken paving stones, parking on the pavement, high kerbs present particular hazards to older people, particularly those with visual impairment
- poor street lighting in particular parts of the city poses a hazard to older people
- the timing of pedestrian crossings is too short to allow some older people to cross the road safely
- the well designed street furniture in the city centre is welcomed. Luminous strips on street furniture, lampposts etc. would help people who are partially sighted
- the provision of well designed seating in public places is very important to older people e.g. higher seating; not concrete and metal which is cold to sit on
- the provision of and signposting to public toilets in the city centre is inadequate
- there is still scope for improvement in the access to shops. The Shopmobility Scheme is welcomed. The positioning of lift buttons in some stores makes it very difficult for a wheelchair user on their own.

Action

- continue the work of the Older Person Friendly City Group in auditing facilities in the city and taking forward the recommendations from their research
- support the development of a more sustainable waste strategy which expands and extends existing doorstep recycling and

8 continued

composting schemes

- Make recommendations to Newcastle City Council for improvements such as the maintenance of pavements including greater provision of warning markers e.g. dimple pavements; ensuring street furniture in pedestrianised areas leaves a clear path for people in wheelchairs or with visual impairment, improvements in the provision of public toilets and extended crossing times
- Encourage the involvement of more older people in Eco Panels
- Support 'litter pick' events which involve the local community in the maintenance of their local area

¹The Older Person Friendly City Centre Interim Report is available from the Elders Council at the address on the back cover

**How I would like others
to see me**

**'being older,
I still feel
I can take part
in how
the community
is run'**

Regeneration and **9** Building Communities

Issues

- the availability of local facilities is very important to older people. This includes local shops, post office, library, leisure centres, GP and health centres.
- access to a local community centre where a range of activities is available, including intergenerational activities, is very important to older people's quality of life
- older people are a resource in helping to build communities, both through the support they provide at neighbourhood level and the significant amount of voluntary work done by older people in a range of activities including intergenerational work.
- older people are particularly affected by major redevelopment and regeneration of areas, such as the Going for Growth initiative, and need well developed networks to support them through these changes.
- older people have a wealth of experience and ideas which they can contribute to strategic planning and implementation of new initiatives, provided the appropriate support and infrastructure is in place to enable them to play this role.

Action

- actively lobby to retain local facilities (e.g. shops, health centres, leisure facilities) within easy access of older people's homes
- support older people who play a key role in developing and running activities in local community centres, so that these centres are a vibrant resource for the local community.
- work with regeneration initiatives (e.g. Community Empowerment Fund) to ensure that the appropriate infrastructure and support is in place to enable older people to fulfil their role as citizens
- develop more opportunities for older people to play an active part in the development of their local area - for example, the Sensory Garden Group in Nuns Moor Park and the Children and Play Group in Exhibition Park
- support the work of voluntary and statutory agencies which work with older people affected by major regeneration initiatives such as Going for Growth

9 continued

- continue to develop **the Elders Council** as the voice of older people in the City and to develop mechanisms for **the Elders Council** to participate in strategic planning through the Newcastle Partnership and the Newcastle Plan

How I would like others
to see me

**'I would like
others to see
me as
an intelligent,
active, 'taking
an interest'
person'**

10

Equality and Diversity

Issues

- one of **the Elders Council**'s principal aims is to counter age discrimination. We appreciate that currently there is only a non-mandatory code of practice on Age Diversity in Employment. However, the Government is a signatory to the European Union Employment Directive which requires the introduction, by 2006, of legislation to outlaw discrimination on grounds of age. There is also a strong case for any such legislation to include the provision of goods and services (as does existing race, gender and disability legislation)
- there is evidence that in some instances older people experience discrimination in health and social care services. The National Service Framework for Older People Standard 1 seeks to address this issue
- **the Elders Council** aims to reflect the different ethnic groups and cultures in the city both in its membership and in the work that it does
- **the Elders Council** aims to include the diversity of older people in the city and to be as welcoming as possible to all older people regardless of gender, age, culture or disability

Action

- **the Elders Council** recommends that Newcastle City Council lead by example by adopting overt equal opportunity policies in respect of age. This would involve such measures as removing all reference to age in employment adverts, non-discriminatory selection for training and promotion and the relaxation of rigid age based retirement criteria, the addition of age discrimination to contract compliance criteria and undertaking an audit of Council services with a view to identifying any possible age discrimination. As a progressive and forward looking Council, Newcastle should anticipate and be ahead of legislation. At a later stage we will seek to encourage other local employers to adopt similar measures
- members of **the Elders Council** are supporting the Expert Lay Reference Group 's initiative to hold a Listening Event on Age

Discrimination in Autumn 2003

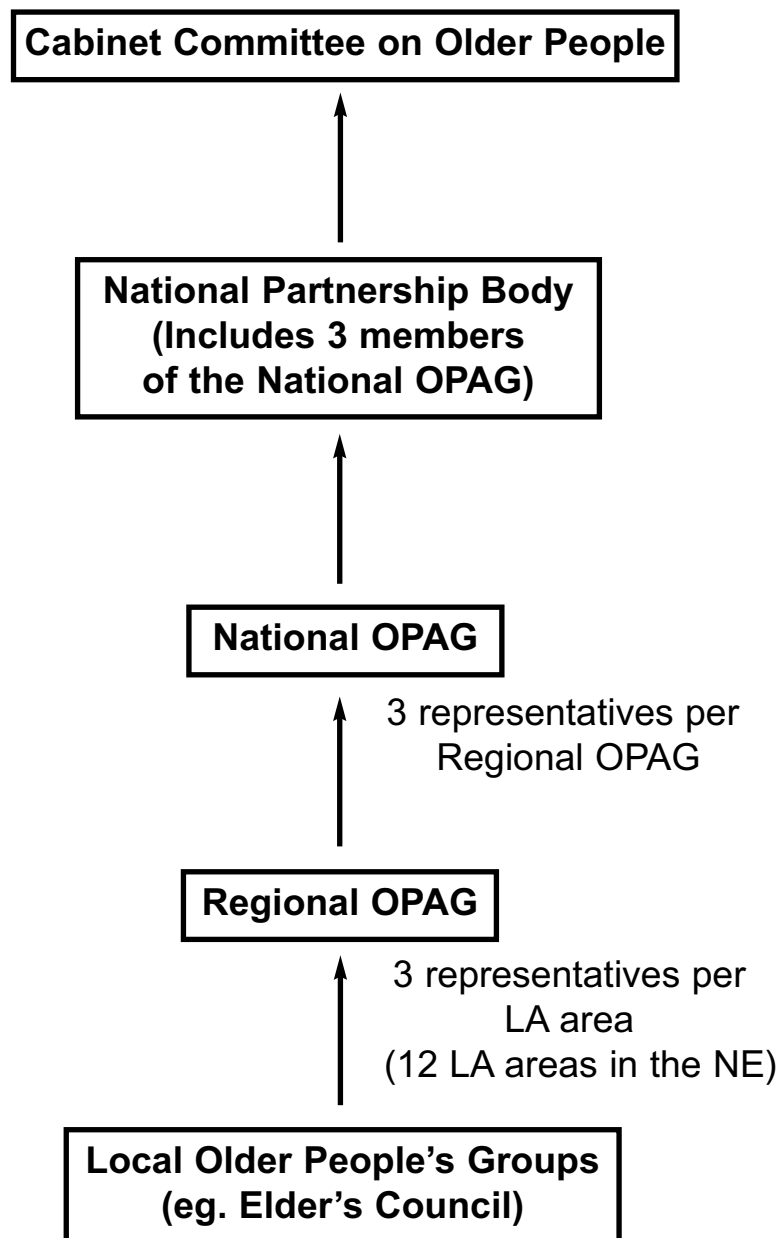
- members of **the Elders Council** attend the Scrutiny Committee which monitors age discrimination in the health and social care services
- **the Elders Council** will be proactive in making contact with ethnic elders throughout the city and to find the most appropriate way of ensuring that their views and concerns are included in the work of **the Elders Council**
- **the Elders Council** endeavours to support older people in taking part in its work by providing transport, information in different formats and languages, and a range of interpreting services as well as covering members' out-of-pocket expenses

How I would like others to see me

'I'd like to think that people could come to me if in trouble. I have looked after older people most of my life and I would like to be accepted as I am - not as a silly old woman'

Appendix

Older People's Advisory Group Network



the way ahead

**presents a very ambitious
and wide ranging agenda.**

**to implement it will require
hard work on the part of the
members of the Elders Council
and the support and
co-operation from a wide range
of agencies in the statutory,
voluntary and private sectors.**

**the Elders Council is actively
seeking opportunities to work
in partnership with others in
taking this forward.**

in publishing **the way ahead,
the Elders Council invites older
people and agencies to come
forward and work with us in
creating a better city for older
people and a better city
for everyone.**