

By: Oliver Mills, Managing Director, Kent Adult Social Services
To: Adult Services Policy Overview Committee – 1 April 2008
Subject: **KENT'S STRATEGY FOR LATER LIFE**
Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: A Kent Strategy for Later Life is being developed. This paper introduces the current draft, informs Members of next steps and seeks input into the final version.

Background – Why Now?

1. (1) In the past, the County Council has shied away from having an “older people’s strategy”. As part of the development of Towards 2010, a holistic older people’s theme was seriously considered, but on balance it was felt that all the themes should apply to all age groups. Equally, Active Lives is structured in a generic way, rather than focussing on the specific needs of different age groups.

(2) However, the benefits of having a Children and Young People’s Plan and a Children’s Trust became increasingly apparent, and there are lessons that can be applied to older people. Whilst “older people” (however defined!) are an extremely diverse group, there are issues that do particularly resonate with senior citizens. Of course KCC and its partners have been supporting older people in many ways for many years, but over the last year there does seem to be a consensus that it is time for the different partners in Kent to have a mechanism to ensure that older people’s needs and interests are being met and are seen to be met.

(3) KASS therefore led a number of workshops to which a wide range of representatives were invited, from older members of the public through to District and Borough Council representatives, Police, Health, the voluntary sector, BME community representatives, and so on. At those workshops, people were presented with the seven dimensions of independence, and the Vision for Kent themes, and asked to identify their priorities for action.

(4) Although KASS has led this work, this is on behalf of the Kent Partnership as the strategy is about identifying issues and action needed in relation to older people as a whole. The actions required will cut across not only the County Council Directorates but other public, private and voluntary organisations.

Key themes emerging from the initial consultation

2. (1) There was vigorous debate at the workshops, and a considerable degree of consensus about the main issues that needed addressing, although the solutions were not always obvious. The emerging themes were:

- i) **Valuing Later Life:** perhaps surprisingly this “need for a cultural change” came out very strongly in all the workshops.
- ii) **Planning for a secure old age** (ie for financial security and physical health)
- iii) **Healthy Communities** (ie good & accessible transport, decent homes, community safety, social activities)
- iv) **Learning** and being well informed - getting information you need when you need it
- v) **Independent Living**

(2) There was little appetite for a lengthy strategy document, but people did feel it would be useful to have a short overarching statement highlighting the priorities for action and acting as a signpost to where people could find further information (including older people’s strategies for specific services or geographical areas where these exist). Based on the consultation, the attached draft (Appendix 1) was written to summarise the issues raised.

Next Steps

3. (1) There is a Members’ Conference on Ageing and the Economy on 2 May 2008 which will be very useful in helping to shape priorities for action. It is hoped to widely promulgate the content of this conference to stimulate further discussion, including amongst older people’s forums and the Active Retirement Association for example. The draft strategy will go on the KCC website, and we will encourage as many people as possible to give us their views.

(2) In June I will be holding two further multi-agency events (East and West) also involving older people to finalise the issues and action to be included in the overarching strategy (which will remain short and snappy).

(3) I will then establish an editorial panel of older people to draft the final version (a model that worked really well for Active Lives). We will aim to produce the final version in the autumn.

Recommendations

4. (1) Members are asked note the contents and comment on the attached draft strategy.

Debra Exall
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