

Challenging Age

Information, Advice and Guidance for Older Age
Groups

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(Note: the appendices are laid out to aid photocopying of material for training and review purposes. The documentation can also be downloaded on www.taen.org.uk)

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- Research Team:
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Definition of “Older People”

There is no convenient terminology in the English language to describe “older people”, “mature people” or “third agers”. The term ‘older people’ is used in this report in the absence of a better phrase, and because government publications increasingly use the term to describe people in the 50+ age group. Essentially it describes all those who find that age has an impact on their ability to make choices about how they develop and use their skills and experience. That is the important point.

The Challenging Age Research Project takes 45 as the lower end of the range. There are two main reasons for this. Research has shown that age discriminatory practices can start well before 50, and 45 represents an approximate watershed to acknowledge this.

Secondly, given that age barriers tend to escalate from age 50, it is important to emphasise the need to take action before the threshold age of 50 is reached. The intention is to encourage individuals, employers, learning providers and policy makers to see the importance of career development and learning as a continuum, with no falsebreaks based on age demarcations. Age often bears little if any relationship to people’s career ambitions and potential to succeed, and to keep on succeeding. In relation to upper age limits, the researchers met or received feedback about large numbers of people aged 65+ who are in paid work, are enthusiastic learners, and are active volunteers often contributing critically important services to their local communities. The oldest worker, employed in a warehouse in one company involved in the research, was aged 83.

Executive Summary

This report is concerned with all those in their 40s, 50s, 60s and beyond, many of whom may encounter barriers that prevent full participation in employment, learning in and outside the workplace, career development programmes, and training to improve employability.

The Third Age is a time of change. Many wish to continue to work and contribute, but also want opportunities for new directions. Personal and financial responsibilities are often high - many individuals combine caring and parenting responsibilities, and some still have young children. The conflicting pressures often necessitate difficult choices and decisions.

THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

People are living longer, working fewer years and saving less for their extended retirement. This is not sustainable. The decline in work amongst older people over the last 25 years has been halted but we face huge actual and potential waste of third age skills and experience with major consequences for the economy and the community. A Government report estimates that the drop in 50+ work rates costs the economy about £16 billion a year in lost GDP, and the public purse £3-5 billion in extra benefit and lost taxes (Cabinet Office Performance and Innovation Unit Report, 2000).

Winning the Generation Game). 33% of the working age population are over 50, and this figure is likely to reach 40% during the next 20 years.

Only 0.2 million men and women over 50 are registered unemployed. However, the numbers of economically inactive unemployed are 8 times higher than this; and many of these 'hidden unemployed', substantial numbers of whom are highly skilled and experienced, would like to work if opportunities were available.

Almost a third of men aged 50+, and two-thirds of those aged 60-64, are not in work. Life expectancy has risen by 30 years since the State Pension Age was fixed. Those in work are 50% less likely to participate in training than those aged 35-50. Many of the workless 50+ live in considerable poverty - 57% are in households with no occupational pension, and 40% are in the lowest fifth of income distribution for all age groups. These figures reveal the dimension of the problem if older age groups do not, or cannot, maximise their contribution to the economy and their community.

Government has introduced a number of important measures to improve opportunities in work and community activity for people aged 50+. It has

designated older people as a priority group for Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) Partnerships. IAG Partnerships report directly to their Local Learning and Skills Council and are made up of organisations helping adults to find suitable education, training or work.

Government has also created the Jobcentre Plus by combining the old Employment Service and Benefits Agency. Nearly 40% of working age adults on benefits are over 50 and the new combined service will be dealing with them all.

WHO WAS INVOLVED

The fundamental objective of Challenging Age was to consult older adults and analyse their views on what has or has not worked for them so that all organisations delivering information, advice, guidance and support can achieve better results.

Six IAG Partnerships - Derbyshire; Kent and Medway; Lincolnshire and Rutland; North London; Sunderland; and York and North Yorkshire - took part. This selection provided the opportunity to compare various economic and social contexts, including: inner cities; rural areas; urban areas experiencing significant unemployment, poverty and structural change; more apparently affluent areas; and areas with numbers of older people from different ethnic groups.

The research included three third age specialist support organisations,

which offer a range of learning, guidance and employment services to older individuals. These were: Experience Works, Loughborough College; New Challenge, Ltd, Wembley; and Target Third Age York Ltd. Their involvement enabled the research team to compare and contrast the advantages of integrated and partnership approaches in helping the 45+.

AN EVALUATION MODEL

A 4 -stage Evaluation Model was developed and piloted by Challenging Age:

- (i) consulting with groups of older people
- (ii) collating and analysing the observations and feedback.
- (iii) mapping and researching local provision in the light of the feedback.
- (iv) using the information to review policy across the whole Partnership and planning future strategies.

Focus groups and telephone interviews can provide a rich source of data on: third age issues; individual experiences; the barriers facing the 45+; and interesting and good practice by partners and other agencies in helping older clients to overcome these. The richness of detail and wealth of feedback is contained in the reports on the focus groups and telephone interviews, and these are available from TAEN on request.

ISSUES IDENTIFIED

(i) Barriers

Many older people want to work, learn and earn but are encountering difficulties in doing so. Main barriers include: actual or perceived age discrimination, especially by employers; lack of local retraining opportunities; employer reluctance to train older people; the cost of learning and retraining; and difficulties in finding support agencies with staff who have the experience and expertise to assist older age groups - including listening, empathising, and providing the right forms of practical help.

Virtually all the 45+ and frontline workers consulted were concerned about the resulting waste of third age experience, skills and potential – in terms of the implications for individuals, local communities and the wider economy. The experience of rejection (real or perceived) can rapidly undermine morale, motivation and self-confidence, and cause many older people to give up and join the ‘hidden unemployed’. Frontline workers spoke about the numbers of older people who write themselves off and regard themselves as ‘too old’ to work and learn.

In some geographical areas third age poverty is a main issue. The research shows that poverty erodes hope and in many cases also health (which has attendant costs); it also

acts a barrier to jobsearch, and to learning and retraining. It can also reinforce fear, especially fear of change or taking a risk – for example, by taking short-term employment if this affects benefit entitlement. Many older people are worried about breaks in their pensions contributions, erosion of savings, and incipient and future poverty. Significant numbers want financial guidance alongside advice on work and learning.

(ii) The desire to contribute

However, the focus groups showed that financial concerns are only one of several reasons why many older people want to work. Most focus group members wanted to work, learn and continue to develop and utilise their abilities in their later years – to the benefit of the community and themselves. Many enjoy working, although they don’t necessarily want to return to their previous occupations or work styles.

Quality of jobs as well as quantity is important. Work provides purpose, status, scope to use one’s skills and abilities, and the opportunity to contribute to the community. A significant number of the focus group members didn’t just want to find ‘a job’ – they also wanted an occupation, or ‘vocation’, that allowed them to express their (changing) values, interests and objectives, and to progress. The extent to which they could achieve this by volunteering and active citizenship, rather than within the paid labour market, differed

according to individual circumstances.

(iii) Learning and workforce development

The unmet desire that significant numbers of under-performing older people have to work, learn, and develop their careers, is a key finding of immediate relevance to the Government's Workforce Development Strategy. The findings indicate that the Government's targets for adult skills cannot be met without large uplift in the skills of the over 45s.

Skill development and updating while in employment can help to ensure retention in the workforce, to the benefit of older individuals and their employers. Many people also want and need a 'second chance' if they, the economy and the community, are to avoid the risk of losing that potential energy and experience. This helps to explain the concern shown by many of those interviewed with the qualifying period of six months' unemployment for Jobcentre Plus programmes, including New Deal 50plus, Work Based Learning for Adults, Programme Centres and Work Trials. For many people aged 50+, there appear to be few - if any - alternative means of accessing affordable retraining programmes (other than IT) and sampling, gaining experience and proving themselves in new and alternative areas of employment. Successful employer-led workforce development

programmes, which include older employees and trainees, are clearly critical.

(iv) Information, Advice and Guidance

During the focus groups, participants were asked to identify the forms of help and support they required in order to overcome barriers preventing them from working and learning. Although few used the term 'guidance', the activities they identified are integral to high quality IAG. They include:

- *Accessible, personally relevant, up-to-date and sufficiently detailed information* in relation to older people: (a) to assist career choice; (b) to identify suitable local opportunities (jobs, learning, volunteering); and (c) to locate local organisations that can help.
- *Expert advice* that helps them relate the information to their own circumstances.
- *Staff who are prepared to listen* and have the expertise and commitment to act as "sounding boards" and "sources of ideas", and to help.
- *Staff who motivate*, provide older people with hope and encouragement, and offer help and support in regaining lost confidence and self-esteem.
- *Staff continuity* – not having to repeat one's personal story on each visit.

- *Staff who offer skilled and personal support* over a period of time and to whom older people can return (ie personal advisers and mentors). Feedback also indicates that older people welcome *followup and 'tracking' of progress* because these show that agencies are interested and genuinely care.
- *Skilled assessment* – including help in identifying: *existing and transferable skills, aptitudes and experience*, and relating these to the current labour market; previously *unrealised potential*; and *preferred learning styles* (so that they can make optimum use of learning opportunities).
- Help with such areas as *personal presentation, writing CVs, interview techniques, jobsearch and selfadvocacy* – including techniques to overcome age stereotyping and hidden or overt discrimination.
- *Training opportunities* that provide them with skills required by the local labour market, and which they can afford.
- Opportunities for *work trials, work sampling and work experience* so that they can try out their skills, find out about unfamiliar occupations and prove themselves to employers.
- *Peer group support* – to extend networks, provide motivation and encouragement, and support each other in achieving personal objectives.

Those providers that older people identified as being particularly helpful are all *highly personalised and 'people-focused' initiatives* that combine most or all of these activities into an *integrated service*. In most instances the initiatives also offer clients *opportunities to learn* on the same site – often because the providers are also *learn direct centres* and/or *community learning projects*.

Some frontline workers noted the similarities between the support requirements of many older people, and those of many young people aged 13-19 served by Connexions Partnerships. These parallels require more detailed consideration - including the opportunities that may exist for the *cost-effective use of existing services* and potential *economies of scale*.

Third age IAG provision needs to be *coherent, efficient, welcoming and properly targeted* if it is to be genuinely effective. Many 45+ are reassured by a *mix of ages on reception and other frontline positions*, and by the availability of older staff. The inclusion of these and other qualities and activities helps to explain the success of *multi-activity integrated services* (both 'third age specialist' and for all adult age groups) in helping the 45+ into learning and work. There are important resource issues here. Currently such provision, outside economic and social priority areas such as Sunderland, tends to be the exception rather than the rule, and is

funded from a number of sources that are often short-term.

v) Guidance and National Policy

The project demonstrated the importance of *adult guidance*. It illustrates the potential for increasing the profile of adult guidance and the impact which could be achieved if more adults seeking a change of direction used the services available.

The *information-gathering opportunities* offered by efficient IAG systems are highlighted by the report. Those who work at the front-line, through their contact with individual members of the public, have valuable knowledge and experience of training and labour market issues, including the impact of national and local policy; gaps in national and local provision; and ways of overcoming barriers that may be inhibiting progress. The quality of the feedback received during Challenging Age shows the benefits to policy makers and others of consulting closely with users of services and the DfES' sponsorship of this research forms part of that process....

More attention is needed on *the changing nature of people's skills, interests and values* as they grow older, and how these may match the demands of the current labour market. The evidence from Challenging Age suggests that research is required on third age skills and working patterns in order

to inform policy and enable greater numbers of older people to optimise the contributions they can make to the economy and their local communities.

Other issues that they identified, included:

- ensuring that legislation to limit *age discrimination* among employers is accompanied by positive national and local action to *change attitudes* towards older people in industry and community.
- The *6-month qualifying period of registered unemployment* for Jobcentre Plus programmes. Many older people and frontline workers consider the waiting period to be a cause of 'hidden unemployment' because it is seen to give time for the many 50+ who are keen to work at the point of redundancy, to lose motivation and employability, and withdraw from the labour market. The public feedback appears to run counter to Government statistics which show a high level of re-employment of registered unemployed over 50 within 6 months.
- *Pressure to accept unsuitable and low-level jobs*, even where this means giving up personal ambitions including career change and skill development. This appears to result from tensions between longer-term policies to promote workforce development and encourage lifelong learning, and short-term

pressures to reduce national benefit levels and meet performance targets.

- *Risk of losing benefits* through taking low-paid employment, meaning that some older people may be worse off financially by working.
- The *cost of retraining*, and the *lack of retraining opportunities, including employer-led*, for older people.
- *Age restrictions* imposed on community learning and employment training initiatives by funding bodies.
- *Pension regulations*, which can prevent older employees from downshifting and working part-time for the same employer.

In summary, the key findings from Challenging Age are fourfold:

(i) For many individuals, the period from 45+ represents a key period of challenging career change as a result of changing labour markets, stereotypes of older employees, and the low value that may be placed on the skills and experience of older workers.

(ii) Many older people want to work, learn and continue to develop and utilise their abilities in their later years – to the benefit of the community and themselves.

However, many are having difficulty in doing so and are giving up as a consequence.

(iii) Many want access to high-quality information, advice, guidance, retraining and other learning to enable them to overcome the barriers blocking their progress, and to maximise their personal contribution. Many want and need a 'second chance'.

(iv) The role of high-quality advice and guidance in helping many mid-life and older adults to work, learn and earn requires greater recognition. Potentially the benefits for individuals, employers, government revenues and personal savings towards retirement are considerable.

Guidance for older people therefore represents a huge area of potential and opportunity with benefits for employers, individuals, communities and the national economy. The challenge, as many of the individual stories told within the focus groups vividly portray, is to identify and introduce strategies and interventions that are genuinely successful in preventing the continued human waste of older people's abilities, experience and potential.

Further Information

Copies of the reports on the individual IAG Partnerships, focus groups and third age specialist agencies are available from TAEN on request. The reports are:

Annex 1 Derbyshire Information, Advice and Guidance Network

Annex 2 Kent Information, Advice and Guidance Network

Annex 3 Lincolnshire and Rutland Information, Advice and Guidance Network

Annex 4 North London Information, Advice and Guidance Network

Annex 5 Guidance Advice and Information Network, City of Sunderland

Annex 6 York and North Yorkshire IAG Network

Annex 7 Third Age Specialist Organisations

Recommendations and Observations

The Challenging Age research is based on recommendations and observations from both users of adult guidance services and frontline staff of provider agencies, many of whom work in the community and voluntary sectors. As such, the recommendations and observations do not necessarily reflect government policy.

The recommendations and observations are categorised according to the service providers to whom they may primarily apply. However, many of the issues raised will be of interest to all. A basic assumption of objective and effective partnership working is that all member agencies and their staff have a role to play in helping to take forward any necessary cultural and attitudinal changes that may be prerequisites for effective action.

IAG MANAGEMENT

The Evaluation Model has been designed for IAG Partnerships and others to provide a structured tool to assist review of provision for older people. Regular consultation and feedback with interested organisations and groups are integral to the Model. The Self-Assessment Questionnaire on third age provision, which was designed

using the feedback and observations provided by older people, may prove helpful in undertaking the review (Appendix 1D). Partnerships may also find that the review and action-planning process is most effective when undertaken collectively in partnership events to ensure members' agreement and ownership.

Marketing and outreach. Marketing should be targeted at older people, and designed to ensure that they are welcome and know that IAG provision is also for them. It should help older people to understand what services and initiatives are on offer and how to access these. Identification of older people as role models can help. Full use should be made of the local media as well as locally produced and disseminated leaflets and publicity. Active outreach is essential to reach older age groups who may not otherwise recognise the value of IAG Partnership provision in helping them to meet their individual needs, and who might have written themselves off as 'too old' for work and learning or be at risk of doing so. Marketing strategies should be designed to reach and attract the 'hidden unemployed'.

Staffing IAG. Include some older people amongst the frontline staff. Ensure that staff: respect, value, understand and empathise with older clients; adopt a client-centred and nondirective approach; are good listeners; are trained and experienced in guidance; are knowledgeable about local work and learning opportunities and the local helping network; and can signpost and refer appropriately. Provide training in third age IAG, including training in reception skills and client-centred approaches. Instil total commitment to the principles and practice of equal opportunities and age diverse working practices.

Third age champions. Identify and designate 'third age champions' from among the IAG membership who are able to review progress, identify gaps and potential initiatives, drive the policy forward, and act as sources of specialist expertise to other members.

Involvement of older people. Encourage and find ways of involving older people themselves in IAG and learning activities - as IAG and learning representatives, as mentors to other older people, in researching local opportunities for third age groups, and in other activities and initiatives. The three third age specialist organisations involved in Challenging Age all owe their origins to the work of third age 'champions'.

Networking. Use the experience and support of third age organisations such as Age Concern, Better Government for Older People, Help the Aged and the Third Age Employment Network.

Employers. Build close relationships with local employers and communicate local and national exemplars demonstrating the commercial benefits of employing, training and developing an age diverse workforce. Organise events for employers and act as advocates for older people during site visits.

Trade Unions. Liaise closely with trade unions in promoting the advantages of lifelong learning and workforce development for older age groups, and the benefits of employing an age diverse workforce.

Employment agencies. Develop links with local employment agencies and help them to appreciate the business benefits of deliberately targeting older people and marketing their skills, qualities and experience to employers. Try to involve them in the Partnerships, including working towards the **matrix** Standard (Department for Education and Skills).

Setting a good example.

Encourage members of IAG Partnerships to look critically at their own policies and provision to ensure that proactive equal opportunities and age diverse practices are integral to their culture, and can act as exemplars to other organisations throughout the local area.

IAG SERVICES

Information. Provide a wide range of information on: learning, training, development, employment opportunities; volunteering and active retirement; finance, benefits and transport; and a variety of sources and media for accessing information, including the Internet. Skilled advice should be available to enable users to find, access and sort out the information and relate the information to their personal needs. Organisation of special events such as third age 'jobfairs' can attract large numbers of older people, as well as directly involving employers.

Referral. Provide informed referral to other agencies and organisations. This requires staff to have detailed knowledge of all relevant organisations, what they can offer and to which groups of individuals.

Assessment - of values and of skills acquired through a range of life and work experiences. Methods of assessment favoured by older people include: individual interviews; personal development and jobsearch programmes that incorporate skills

analysis; individual 'stocktakes' of skills and experience; computer-assisted guidance (eg Adult Directions, learndirect Futures); psychometric testing; and work trials.

In-depth guidance - which should be non-directive, holistic and client-centred. In-depth guidance is needed to help people: prioritise their requirements; take account of their personal circumstances; identify suitable jobs, volunteering and learning opportunities that fit their skills, values and interests; consider their options; visualise themselves in new roles; work out how best to implement their objectives; achieve a satisfactory balance between work and quality of life; and draw up and implement individual action plans.

Expert specialist guidance – available on areas including finance, benefits, specific occupational areas, and self-employment.

Jobsearch. Help clients through individual and group work to: identify skills and experiences; relate these to opportunities in the local labour market; their own personal barriers and adopt a positive attitude. This may be achieved through, for example: one-to-one advice and guidance; training courses; volunteering experiences; and the personal support and encouragement provided by staff who are positive, optimistic (but realistic), and cheerful.

Advocacy. Provide advocacy services on finance, benefits,

employment and the law. Encourage individuals and groups of older people to become their own self-advocates so that they can sell themselves to employers and promote the advantages of older workers.

Work sampling and job trials.

Create opportunities for work sampling and job trials that enable individuals to learn about and to test new jobs, and to demonstrate their skills to employers. Experience shows that these are normally best organised on an individual basis. The Jobcentre Plus Work Trial and Employment on Trial programmes are often under-rated in terms of their potential and proven value in helping older people to obtain employment. However, the focus groups show that people aged 50+ who have not been officially registered as unemployed for 6 months also want opportunities for work sampling, work experience and job trials.

Peer group support. Encourage and provide opportunities for older people to socialise, and to advise and support one another. Peer support groups may also develop forms of collective advocacy and self-help.

Special groups. Provide additional support to groups of older people and to individuals with particular needs, eg older people from ethnic minorities; refugees and asylum seekers; those with disabilities;

unemployed older men with no tradition of learning; older people with basic skills learning requirements; and the rurally isolated.

Follow-up and tracking progress.

Follow up and track the progress of older clients in order to: demonstrate the continued availability of IAG services and learning provision to older age groups, and continuity of care; validate the IAG provided; and gain information on third-age IAG and learning requirements.

JOBCENTRE PLUS

Many of the recommendations to IAG Partnerships listed above are equally relevant to Job centre Plus, which was the IAG provider most commonly experienced by the majority of focus group members. Staff will see increasing numbers of the 1.5 million over 50s on benefits, many of whom (on the evidence of the Challenging Age research) will need in-depth guidance in addition to benefits check ups and information on job vacancies.

Feedback shows that older clients appreciate:

A good range of up-to-date, detailed and well-organised job vacancy information.

Signposting to learning and training and other relevant agencies.

Submission to vacancies and training that are appropriate to their skills and experience, and have longer-term prospects. Some focus group members expressed concern that they and other older adults could be submitted for jobs primarily to meet organisational targets rather than to advance their individual career development objectives.

Focus group members also suggested that:

Staff should be trained in third age employment, learning and IAG issues.

As far as possible, older people should be included among frontline staff.

Staff should be able to value, respect and empathise with older clients.

More personal advisers should be designated to specialise in work with older people.

EMPLOYERS

Value, respect and utilise the experience and particular qualities and skills of older people.

Offer older people opportunities commensurate with their experience and skills, and reward them appropriately.

Educate recruiters and other staff to welcome and value older people.

Scrutinise recruitment and selection procedures to ensure that equal opportunities and age diverse policies are being implemented effectively. Revise any practices that could be discriminatory, and consider methods of attracting and targeting older applicants.

Use work trials to help assess the suitability of older people. Provide feedback to job applicants.

Offer training programmes to attract and train older recruits.

Ensure that all staff have equal access to, and are encouraged to participate in, workforce development opportunities. Provide staff with the necessary encouragement, advice and support.

Create working conditions in which employees feel more valued and less pressurised. Older people often have skills that can help teams in the workplace and ensure that organisations are 'customer friendly'.

Introduce phased retirement and flexible working patterns for older people.

Avoid targeting older people for redundancy.

LEARNING PROVIDERS

Research third age skills and working patterns to enable greater numbers of older people to develop through learning, optimise their potential, and contribute to the economy. Consult older learners about their learning interests and preferences.

Promote provision widely, and ensure that publicity and outreach strategies positively include older people and make them feel welcome.

Where possible, access funding that enables training and learning opportunities to be provided free, or at subsidised rates, to older people who cannot afford to pay.

Review local training and retraining provision, and look for opportunities to train older people in skill shortage areas.

Employ tutors who: understand the particular needs of older people; are attuned to their learning styles; and are supportive, encouraging and able to motivate older learners.

Provide:

- 'return to learn' courses and support for people aged over 50.
- opportunities for IT learning.

- accessible learning venues and locations, including outreach provision where appropriate.
- opportunities for older people to socialise with, help and learn from one another.
- opportunities appropriate to different learning styles including individual and small group learning.
- childcare facilities and flexible provision to accommodate the childcare responsibilities of older people.

VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

Review recruitment practices to ensure that older people are welcomed and encouraged to volunteer. Help them to choose suitable opportunities.

Provide detailed information on the job content and skills requirements of volunteering opportunities.

Enable staff of volunteer bureaux to have access to training provided by IAG Partnerships, especially in relation to IAG skills and local networking.

Encourage the development of inter-generational volunteering opportunities, and attract and train greater numbers of older people with the right qualities to work with younger age groups.

Section 1: Project Description

1.1 The aims of Challenging Age were to:

- identify older people's advice and guidance requirements.
- assess their views on the value and impact of the existing services.
- determine from this how the needs of older people can best be met, including the practicalities within available resources.
- pilot and develop a model to help IAG Partnerships evaluate their provision for third age individuals and groups.
- raise the capacity of IAG partnerships, key partners and related agencies, so that greater numbers of older people can participate in employment, learning and the community.
- locate interesting and relevant practice.
- inform national policy on third age issues, in relation to IAG and related services.

THE EVALUATION MODEL

1.2 An Evaluation Model was developed by Challenging Age to help IAG partnerships and others to review and develop their provision for older people. The Model is equally applicable to other adult priority groups.

1.3 The main stages of the Model are as follows:

Stage 1: Consult with representative samples of older people to determine their IAG, learning and work requirements.

Challenging Age used focus groups for the consultation. Older individuals were invited who were already in contact with IAG and learning providers, and community agencies. Most of the participants were keen to contribute, and welcomed the opportunity to be consulted. Many wanted to attend subsequent focus groups, and valued the opportunity to meet and discuss common issues with their peers. Participants tended to support each other with information and advice, and gained considerably by finding that their own experiences were not unique and were shared by others. Embryo peer support networks began to form naturally. This was a valuable additional benefit of the research,

although not an intended research objective.

The questionnaire used as a guide during the focus groups is reproduced as Appendix 1A.

A simple questionnaire was designed to obtain background information on the groupwork participants (Appendix 1B). Most participants were willing to fill in the questionnaire, and few had difficulty in completing it. However, if IAG Partnerships decide to use or adapt this questionnaire, older people from ethnic minorities may need help in understanding some of the terminology (eg occupational classifications, educational qualifications), some of which may not apply to them. Older people with basic skills requirements may also require appropriate help and support.

Stage 2: collate and analyse the main points arising from the focus groups.

Reports were prepared on each of the focus groups using notes written by the focus group leader and the observer - normally the liaison worker from the IAG Partnership. The focus groups were not taped because it was felt the presence of a tape recorder would inhibit discussion. Feedback from group members confirmed that they would have found the presence of tape recorders off-putting.

Main points were itemised and grouped into categories. The

information was used by the research team (a) to plan Stage 3 (the mapping and research stage of the project); and (b) to design the telephone and self-assessment questionnaires used during Stage 3. Stage 2 is critical because it provides the 'bridge' that links the observations and requirements of older people to the actuality of local provision.

The key criteria set out in the Self-Assessment Questionnaire (Appendix 1D) are based on the feedback received from focus group participants on information, advice, guidance, learning and employment provision for older age groups.

Stage 3: map and research local provision.

The mapping and research stage included a wide range of partners and other organisations.

Stage 3 should include a small sample of employers sympathetic to the employment of older people and who provide appropriate support such as training, access to lifelong learning and IAG. Trade Unions can play - and are playing - an increasingly important role in helping many older people to learn, and are key partners.

The telephone questionnaire (Appendix 1C) can also be used for personal visits. These are likely to provide a more detailed picture of local provision – provided time and resources permit.

The Self-Assessment Questionnaire (Appendix 1D) is probably most effective if it is introduced within a special partnership event. The Questionnaire worked best where providers used it to conduct a critical team review of their own provision, and where they already had a good understanding of the issues involved, the standards required, and experience and knowledge of practice in other organisations.

Stage 4: use the information to review policy across the whole Partnership and plan future strategies.

The Action Plans drawn up by the six IAG Partnerships, using the feedback from the Challenging Age research, are set out in Appendix 2.

Most of the Partnerships are planning partnership events on third-age provision. A main objective is to review current practice and plan future strategies on a collective basis. Most Partnerships are intending to use the Self-Assessment Questionnaire, adapted where necessary to accommodate local requirements, to assist the review process.

Collective review will also help partner organisations to learn about good practice elsewhere, and to identify points of comparison.

THE PARTICIPANTS IN CHALLENGING AGE

- 1.4 142 older people attended a total of 15 focus groups. Of these, 67 were men and 75 women. Telephone interviews were conducted with 74 IAG partner agencies and organisations closely associated with the IAG Partnerships (12 interviews in each of 4 Partnerships and 13 in each of two Partnerships). 44 of the 74 organisations returned completed self-assessment questionnaires. In addition, self-assessment questionnaires were returned by the three third age specialist organisations.
- 1.5 The reports on the focus groups and telephone interviews provide a rich source of data on third age issues, the barriers facing older people and ways of overcoming these, and interesting and good practice by partner and other organisations. The reports are a direct, and often vivid, record of the views and observations of older people and front-line workers. They have provided the source material for this report.
- 1.6 Focus group members ranged in age from 45 to over 70, although the majority were aged 50-65. Participants included highly qualified professionals and managers, skilled technicians, and older people with no formal qualifications who had worked mainly in operative and assembly or manual work. Many of the participants had experienced unemployment, redundancy and jobsearch. Some participants were currently in work, including a small number aged 65+ and 70+.
- 1.7 Many participants wanted to work, although some were losing hope of ever doing so. A significant proportion were involved in voluntary work - some as a first option because it enabled them to realise life goals not necessarily attainable in their paid work, others in the hope that volunteering might lead to paid work, and because it provided a sense of purpose and involvement during prolonged periods of unemployment.
- 1.8 The majority of participants were involved in learning, mainly on courses in IT skills.
- 1.9 Some participants were happily retired. Where this was the case it was noticeable that the individuals concerned tended to find fulfilment not only in their family lives but also in learning and voluntary work, and had a range of social contacts. Normally they also had a pension from their previous employer.

- 1.10 A number of participants were not happy in their retirement, although this was not always apparent at the start of the focus groups. Some members initially described themselves as 'retired' but subsequently revealed that they wanted to work but had met with various forms of rejection, and had virtually abandoned hope of ever working. Some of these had experienced redundancy; others had taken early retirement and were now bored and unfulfilled, and wanted employment. Most of these fell into the category of the 'hidden unemployed'.
- 1.11 The term 'retired' tended to be used by some focus group members as a form of self-defence, and could mask considerable frustration, and sometimes bitterness, at the waste of their potential. Paid work was seen to provide status as well as income; involvement in education courses and voluntary work was seen by some as 'second best'.
- 1.12 Unemployed participants varied in their determination to find employment. Some adopted a structured and assiduous approach to jobsearch and job applications; others felt defeated by the experience of continued rejection. The focus groups indicated that some members of ethnic communities may be especially prone to regard third age unemployment as inevitable, and to require additional advocacy and support to help them in overcoming the extra barriers that older members of minority groups can face in obtaining employment.
- 1.13 Female participants appeared less likely to experience unemployment as a blow to self-esteem. Feedback from partner agencies showed that unemployed men were more likely to experience long-lasting depression and to seek refuge in the home. Unemployed women tended to remain active in the community as carers and volunteers, and as learners. Generally, women were better able than men to reconcile themselves to one or more part-time jobs, even though they may have preferred full-time employment with the same employer.
- 1.14 45 to 65 is a wide age range and the chances of obtaining employment tend to decrease as one approaches 60. Some guidance workers commented that "There are jobs out there for everybody that wants one". The observations of others contradicted this assertion. A number of factors seem to be at play here, including: differences in the abilities of individuals to cope positively with actual or perceived rejection; and the extent to

which individual skill levels and abilities match the specific demands of local labour markets. Ultimately individual experience, personal motivation, presentation and suitability can prove the deciding factors – as they would do for younger age groups.

- 1.15 Participants brought a wealth of life and work experiences and individual 'stories' to the focus groups. The research confirms that many older people have much to contribute to work and the community, even though some may require considerable support in unravelling their skills and experiences and relating these to the demands of the local labour market and the community. The difficulty for many of the individuals concerned is in identifying what they have to contribute, and how they can best overcome the internal and external constraints and set about making that contribution – given the reality of local circumstances.

- 1.16 The Challenging Age research shows that a major constraint on most IAG partners is in finding the time and resource to listen to the individual stories and provide the support required to help many older people identify and utilise their potential. However, the consequences

of not doing so – and this was a continuing concern of focus group members and many frontline IAG workers - can be continuation of third age obsolescence and 'waste'.

PARTICIPANTS' PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

(i) Finances

- 1.17 Financial concerns and varying levels of poverty and benefit dependency (especially – but not entirely - in areas adversely affected by structural unemployment, such as Sunderland and the coalmine areas of Derbyshire), can be a major barrier to employment and learning. Poverty can erode hope and incentive. Many people aged 45 and 50+ also have substantial financial commitments including mortgages, children and accumulated debts.

- 1.18 Low income levels may make it difficult for older people to: pay for retraining courses in order to improve employability; extend their skill base or change their field of work; raise the capital to fund self-employment; and seek and find new employment. Anxiety about losing benefits, if a job does not work out, can also inhibit job search. The additional costs of working, such as

- transport and the need to pay for care, are also barriers. Feedback during Challenging Age shows that large numbers of older people, including women of working age, are looking after grandchildren so that their own children can afford to go out to work.
- 1.19 In some areas, older people cannot afford to pay for education and training courses, even if fees are discounted. Cost is more likely to be a deterrent for new or potential learners than for those who are committed to learning. A number of focus group members and frontline workers were concerned about the cessation of Individual Learning Accounts, which significant numbers of older people had used to support courses of learning, including IT.
- (ii) Health, psychological factors and individual attitudes**
- 1.20 For some older people physical health, stamina and limited mobility can affect access to learning and employment choices. However, generalisations are inappropriate because the majority of older people are physically fit.
- 1.21 For other 50+ the experience of unemployment, repeated rejection and social isolation can cause or exacerbate depression and other psychological problems causing individuals to lose their sense of identity, status and purpose. This undermines self-confidence and self-esteem and leads to varying states of demotivation and apathy. In Sunderland for example, some community workers have to visit older people, especially men, in the home because they have lost the will to go out. Inevitably, resulting depression and loss of hope erode jobsearch activity and participation in learning, and lead to unemployability.
- 1.22 This level of negativity is at the extreme, although not uncommon in some economically depressed areas. Most people's reactions to redundancy, repeated rejection, or perceived rejection are less severe - although they may still lead to withdrawal from the labour market and possibly from learning also, especially for men. Consequences can include:
- reluctance to train or retrain. In particular, some older men tend to reject training as 'going back to school'. In some areas, third-age 'laddist' attitudes towards education and training are prevalent,

and can influence the younger generation.

- feeling they are too old to work or learn.
- assuming that all employers and many learning providers will share the same viewpoint.
- developing inflexible attitudes towards new areas of work and having difficulty in imagining themselves in different work – rejecting alternative career options.
- showing disappointment – for example, by developing a ‘chip on the shoulder’ and a tendency to retell one’s own ‘hard luck story’, which employers and others find off-putting and which increases the risk of unemployability.
- attributing some or all of one’s problems to other people’s attitudes to age, and not developing the self-knowledge to look within oneself and see how best to counter these.

(iii) Skill levels

- 1.23 Some older people attending the focus groups were concerned about their low skill levels and outdated skills. However, opting to attend a focus group demands a certain level of self-confidence and many of the participants

were attending learning courses.

- 1.24 Frontline workers report that considerable numbers of older people have basic skills requirements. This is particularly true in social priority areas but applies also in areas of greater affluence. Some older people can also fear IT, and feel they are incapable of gaining IT skills and experience. If they can be encouraged to attend IT courses, it is easier to identify and deal with basic skills needs.

REGIONAL VARIATIONS

- 1.25 The IAG Partnership areas that took part in the Challenging Age research vary considerably in terms of local economy, community and environment. Concerns specific to particular areas include the following:

Derbyshire: unemployment and social dislocation in ex-coalmine towns and villages; large and smaller-scale redundancies in manufacturing industry; basic skills learning requirements; transport and rural isolation.

Kent and Medway: localised long-term unemployment, especially in the coastal areas; loss of some traditional industries; contrasts

between geographical areas and industrial sectors experiencing considerable growth, juxtaposed with areas and sectors in decline; increases in the numbers of refugees and asylum seekers requiring ESOL and basic skills courses, accreditation of prior achievement, and holistic guidance and counselling.

Lincolnshire and Rutland: above average third-age population; rural isolation; some industrial decline (eg food industries); consequent localised high unemployment affecting whole families; prevalence of seasonal work in the coastal areas.

North London: large and varied population in terms of income, as well as ethnicity and culture; the size, diversity and complexity of the area covered by the North London IAG Partnership which includes the London Boroughs of Barnet, Enfield, Haringey and Waltham Forest.

Sunderland: industrial decline and redundancies in large-scale traditional industries (especially coal-mining, ship-building and steel); long-term unemployment affecting whole estates and communities; inflexibilities in some of the local workforce; the importance of re-skilling and upskilling; basic skills learning requirements; localised poverty; concerns about youth crime and fear of going out at night; some inter-generational tensions.

York and North Yorkshire: transport difficulties in rural areas and rural isolation; comparative affluence masking 'hidden' and localised unemployment; impact of the foot-and-mouth outbreak on the local tourist industry and farming, which employ significant numbers of older people.

1.26 There were many common factors between all the regions. Most people also saw current waste of third-age potential as a main issue. This concern was expressed most graphically by a female focus group participant in Sunderland who was also a local councillor: "When you're over 50 and unemployed you have to keep saying to yourself you can't afford it. You keep on having to balance your finances, even in the little things. Your whole quality of life is utterly changed. But you don't want your kids to know what you're going through. You have to keep hiding this from them. You don't want to be helped – and it's all so hard, so hard. We've worked most of our lives and contributed to the economy and we've earned our pensions and benefits – but we now have to beg for these and a decent standard of living. You're on the scrap heap. You have to work really hard at remaining positive and keeping your motivation and self-esteem. All the time there is this unspoken innuendo –

- you're too old. But we've all got something to offer employment and the community. We need opportunities to use our experience – where necessary to be trained and retrained – and to work. There are social costs here – costs to the economy, costs to health and costs to social services and the community. It's an issue that the country has simply got to get hold of because there's so much waste - at some point it could be any of us.”
- 1.27 Three third age specialist organisations that took part in Challenging Age provide a range of services for older people. One organisation (Experience Works! At Loughborough College) works entirely with people aged 45+. New Challenge and Target Third Age York were founded by older people with personal experience of unemployment, redundancy and/or early retirement, but now offer some services to younger age groups. For Target Third Age York this was a deliberate decision determined by its belief in the value of intergenerational work and learning. However, in both cases older people are the main source of clientèle.
- 1.28 New Challenge and Target Third Age York are also members of their respective IAG Partnerships.
- 1.29 Experience Works! Was established as a result of an initiative launched by a group of local ‘champions’ in the East Midlands working in Local Government, the former Training and Enterprise Councils, Colleges and the Third Age Employment Network, and supported by the East Midlands Development Agency. Experience Works! Also operates at New Colleg Nottingham, and the initiative is being extended to other centres in the East Midlands as part of the ‘umbrella’ East Midlands Mature Workers Initiative programme.
- 1.30 Experience Works! and Target Third Age York both offer a range of learning courses with a particular emphasis on IT learning, and are approved Learndirect centres. New Challenge provides a free recruitment, jobsearch, and information and advice service, but is not itself a learning provider. Many of its clients, all from Boroughs in North West and West London, are from minority groups.
- 1.31 Services offered by the third age specialist organisations (although not necessarily all by the same initiative) include: IAG; mentoring; advocacy; continuity of care and contact; coaching in interview techniques, CV preparation,

- and other aspects of jobsearch; training in career management; confidence building; job recruitment; ICT training; drop-in learning facilities; learndirect courses; occupational training; qualifications; advocacy work with employers to help them appreciate the business case for employing an age diverse workforce; and (by Target Third Age York) a Job Diagnostic Survey to help small and medium size employers identify employee training needs.
- 1.32 Client reaction to the specialist provision, as demonstrated within the focus groups and by other sources of feedback including letters of appreciation from ex-clients, is highly positive. Features that clients particularly appreciate include: the diversity of specialist services available; individualised support and encouragement; staff understanding of the needs of older people; career guidance; ongoing mentoring, advocacy and follow-up; the availability of peer group support; cheap affordable courses; the high quality of tuition; strong local networking; close relationships with local employers; and emphasis on helping older people to obtain individually suitable employment. All the specialist provision was informed by a

culture set by the founders, all of whom are in the age group and have experience of change in their working lives.

- 1.33 Older people also welcome the single point of entry and the fact that services are all on the same premises.

Box 1: Targeted provision for older age groups: Target Third Age York

Target Third Age York was started by a small group of people aged 50+ who had been made redundant. The 'not for profit' company has developed considerably since its foundation and currently employs 13 staff. While its main focus is to provide specialist learning and guidance services to third-age groups, it has also diversified to offer programmes to other age groups: for example, a project to train unemployed and under-employed graduates in ICT and personal development. A main objective of Target is to encourage and facilitate inter-generational working.

Target's services for third-age groups include accredited IT training, including the European Computer Driving Licence, and jobsearch. Particular emphasis is placed on re-motivation, encouragement, and personalised tuition attuned to the pace of each individual. Target is a Learndirect Centre, and promotes and facilitates flexible learning.

Target has close relationships with many local organisations, and – although it is not part of the York Careers Centre – is based in the Careers Centre's premises. This helps to extend the range and depth of the services it can offer to older people – for example through immediate access to the career resource centre and guidance programmes such as Adult Directions. Target also offers services to local industry, including: use of the Job Diagnostic Survey to evaluate work and identify training needs; redundancy counselling and guidance; stress counselling; management training and development; and a recruitment and employment agency service.

The staff of Target have received many letters of appreciation from past and present third age users. An analysis of these letters shows that some of the features that users particularly welcome include: the warm and supportive atmosphere; the encouragement they receive from the staff and from each other; and the patience and teaching skills of the tutors.

1.34 The 'self-help' aspect of the specialist initiatives is important, because it shows that much may be achieved at local level by finding ways of harnessing the skills and commitment of older people themselves – possibly in taking forward larger scale initiatives such as those described above, but also on

comparatively smaller scale projects such as researching local learning, work and community opportunities for older people.

Section 2: Overcoming the Barriers

This section brings together the feedback from focus group participants and frontline workers in order to identify main elements of effective practice with older age groups.

INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

2.1 The following paragraphs outline the main features of effective information, advice and guidance as identified by older people during the focus groups. As far as possible, a distinction is drawn between 'information and advice' and 'guidance'. However, the two areas intertwine; and sometimes the only realistic distinction lies in the amount of time and resource the IAG agency can devote to providing older people with the help and support required.

Staff attitudes and approaches

2.2 Participants' main observations on staff working in agencies providing IAG services were as follows:

- Positive efforts should be made to ensure that older people feel welcome. Many people aged 50+ do not feel comfortable visiting IAG agencies – and especially organisations that serve much wider age groups such as Careers/Connexions Centres, Colleges and Jobcentres – for reasons that may include: general lack of self-confidence; belief that they are too old and that staff are more interested in younger age groups; the presence of younger people who may predominate; and (depending on the circumstances) a feeling of shame that they are having to ask for help in the first place.

The focus groups show that older people feel reassured by the presence of other older people on reception and other frontline positions. Some older people also feel more comfortable talking to staff who are nearer their own age. Age diverse reception and advice services communicate to clients that the agencies concerned are sensitive to the value of employing an age diverse workforce.

Focus group participants were also concerned about lack of staff continuity and the need to 'repeat one's story' to different members

of staff each time they called. In particular, this concern applies to jobcentres. Some participants and frontline workers suggested the designation of more third-age specialist IAG workers with

specialist knowledge and skills.

Box 2: New Deal 50plus personal advisers: Jobcentre Plus – Enfield, North London and Sunderland

Some jobcentres, for example those in Enfield and Sunderland, have designated New Deal 50plus personal advisers who specialise in work with older clients. These specialist staff are able to communicate their experience and expertise to other Jobcentre Plus staff, and help them gain a better appreciation of the work and personal requirements of the 50+ and the barriers they may experience.

- IAG workers should not regard older people as a homogenous group. Older people are as disparate as any other age group. Client requirements inevitably differ in their detail - although some requirements commonly re-occur (eg concerns about loss of confidence in own abilities; lack of awareness of what one can offer and how to present this effectively). Older individuals also share similar barriers to employment and learning.
- Flexibility of approach is essential – it is important to listen carefully and respond to clients and their requirements rather than trying to impose pre-determined agendas. Genuine client-centredness is imperative.
- Older clients need skilled and empathetic IAG workers who will listen, who are genuinely interested and concerned, and to whom they can tell their story and begin the process of resolving their difficulties. Older people also value a common-sense approach by guidance workers who are sensitive to the needs of older age groups and will help them to resolve current needs and to plan ahead.
- Older people often lack confidence and distrust their own abilities, especially after negative experiences and trauma. A main function of the IAG worker is to help older clients to regain motivation and self-belief.

INFORMATION AND ADVICE

- 2.3 Clearly presented and sufficiently detailed directories of local helping agencies are necessary to ensure that clients know what local IAG Partnerships can offer them. However, they may well require interpretation by an informed intermediary worker – and especially so where third age provision remains largely piecemeal and lacks overall coherence. IAG publicity leaflets that provide concise outlines of the facilities provided by IAG Partnerships and the individual members, and ensure that older people understand how they can gain access to Partnerships and that they are welcome, are also essential.

Box 3: Directory - Guidance, Advice and Information Network: City of Sunderland

The City of Sunderland Guidance, Advice and Information Network (GAIN, first established in 1997) has published a well-researched, detailed and clearly set-out directory which outlines the adult IAG services provided by each of its members and associated local services, and includes contact details, a short description of the purpose and function of each member agency, opening hours, disabled access and crèche facilities, and other relevant information. The Directory is widely disseminated and designed for easy usage by frontline staff and members of the public. The GAIN Directory is also available via the internet and the website www.gain.org.uk is regularly updated.

- 2.4 Up-to-date, well-organised, relevant and appropriately presented information should include:
- General careers information for personal research, including relevant information on mature entry into work and change management.
 - Opportunities available in the local labour market for older groups, and how age and age barriers are likely to affect them. This calls for ongoing local and national monitoring and research of the labour market and work opportunities in respect of third age groups, which can then be communicated through various formats.

- Job vacancies that outlines job content and required skills and experience - and are preferably available via a number of sources.
- Learning opportunities and course content in sufficient detail to enable people to make informed choices to enhance employability.
- Volunteering opportunities – the information should outline job content and main personal requirements.
- Financial planning, benefits and self-employment.

people want to identify opportunities to contribute to their local community. Many also want and need a paid income. However, many are also concerned about identifying opportunities that fit their own values and allow them to express talents and interests that may until now have remained dormant. For many, achieving a satisfactory balance between work and quality of life will be a main issue. The pros and cons of part-time working may appear on some older people's agendas – but so may full-time work and self-employment.

GUIDANCE

2.5 The following paragraphs use the feedback from focus group participants and frontline workers to summarise older people's main guidance requirements.

- In-depth guidance should be holistic – older people can bring considerable 'personal baggage' to the guidance process. For example, issues concerned with health, personal circumstances, feelings and values are integral to future decisions on learning and work and cannot be dissociated from the career guidance process. Many older

- Older people want "somebody to bounce ideas off" and gain a realistic understanding of the options and avenues open to them. They need sufficient information in order to make a decision. At the guidance interview stage, options may be of greater importance than too much detail which can confuse and make the interview over-complex. Information can be researched later.
- Older people need help in determining what they want to do, what is available to them, and how to go about it. Help and support in determining action plans is often crucial. However, they also want to remain in charge of the

- process and make their own decisions. Directive guidance approaches can antagonise and not help.
- gain an appreciation of existing skills and experience, overall suitability and future potential.
- Many older people require help in self-presentation, self-advocacy and jobsearch skills, including how to:
 - identify and own their own skills and experience, and gain an appreciation of their own value as employees and what they can contribute in the employment situation.
 - understand the language of employment and the changing world of work.
 - acquire essential self-presentational skills including writing CVs, self-advocacy and interview techniques. In particular, they need help in how to ensure that employers
 - combat age prejudice and stereotyping.
 - develop and implement personal action plans.
 - Older people often appreciate computer-aided guidance packages (eg Adult Directions, and psychometric tests) that help them with personal 'stocktaking' and establishing a new sense of direction. Computer-aided guidance and psychometric tests support the process of regaining (or possibly developing for the first time) the self-knowledge necessary to make sound career decisions.

Box 4: Integrating assessment, coaching and learning: PS People Specialists, Chesterfield, Derbyshire IAG Partnership

PS People Specialists is a small private training organisation located in Chesterfield's shopping centre, and is a full member of the IAG partnership and an accredited guidance provider. As a Learndirect Centre, *People Specialists* offer a wide range of Internet-based courses which are typically self-help and on-line. Courses include: free tasters for ICT and the Internet; CLAIT; IBT2 and 3; the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) and advanced courses such as HTML and web design. Negotiations are in progress with the University of Derby to pilot credits towards a work-based degree. Many other courses are available at *People Specialists* including courses to improve skills in staff appraisal, financial management and project management. However, ICT courses, especially ECDL, are the most popular. *People Specialists* also offer bespoke corporate training, human resource consultancy, and psychometric occupational and personality profiling. A full skills assessment covers basic skills, key skills and psychometric testing, followed by an in-depth, one-to-one discussion about the outcomes. Where appropriate, clients are referred for further career guidance to Options, Derbyshire's careers centre.

People Specialists employs a total of 12 members of staff. 10 computers are available on a drop-in basis, and the centre is open for 6 days a week including Saturdays and 4 late nights. A trainer is available to provide support whenever the centre is open. Two further centres have recently been opened in Alfreton and Clay Cross. *People Specialists* has recently won DfES Regional UK On-Line awards for the quality of its learning provision and for best learner (aged 45+).

People Specialists advertise on local radio and in the free press. A notice outside the centre highlights the training offered and invites people to drop in. Users also learn about the centre by word of mouth and via the careers centre. *People Specialists* attract a broad range of users, 80% of whom are eligible for European Social Fund support, although not all are job seekers. Approximately 55% of users are aged over 50.

- Older people may require opportunities for work trials, work sampling and work experience. Work trials and work experience can help to: restore confidence and self-esteem; enable older people to assess their own abilities and potential; demonstrate those abilities and experience to employers; and provide employers with opportunities for assessment.

Box 5: Jobcentre Plus – Work Trial programme

Jobcentre Plus's Work Trial programme enables unemployed clients and employers to assess each other without commitment. Clients remain on benefit for the duration of the Work Trial, which can last up to 15 days. Some field workers interviewed during Challenging Age reported that the Work Trial programme has proved especially helpful to older people in enabling them to find work. Similar feedback was received from some of the 50+ attending the focus groups. However, the programmes were generally under-used.

Box 6: Work experience database: Kent Careers Services Adult Guidance Service

A careers adviser in Kent Careers Services' Adult Guidance Service has built up a database of employers who offer work experience and job-tasting to older people. This is seen as an aid to developing older clients' self-confidence and an opportunity to demonstrate their abilities and experience to employers.

- Some older clients require ongoing mentoring and support, and may need to be seen over a period of time to help them establish a clearer sense of direction and/or begin to resolve their vocational problems and uncertainties.

Box 7: Kent County Council Adult Careers Guidance - the ASCEND and Focus 21 programmes

An older motivational programme worker in Kent County Council Adult Careers Guidance developed a course to re-motivate long-term unemployed clients. Entitled “ASCEND”, it is an 8-week programme over 4 mornings per week for up to 12 people on each course. A high proportion of the clients are over 45. The ASCEND programme, a National Training Awards 2001 winner, demonstrates the considerable difference intensive one-to-one support, on-going encouragement, and structured individual attention can make in overcoming real and perceived barriers, and allowing individuals to work towards achieving their goals. This package has the flexibility to meet individual needs in a supportive group situation and provides immediate access to qualified, experienced careers advisers. Both have proved critical in supporting clients into appropriate training and/or employment in many occupational sectors. During the course of the programmes, around 70% of the participants have been helped into employment and further education, or have received other benefits.

A shorter 4-day course has also been developed called Focus 21, with the first 8 programmes funded by the IAG partnership. It is a highly experiential workshop designed to motivate, empower and widen the horizons of participants. One course was run in a community centre based on a former coalfield site. The women who attended the course continue to meet as a group and organise a range of interest and learning activities for themselves.

**Box 8: Continuity of care – supporting clients with disabilities into employment:
Royal British Legion Industries Division: Workwise Employment Services, Kent**

Workwise Employment Services of the Royal British Legion Industries Division helps adults with disabilities, including many older adults, to return to employment. Client referrals come from many sources including via self-referral, job centres, Armed Forces and employers.

Workwise Employment Advisers spend time getting to know the client prior to commencing more formal progression routes. Clients undergo several informal interviews based on the Vocational Profile (which looks at such areas as benefits, past employment, current support infrastructure outside employment, career and training aspirations, barriers to employment and support requirements). Where necessary, further in-depth assessment is undertaken to ascertain aptitude and ability to learn, especially where clients wish to re-train. Career guidance counselling may include use of Adult Directions or Odyssey. Clients are encouraged to establish their own action plans with advice and guidance from their Employment Adviser.

Once the action plans are in place Advisers work on a one-to-one basis with clients to help them to implement their action plans and progress. This process often includes a period of work preparation (including team building, confidence building, health & safety, work terminology and etiquette, and introduction to ICT) or 'fast track' to job search support and employment. The work preparation also includes work placements in organisations with whom RBLI works closely and to whom Employment Advisers provides background support. RBLI is able to provide in-house training and development programmes in some occupational areas so that clients can 'hit the ground running' and feel more confident.

RBLI tries to ensure that clients receive continuity of support from the same Employment Adviser who follows them through until they are settled in suitable employment. Experience shows that clients appreciate this and that it helps to give them the confidence to optimise their performance. Advisers provide job coaching within the work place if this is required, and pay regular liaison visits to employers to monitor their clients' progress.

Employment Advisers make every effort to ensure a good job match when clients are ready for employment. This includes assessment of the work environment, job analysis, and in-depth review of the client's abilities against job descriptions. This minimises the chances of failure. However, where problems arise Advisers normally set up a support package in order (if in the clients' and employers' interest) to preserve employment. Solutions can include: job coaching; reduction in hours; setting up workplace mentoring and support; and additional training or re-training. The support package is reviewed periodically to assess whether it is meeting objectives. Where employment is not sustainable, even with the support package in place, Workwise assists with the exit strategy to ensure that all parties are represented and treated fairly. This is important because Workwise finds that a major obstacle in helping people with disabilities into employment is the employers' concern that, if employment fails for genuine reasons, they may still be accused of discrimination.

- Peer group support can prove invaluable in helping older people to: regain confidence and motivation; re-establish direction; extend networks; obtain work; progress in learning; and implement action plans. Peers may also provide much needed personal support. Group guidance and learning programmes should always encourage, and provide space for, the development of peer group support networks.

ENGAGING WITH EMPLOYERS

2.6 A number of frontline workers pointed out that IAG Partnerships and partners must work closely with employers if they are to be effective in helping older people into employment. In particular, IAG Partnerships need to work with employers to overcome conscious and unconscious ageist practices.

2.7 Employer initiatives need to be designed to:

- promote the business benefits of employing an age diverse workforce, and help employers to appreciate the implications for their businesses of current demographic trends.

- identify local employers and recruitment agencies with age positive policies and practices who can act as role models.
- help employers to implement age diverse strategies; for example, Partnerships can produce and disseminate local guides to good practice.

2.8 Employer initiatives may also:

- encourage employers to offer work trials, work taster, work experience and work-based learning opportunities to older people.
- publicise the Employment Credit and the Training Grant as incentives to recruiting older people through New Deal 50+. The voluntary nature of participation in this programme is valued by many older participants and may also be attractive to employers.
- educate other organisations such as voluntary agencies and learning providers in third age issues.
- promote Age Positive resource material developed by DWP.

Box 9: Working with employers: Jobcentre Plus, York and North Yorkshire

Jobcentre Plus in York and North Yorkshire is evolving a strategy to assist and support older people who are registered as unemployed or, although not registered, wish to work. The strategy is particularly aimed at local employers to ensure that they understand:

- the implications of current demographic trends for their current and future workforce.
- the importance of adopting age diverse strategies towards their workforce including recruitment, internal training policies and career development.

The following events and initiatives took place during the period that the Challenging Age research was being conducted:

- **Age Diversity Conference**, aimed especially at providing relevant information on age diversity to local employers and influencing their attitudes towards the employment of older people. The Conference was attended by approximately 80 delegates, many from local industry. Speakers outlined the implications of demographic trends for the current and future labour force, and described good practice especially in respect of the contributions of older people within employment. Syndicates considered: jobcentre programmes and older age groups; marketing the older worker to employers; working together to help older people; and 'next steps'. The Conference provided the foundation for future activity to promote the benefits of age diverse policies and helped to strengthen local networks between employers, public agencies and the voluntary sectors.
- **'EmployAbility' Conference** which was supported by the Minister. This conference was organised to promote the business case for employing an age diverse workforce and to highlight and exchange examples of good practice throughout York and North Yorkshire. Workshops were organised on: age diversity good practice; training and incentives; and closing the skills gap. Organisations involved included: local employers; the York Chamber of Commerce; DWP Age Positive Unit; DTI; Learning and Skills Council; Yorkshire Forward; and TAEN.

The following activities are being planned or considered:

- A third-age job fair to be attended by the Minister, and to provide opportunities for older people and employers to meet each other.
- A regular York and North Yorkshire 'age positive' Newsletter to be aimed principally at local employers and policy-makers.
- Formation of a local 'age positive' forum of representatives from involved local organisations, including employers, to advise on age positive policies and drive the strategy forward.
- Introduction of local 'age positive' awards to industry to reward and highlight local good practice.

These initiatives are gaining national recognition and may form the model for the development of similar strategies in other Jobcentre Plus areas.

2.9 Macro-initiatives, such as those introduced by Jobcentre Plus in York and North Yorkshire, are necessary because they help to concentrate public attention on the issues and the necessity for change, and therefore create a local environment in which change can occur. However, they need to be supported by a series of microactivities in local organisations – including promotion of the value of employing older employees during guidance workers' industrial visits, and negotiations with employers to organise short work trials for individual older clients.

2.10 A number of frontline workers observed that the LSC Investors in People teams are particularly well positioned to promote and

encourage age diverse career development and training practices in the workplace.

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

2.11 Older people's requirements differ between individuals and between groups. However, inevitably there are areas of commonality between individuals sharing similar backgrounds – for example, older people who are rurally isolated, live on the same estate, or have been affected by closures and redundancies in the same industry. Partnerships and agencies need to be able to identify the main groups and their common requirements to aid effective marketing. Methods of achieving this include the following:

- Ensure that information is regularly gathered on the requirements of the target groups. Approaches include:
 - organising focus groups (ie as in Challenging Age).
 - consulting relevant partners and other organisations, including third age specialist organisations and community agencies (for example through phone calls, visits, and special events).
- gathering relevant data on older adult users of IAG services.
- Track clients to assess the effectiveness of the IAG provided, record client satisfaction levels, and offer follow up support if required. Feedback during the focus groups shows that many older people appreciate follow up and continuity of support.

Box 10: Data Collection: York and North Yorkshire IAG Partnership

York and North Yorkshire IAG Partnership organises an ongoing survey of adults calling at partner agencies. Data collated includes information on barriers, IAG offered, referrals and unmet needs. Information is also obtained on clients' age so that data can be compared against age groups to assist strategic planning.

- 2.12 Methods of marketing and promotion that have found to be effective include the following. A number of these approaches have already been used successfully in reaching older age groups:
- Using a segmented approach, aim marketing at specific groups in the local community and not at all adults simultaneously. This may entail designing publicity material and approaches specifically aimed at particular groups of older people, for example the 'hidden unemployed' who have gradually withdrawn from the labour market after rejection but would like to work if opportunities occur. Estimates of the size of this group vary between 550,000 and 1,000,000 nationally.
 - Develop an overall IAG partnership marketing and publicity strategy towards older people. This may include drawing up a 'good practice checklist' for marketing materials and promotional events aimed at the 50+.
 - Review marketing material and promotional activity to ensure that images and text appeal to people aged 50+, and that older people are positively welcomed. This is a key issue, especially in relation to

reaching and attracting the 'hidden unemployed'. The Challenging Age research identified very little local marketing material that is specifically designed to attract the 50+; assures them that the IAG and learning provision

is available and appropriate to them too, and informs them about relevant initiatives. However, that which does exist is impressive.

Box 11: Birthday Cards: Jobcentre Plus – Lincolnshire and City of Sunderland

The New Deal 50+ advisers in Jobcentre Plus, Lincolnshire and City of Sunderland, identify older clients as they approach their 50th birthday, and send out birthday cards which provide them with brief details of New Deal 50plus, its potential benefits and how and when to apply.

- Consider consulting older people about, and involving them in, the preparation of information and publicity targeted at third age groups or intended to include them.
- Adopt proactive outreach approaches to publicise IAG and learning opportunities to older people. Local people who have detailed knowledge of the target area, have many local contacts

and command the respect of their peers, can be particularly effective at reaching and helping hard-to-reach groups including the 'hidden unemployed'. A number of outreach initiatives and community projects have identified or appointed local people from within the target groups to act as IAG/learning representatives and 'champions'.

Box 12: Identifying local ‘champions’: Northallerton College, North Yorkshire

Northallerton College organises a number of courses that attract significant numbers of adults aged 50+. Two examples are:

- A day-time course for farmers who are having to diversify for financial reasons and for subsidiary small local companies dependent on agriculture. The course provides training in the skills necessary to diversify but yet to maintain their accustomed way of life. The course includes: accounting, spreadsheets, relevant software and business skills (eg running a farmshop, bed and breakfast).
- The RITES programme (Rural Information Technology Education Service) to provide IT training in outreach situations throughout local villages. The Church of England and Methodist Church are partners with the College in this initiative, and this has given the College access to church premises in the local villages. In one village a computer has been installed in the chapel. A class in another village is conducted in the church using church pews.

An imaginative aspect of both programmes has been the identification of ‘learning champions’ within the farming and local communities who can encourage and support friends, neighbours and colleagues to undertake learning and encourage them while they are doing so. A number of older farmers have proved to have a natural talent as champions and in supporting and encouraging neighbouring farmers and farm workers to ‘return to learn’.

A number of local champions are supporting the RITES programme. For example, one RITES ‘champion’ aged 60+ encouraged 32 people to attend a RITES training course held in the village hall in one North Yorkshire village. Given the small size of the village concerned this was an outstanding achievement.

- Organise job fairs for older people (see Box 10).
- Use success stories of older people who have found suitable employment or succeeded in training and education. Frontline workers report that the utilisation within projects and the media of real-life examples of local people who have succeeded, and the incorporation of these examples into marketing publicity, can prove particularly successful in involving and motivating older people.
- Distribute publicity leaflets and posters, and organise events, in community and public venues which older people are likely to visit; and arrange to speak about relevant provision to third age groups (working with

organisations in close touch with older people including Age Concern, Better Government for Older People, and Help the Aged). A number of the Partnerships are distributing publicity

material to libraries, doctors' surgeries, churches, community meeting places, supermarkets and other places frequented by the 50+.

Box 13: Attracting older people through community involvement: The Bridge, Langley Mill, Derbyshire

The Bridge is located in Langley Mill and is a community resource centre for the residents of Langley Mill and Aldercar. Langley Mill is a deprived rural community lacking basic facilities such as a doctor's surgery, health clinic, chemist and dentist. About a quarter of the population are on pensions. Common individual problems include apathy, low self-esteem and a sense of not being valued.

The Bridge was established through the efforts of Langley Mill residents with the aid of regional, national and European funds. The centre, which is multigenerational, was opened in May 2000 and offers a range of activities including classes in keep fit, IT, and basic skills (see *Read on - Write-Away, Box 29*). Derby County Council Adult Community Education and South East Derbyshire College staff run many free education and training courses at the centre. Specific social and activity groups are available for: mothers and toddlers; children; young people; and people aged 55 and over. Information on a range of topics is supported by regular 'surgeries' where specialists provide advice on careers (through the Derbyshire Careers Service), mental health, welfare rights, housing, community development, and general citizens' issues. The counselling service is seen as important in helping overcome anxious, fearful and negative feelings that may inhibit older people from accessing the services they need. On-site learning provision and advice is essential in an area where many people do not have their own transport. A morning café provides an opportunity for people to drop-in, socialise, use the information services and find out about the centre. Users can become involved in a range of voluntary activities which help to publicise and run the centre.

When *The Bridge* was first opened, an initial concern was how to engage older people. Finance was secured from Comic Relief to fund an Older People's Project Coordinator for 3 years. The Coordinator acts as secretary to the 'over 55s group' which was officially launched in March 2001. The over 55s group fulfils a social function and has initiated specific activities such as the Heritage Group, which helps older people to celebrate their community, and a beginners' computer course for the over 50s. The group also organises activities for the whole community.

The centre hosts an Older People's Forum which aims to: increase the involvement of older people in the community; empower older residents to influence decisions; and create a better community for older people. Currently volunteers from the Older People's Forum are compiling an information pack for older people. Training to help build group capacity and to develop members' confidence is arranged through the centre with support from the Council for Voluntary Service and Derbyshire Community Foundation. Training currently planned includes financial awareness, and self-awareness to aid effective meetings and group work.

PREMISES

- 2.13 Older people welcome the availability of integrated IAG and learning services with a single point of entry. The research showed that premises are important.
- 2.14 Five of the six Partnerships who took part in Challenging Age are coordinated directly by Careers Companies or Connexions Services, although the Adult IAG Services are separately branded. The exception is Sunderland where City of Sunderland College held the contract for the IAG Partnership. However, this is reverting to City of Sunderland Council, which also holds the contract for Connexions.
- 2.15 All six Careers Companies and Connexions Services have impressive career resource centres, which are centrally situated. Five of these are open to 13-19 year-olds for all aspects of guidance and to adults for information and advice (guidance is normally available to adults at a charge). In Sunderland, the learningplace - which is the high-street-sited adult learning and IAG centre – is situated immediately below the Connexions Service and employs a small team of careers advisers who provide free adult guidance.

(Note: since the research was completed the arrangements in Sunderland have been subject to review.)

- 2.16 All the Careers/Connexions services house extensive career resource centres, which in practice provide a dual service to adults and to young people. However, the numbers of young people who use the career resource centre during the day is normally limited. 14-19 year-olds tend to be at school or college, and Connexions staff provide outreach guidance in youth clubs and other locations frequented by young people during the evening. One consequence is that the main users of Careers/Connexions centres are often adults – and especially so where the centres are also Learndirect centres.
- 2.17 Target Third Age York has premises on the top floor of the York Careers Centre, and feedback during the focus group shows how much the older clients value the opportunity to use the facilities of the career resource centre, including computer-assisted guidance programmes such as Adult Directions, and to access relevant IAG websites on the internet. Learndirect Futures was especially commended.

- 2.18 However, feedback also shows that older people would like career resource centres to hold more career and IAG material specifically targeted at third-age groups.
- 2.19 One Careers/Connexions Centre calculated the age of all callers specifically for the Challenging Age research, and found that 50 per cent of clients during the past year were aged 45+.
- 2.20 Feedback during the focus groups showed that, however warm the welcome, 45+ people do not necessarily feel comfortable when visiting Careers/Connexions Centres because they feel that the premises are mainly aimed at young people. This can apply even where Careers Centres also offer Learndirect. There are important messages here for the marketing and presentation of Careers Centres, if they are to attract the numbers of older people who could clearly benefit from the facilities available. There are also marketing issues where the Centres simultaneously carry the Connexions, IAG and Learndirect logos, to ensure that the public are not confused by mixed messages and are clearly able to see the Centres as an all-age resource (provided that is the intention).
- 2.21 One Connexions Service, Lincolnshire and Rutland, has anticipated the potential for mixed messages by adopting the brand-name 'Direxions' for its adult service and marketing the two related services separately, although they continue to share the same premises. This is an interesting attempt to encourage optimum use of the career resource centres at all times of the day, ensure economy of scale, and avoid any waste of public resources caused by confusions in image.
- 2.22 Potentially, Careers/Connexions Centres, which house comprehensive career resources in prominent high-street premises, are an important asset for IAG Partnerships and the local public of all ages. They offer a central point of access to the facilities offered by the Partnerships – and particularly so where they are also responsible for coordinating the Partnerships. Provided older people know that they are positively welcomed by the Centres, they have the potential to play a key role in enabling older people to learn, work and earn, and to contribute to the local community.

Box 14: High-street-situated learning and guidance: The learningplace, City of Sunderland

The learningplace has developed from a partnership initiative in the early 1990s between the University, local Colleges, City Council, Careers Service and TEC. This established the Sunderland Pathway Centre. The partnership has continued since the demise of the TEC. The learningplace is an impressively equipped drop-in learning centre for adults, which is situated centrally and prominently next to the main entrance of the City Library and Arts Centre Building, and is part of the Connexions complex. The learningplace aims to provide high quality IAG on career development, training and education to adults throughout Sunderland. The learningplace employs a team of adult careers advisers, and advisers visit on a rota basis from the College and University. Tutorial support and facilitation is provided by staff from the College. The learningplace is an approved Learndirect centre.

CONSULTATION

- 2.23 The specifications for Connexions Partnerships require the Partnerships to consult with the 13-19 age group and to involve young people in their work. However, this is not the case with IAG Partnerships in respect of adult groups. The Challenging Age focus groups have shown how greatly older people value consultation. People who are consulted about the provision planned for them – whether learning, IAG or other related activities - are more likely to feel some form of ownership and to become involved. It is strongly recommended that arrangements for consultation with older age groups (and with other adults) should be built into IAG and learning strategies.
- 2.24 Older people may welcome the opportunity to help in taking forward Partnership objectives; for example, by: participating as ‘learning champions’; acting as mentors to their peers or to other age groups; researching local learning, employment and voluntary work opportunities for older people; and writing third-age guides to local opportunities for local dissemination. It is in the interests of IAG Partnerships and learning providers to encourage older people’s active participation in IAG and learning initiatives because individuals are more likely to be influenced by their peers than by ‘external experts’.

Box 15: Third age mentoring: Pennywell Community Business (609 Project), Sunderland

Families living on the Pennywell Estate in Sunderland have been severely affected by closures in traditional manufacturing industries, including shipbuilding. Levels of unemployment remain comparatively high, and affect all generations. A number of older residents aged mostly 60+ have formed themselves into a group of voluntary community workers - the 'Grey Force'. Members of the 'Grey Force' help others on the estate by, for example: encouraging and supporting adults, including older adults, to learn; coaching them in IT skills, especially those attending Pennywell Community Business' Electronic Village Hall; acting as mentors to young people and younger adults involved in the Neighbourhood Learning Project; and helping residents to set up businesses. Most of the work of the 'Grey Force' is deliberately inter-generational.

ACTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

2.25 All the third age action plans drawn up by the IAG Partnerships involved in Challenging Age include objectives to organise partnership events where local third age provision can be reviewed in the light of the identified needs of older people, and inter-agency networking strengthened to meet those requirements (Appendix 2).

2.26 Joint networking can increase the quality of service by providing opportunities to:

- Review and take steps to improve the quality of existing practice.
- Share and disseminate examples of good and interesting practice.
- Identify local needs and gaps in provision.
- Improve the effectiveness of referrals – detailed directories of partners are helpful here (see Box 4).

- Enable partners to access a wider range of funding sources and to pool resources. Funds to support community projects are currently accessed from a wide range of sources including the Single Regeneration Budget, the European Commission, the Regional Development Agencies, the Lottery, Comic Relief and the Countryside Agency. Partners may be knowledgeable about, and have access to, other sources of funding.

Box 16: Working in partnership: Job Bus Red Route, Lincolnshire

Job Bus Red Route was started in 1992 as a collaboration between the Training and Enterprise Council, the Employment Service and the Rural Development Council. The first bus was purchased to provide IT training and a mini-jobcentre on tour round four village and small town centres in Lincolnshire (Market Rasen, Alford, Caistor and Woodhall Spa – the ‘Red Route’). The initiative was so successful that in 1993 a second bus was added to serve another 4 centres (Coningsby, Spilsby, Bourne, Wainfleet – the ‘Blue Route’). It is still funded through a partnership, now the Learning and Skills Council with Boston College as well as the ES. The ES provides the bus with its equipment, and the salary of the responsible Advice Worker. Boston College manages the project and supplies the driver and the IT trainer (who also give employment advice) with funding from the LSC. The IT courses are free to the students. The bus carries job vacancies supplied from the main Jobcentres in Lincolnshire and, although it is technically in a different county, Grimsby.

- Provide joint feedback to local and national policy-makers on older people’s work, learning and IAG requirements.
- Facilitate the development of more joint initiatives to meet local needs.

wanting part-time – and therefore normally low-paid - work.

2.28 Access issues differ in nature and scale according to: location (urban and rural areas); personal factors such as income levels, health and physical mobility; family responsibilities; and access to personal transport.

TRANSPORT AND ACCESS

2.27 Feedback indicates that women (and especially those with caring responsibilities), and people aged 60+ are most likely to be affected by transport and access issues. In particular, access issues are seen as a particular barrier to learning. However, transport and access also create difficulties for particular groups of people seeking work, for example redundant farm workers and employees in the tourist industry, and people (especially women)

2.29 Inadequate public transport was a particular issue in the rural areas of Derbyshire, Lincolnshire and Rutland, and North Yorkshire.

LEARNING PROVIDERS

- 2.30 This section concentrates on the actions that learning providers themselves can take to attract older people into learning, and to provide the facilities and support necessary to enable them to learn. However, clear distinctions cannot be drawn because many partners and related organisations combine IAG and learning activities.
- 2.31 Feedback from focus group participants and frontline workers confirmed that learning brings important benefits to older people, including: the development of work skills to improve paid employability, and equip them for volunteering and active citizenship; improvements in health and selfconfidence; opportunities for social contacts; and strengthening of individual networks including those that may lead to jobs.
- 2.32 The research also showed that many older people consider themselves too old to learn, and that particular groups were reluctant to engage in learning or were encountering difficulty in doing so. Notable examples include: older men, especially those living in areas with no tradition of learning; and the less mobile and rurally isolated. Particular efforts need to be made to reach out to these groups, and significant progress can be made, and is being made, in targeting particular geographical areas.
- 2.33 However, classifications can be misleading. Challenging Age showed that there are older

people living in all communities who for various reasons are experiencing forms of isolation, and who could be helped if they felt that learning had something to offer them and that they would be welcome by the tutorial staff and other learners.

- 2.34 A number of participants observed that they wanted colleges and other providers to consult them about the choice, suitability and content of courses, and appropriate learning delivery, before courses are organised and while they are in progress. Concerns were expressed about top-down provision, which appeared to suit the needs of provider organisations and tutors rather than the students. During the Challenging Age research, examples were identified where little if any consultation appeared to be taking place with the communities and individuals served by the providers.

Box 17: Consultation with learners and community: Workers Educational Association, Sunderland, and York and North Yorkshire

The Workers Educational Association (WEA), which attracts many older learners, has always laid stress on the importance of consultation in all three elements of its provision (the community programme; work-based learning; and the general programme which is membership led). The success of its programmes rests heavily on learner ownership, and courses are organised through consultation with local communities and potential students.

Box 18: Consultation with learners and community: yes@thegeorge Grantham College, Lincolnshire

The George is a shopping centre in the middle of Grantham; and the Yes Centre is one of a number of community-based learning centres run by Grantham College. Almost all the learners attending yes@thegeorge are 30+, considerable numbers are 45+, and about 30% are over 60. For the 45+, retraining is the main need and the Centre receives a lot of enquiries about computing skills from this age group. yes@thegeorge runs a range of IT, vocational and leisure courses; IT courses include Computing for the Terrified, CLAIT and Computing for the Retired. The Centre also offers assertiveness and confidence building courses which are well attended by 45+, who realise they need such help to obtain employment.

yes@thegeorge is opening up activities around Grantham and in the villages, going into areas of deprivation, and working with specific target groups including older people. The College has sets of laptops which can be taken out to groups if needed, and dedicated IT vans which can provide Internet access for those laptops. NFU groups in villages have asked the College to run computer courses for working farmers, and again these are usually for older learners. A Rural Training Group has also recently contacted the College to provide such a programme. There are close working relationships with Jobcentre Plus.

Grantham College has recently appointed a Community Liaison Officer, to work with community groups to identify their needs including older age groups (45+, 'hidden' unemployed, rurally isolated, older people living in warden-controlled housing).

2.35 Focus group members highlighted the following strategies at the recruitment and entry stage of courses in order to attract older learners:

- Develop actively inclusive policies, and ensure that older people are positively welcomed and helped to understand that learning is relevant to them.
- Provide sufficient detail on course content to enable potential learners to make informed decisions on individual value and relevance. Many participants were critical of brochures that listed course titles but gave little information about content. Some participants were also concerned that open days and enrolment days had virtually disappeared so

t there was little opportunity to discuss course content and learning methodology with course tutors in advance.

- Assess learning needs (including basic skills and learning difficulties) and learning styles so that learning can be tailored to meet individual requirements, and the necessary level of support provided accordingly.
- Offer learning tasters - these are widely appreciated by older age groups.

Box 19: Workers Educational Association, York and North Yorkshire

The WEA brochures in York and North Yorkshire provide concise but detailed outlines of course content and are praised by prospective learners (many aged 50+), because course objectives and teaching methods can be immediately understood.

Box 20: Taster courses: Sunderland

In Sunderland a number of learning providers help potential learners, including many older learners, to overcome feelings that learning is “not for them” (often attributable to low levels of self confidence, poor self esteem and fear of the unknown) by offering regular opportunities for learning tasters. City of Sunderland College organises a considerable number of taster sessions with titles such as ‘Why not try your hand at...?’ and ‘Learning on your doorstep’. The Thorney Close Action and Enterprise Centre organises a weekly ‘Dine and Dabble’ lunch for older people, where they have lunch and an opportunity to try out various learning opportunities. The WEA offers taster sessions on a number of its community-based courses. The WEA Tutor Organiser observes “Taster sessions can help to overcome the area of doubt in people’s mind and act as a bridge into learning – they eliminate some of the risk.”

2.36 The research showed that providers have introduced an extensive range of outreach initiatives to improve access to learning, a number of which are either aimed at, or likely to attract, older age groups; these include the following:

- Home-based provision for people with disabilities and mobility problems.
- Mobile and outreach services, for

example:

- Mobile libraries and IT buses. These have been introduced in a number of Partnership areas (including Kent and Medway, Lincolnshire and Rutland (Boxes 16 and 25), and York and North Yorkshire).
- Outreach learning provision, which is readily transferable to a number of locations.

Box 22: Outreach learning: Workers Educational Association, York and North Yorkshire

WEA North Yorkshire District organises a 'Training on Wheels' course which enables people in rural locations to obtain computer qualifications; gain proficiency in a foreign language; improve their confidence and communication skills; and consider personal and career development. The course attracts significant numbers of learners aged 45+, including women and carers who wish to return to work and enrich their lives more generally.

- Use of technology to increase access to tuition.

Box 23: Outreach learning using IT: Lincolnshire Regional Access Centres

Lincolnshire Regional Access Centres (L-RAC) was formed following a partnership bid for European Funding by a group which consisted of Lincolnshire County Council, the East & West Lindsey District Councils, TEC and the University of Lincoln. With a remit of raising awareness of, and access to, IT in rural Lincolnshire the Company has introduced a number of innovative approaches to reach out to the rural community and businesses in order to encourage them to embark on lifelong learning (including distance learning) and the relationships between learning and work. Many of the rural population are in low-paid occupations, some of which are seasonal.

In its first 3 years (1996-1999) LRAC reached 86,000 through a combination of the 4 centres (Horncastle, Louth, Skegness, and Market Rasen) plus 98 units (computer facilities in a range of locations from pubs and village halls, to schools and libraries). During the second phase (1999-2002), LRAC has worked with employers (including training and development packages) as well as with individuals. Many of the learners are 50+, including employed, registered unemployed, 'hidden unemployed' and retired. Part of the challenge is to help people to realise the potential offered by IT, and to provide them with the personal support and encouragement to enable them to do so. For example, members of the Women's Institute in Louth and Horncastle had problems travelling, so a video-conferencing link was introduced to enable them to share a tutor. Email has considerable appeal in isolated rural areas because of the ease of communications (including with families), and can provide the spur to encourage older people to explore the potential of IT in greater depth.

- Community-based learning in rural areas and town/city estates, often based at venues where other community activities and IAG are also available.

Box 24: Community-based learning and guidance: Job Linkage (Hendon), Sunderland

Community-based learning projects are a feature of learning in Sunderland, and attract large numbers of older people although all are multi-generational. Job Linkage (Hendon) is one of several examples of initiatives which integrates learning, guidance and community provision.

Job Linkage is a city-wide initiative with 8 centres based across the City of Sunderland area. Job Linkage (Hendon) serves a number of estates severely affected by industrial closures and high levels of unemployment. The project is staffed by experienced adult guidance workers, all of whom have career guidance qualifications. As well as offering in-depth career guidance (including computer-aided guidance facilities), Job Linkage uses a number of training providers, selected for their client-centredness and sensitivity to the needs of the target groups, to deliver IT and other training in-house within Job Linkage premises. Job Linkage is a Learndirect access centre.

Job Linkage is working closely with the Local Authority Economic Development Team to sell the positive qualities of older people to employers (eg maturity, experience, reliability) and this strategy is meeting with some success. Older people are not specifically targeted but they are made to feel welcome. Job Linkage provides a welcoming environment, and there is a lot of outreach to community centres and other places where people, including older people, congregate so that they are encouraged to visit the premises. A considerable number of the staff are 45+ and this helps. All staff have an induction programme which emphasizes the importance of making people feel at home, and attend courses in customer service.

- Drop-in learning centres in shopping centres and high street locations which are easily accessible and enable learning to fit in with people's daily activities.
- Transport to learning provision organised for people in rural areas.

Box 25: Integrating transport and learning: The Wragby Centre, Lincolnshire

The Wragby Centre shares a purpose-built building with the Doctor's surgery, 2 minutes from the centre of the village of Wragby. The Centre was initiated by the County Council, and co-funded by a consortium that includes the East Midlands Development Agency, and the Countryside Agency, plus SRB money.

The Centre is part of a policy to extend services to the community, particularly in rural areas: this development brings education and training opportunities to Wragby and the surrounding area of 20 or more hamlets. Part of the provision is improved transport, including Interconnect, a mainline bus service from Lincoln outwards every hour, linking into other feeder services; this includes the ability to 'book a detour' for a bus to an outlying area. The provision is also backed up by a voluntary car service.

The Centre consists of a larger training room, equipped with IT facilities, and a smaller meeting room: it is open 9.00 a.m-9.00 p.m. four days a week, closing at 5.00 p.m. on Friday and opening for Saturday morning until 1.00 p.m. The Centre caters for the whole age range in the community, allows open access to the IT facilities, and through its partners offers both vocational and non-vocational courses.

CHILD CARE FACILITIES

- 2.37 In many areas childcare provision is essential if older people are to be enabled to learn. Courses may also need to be organised to fit in with the school day.

Box 26: Child Care: Thorney Close Action and Enterprise Centre, Sunderland

The Thorney Close Action and Enterprise Centre covers 5 areas of Sunderland and provides a range of learning, voluntary work, social, leisure and jobsearch activities to meet and reflect the needs of the local community. People are consulted about their learning and other requirements and every effort is made to meet these. Thorney Close is a busy social centre, and attracts many older people. For example, 55% of learners following IT courses at the Centre are 50+. Thorney Close has a Mother and Toddlers group and 60% of the 'mothers' attending are 50+. These are grandmothers (and occasionally grandfathers) who are looking after the children while their daughters or daughters-in-law are at work.

COST

2.38 A number of providers have introduced free and discounted learning to reduce cost for groups of adults, including non-traditional learners and older people unable to pay.

preferred multi-generational provision. Ultimately, decisions about targeted and non-targeted provision are likely to be determined by the requirements of the older people concerned,

Box 27: Free and discounted adult learning

Some providers are able to provide free or heavily subsidised IT courses, funded through a number of sources including EC and SRB. In Sunderland, learning for all adults is free up to Level 2, irrespective of age. North Yorkshire County Council is able to fund a number of free and discounted courses to attract adults, including older adults, back into learning.

DELIVERY

2.39 Feedback showed that many older learners appreciate learning approaches that may differ in important aspects from those suitable for younger age groups.

2.40 Although preferred learning styles inevitably vary between individuals, a high percentage of focus group participants expressed preferences for the following learning conditions and approaches:

- Informal learning environments and approaches, including community-based and outreach provision, drop-in facilities, and the opportunity to study at one's own pace.
- Courses and provider organisations where older people are positively welcomed. Some participants wanted provision specifically designed to meet the needs of older age groups; others
- and the availability of the necessary funding to meet those requirements.
- Small groups and one-to-one support especially for IT-based training.
- Patient, empathetic and encouraging tutors; and extra support for older people where needed. The presence of older tutors is appreciated.
- Opportunities for peer support.
- Day-time courses for some older people. Whilst people over 45 may be happy about attending evening courses, many people aged 65+ have a preference for day-time provision.
- Help in handling modern teaching and learning styles.

Box 28: Tutorial and peer support: Experience Works, Loughborough College

Experience Works is a discrete learning centre for older people based on the Loughborough College site. The centre is part of the East Midlands Mature Workforce Initiative and aims to provide an empathetic environment where people over 45 years of age feel they belong, and where their experience is recognised and valued.

Programmes of up to 12 weeks include: job search skills such as CV writing, interview techniques and practice; job search strategy; confidence-building; and developing IT skills. Participants have individual consultations with project staff and are assigned a personal peer mentor. They also have access to the expertise of other mentors. Individuals may drop in and out of different elements of the programme according to their needs. A beginner's computing course and the European Computer Driving Licence qualification are available, with or without tutor support. Staff aim to help clients develop more positive attitudes to job seeking, for example by recognising their ability to take control of their lives.

To be eligible for Experience Works individuals must be aged 45+ and either work or want to work. Some clients are unemployed and want to return to work; others are working part-time or full-time and wish to update their skills.

Experience Works also encourages employers to attract mature applicants by adapting their marketing techniques and offering flexible working. The project manager identified the following critical success factors:

- (a) Staff attitudes, knowledge and skills. Staff recognise and value the experiences of older people. As all staff and trainers are aged 45 plus and have experience of redundancy, they are able to empathise with clients.

Staff:

- provide honest, constructive feedback about individuals' potential and aspirations, and about how their behaviour may affect their job prospects.
- provide realistic, expert knowledge about how the labour market operates.
- encourage clients to use the Internet and their personal networks as well as newspaper advertisements for job search.
- help clients to identify their skills and experiences.
- help clients to present CVs that are tailored to individual employers.

- (b) The professional, office environment provides a place where people feel they belong, are known and which they can use regularly if they wish.
- (c) Peer support. Older adults are able to support one another because they are in similar situations. The nature of the courses, tutorial support and environment enables peer support to develop naturally.

NATURE OF PROVISION

2.41 Provision should be regularly reviewed to ensure that it meets learner demand and requirements, including learning to enhance and improve employability. Up-to-date knowledge of the current and projected needs of employers and the labour market, and the policies and expectations of employers in respect of older people, is essential (paragraph 4.11).

2.42 On the evidence of the feedback received from focus groups and frontline workers, local requirements are likely to include:

- Opportunities to retrain and up-skill that relate directly to local labour market requirements.
- IT training in order to improve employability and job search, but also to improve personal effectiveness more generally.
- Training courses and individual coaching for people interested in self-employment, or setting up their own businesses.
- Learning opportunities that facilitate social contact and personal fulfilment, and help to develop skills and opportunities

- for voluntary work and active citizenship.
- 'Return to Learn' and 'Return to Work' courses - these can attract considerable numbers of older people

Box 29: From community into work: Thorney Close Action and Enterprise Centre, Sunderland (also see Box 26)

Staff encourage learners aged 45+ to attend jobsearch courses and take IT and other courses to improve their employability, as well as attending the social and leisure events. Older people are heavily involved in voluntary work. Thorney Close runs a community café and retail outlets, and volunteers are involved in catering, serving, administration and computer work. This 'half-way house' can help to prepare or re-prepare them for open and paid employment.

The job linkage initiative includes an access fund to help people into employment; for example, the access fund enables people starting work to purchase tools and equipment. A number of the 45+ take advantage of this facility to get themselves started again.

Box 30: Involving older people in the community through learning : Read On — Write-Away! (ROWA), Derbyshire:

ROWA is an independent literacy organisation which bids for funding from a range of sources not open to the Derbyshire County Council. ROWA staff have to work flexibly in order to respond to the needs of funders and those of the communities they serve. ROWA operates from a number of community sites, and works in liaison with other community learning providers.

For example, ROWA at Kirk Hallam Community Hall supports two lunch clubs, a women's friendship group, two 'older and bolder' computer groups and an exercise group. The first computer group was set up in response to older learners aged 60+ who wanted to learn about computers but were afraid of holding younger learners back in a mixed-age group class. A free, 10-week course for older learners was filled without advertising, and this group has progressed to learning about emails. A new beginners' group was subsequently formed. People learning computer skills can practise, for example by writing letters and minutes, and creating posters in the community hall office. Older learners who wish to gain accredited computer qualifications can progress to courses run locally by the County Council's Lifelong Learning Division.

Older people's groups also help to run their own events which involve socialising and learning, for example craft activities; making a will and the associated legal language; exercise and health. It is important that these events involve everyone taking on responsibilities. ROWA finds that having limited funding can help people to work together and prevent dependency.

Recent intergenerational activities include:

- 'Grow your own' - where children grew vegetables, and older people showed the children how to make marmalade and pickled onions.
- 'Find an older friend' - where primary school children filled in a questionnaire about their games and interests, and then identified an older person in the community and asked them about themselves as children. Children from the Saturday morning club also visited and talked to people in a local residential home to increase their understanding of older people.

Older people play a part in the decision-making and management of the community hall. The staff consult older people early on in the planning of any projects involving the 50+. Older age groups are well represented on the Management Committee.

Employment

EMPLOYERS

2.43 The research revealed some impressive examples of employer good practice in relation to third-age employment, career development and preparation for career change. However, the examples are the exception rather than the rule. Very few of the focus group members considered that they had received any career development support from employers after 40+, nor access to any form of support or guidance to help with career transitions including redundancy and (early) retirement.¹

2.44 Focus group participants considered that employers should:

- Be more open about what they want from job applicants – this includes providing honest feedback to applicants on reasons for rejection.
- Be more prepared to offer older career changers work trials,

opportunities to sample new occupational areas through work experience, and training that can equip them for new occupational areas.

- Train older employees.
- Help older employees by taking appropriate steps to prepare them for 'active retirement'.
Methods include:
 - Pre-retirement courses which include information, advice and guidance on learning, volunteering and alternative forms of paid work, and where the emphasis is not exclusively on financial planning.
 - The introduction of downshifting policies to prepare older employees for active retirement on a phased and humane basis.
- Improve preparation for redundancy.

¹ The two NICEC Briefings, '*Straight Talking: Effective Career Discussions at Work*' and '*Practical Tips for Effective Career Discussions at Work*' (Hirsh, W., Jackson, C & Kidd, J., 2001: NICEC: Cambridge), provide practical tips for employers, employees and the wide range of people who find themselves in a position to offer advice and support on career development. The Briefings are based on detailed research to explore the key features of effective career discussions at work, and are highly relevant to career development and support for older employees.

Box 31: Saga Ltd, Kent and Medway

Saga Ltd is a major employer of 3000 people in the Folkestone and surrounding area. One Challenging Age focus group was based at Saga, and feedback from the staff (all aged 45+) indicates that Saga values its staff and appreciates the business benefits of employing an age diverse workforce. The company is an Investor in People, and is ensuring that personal development planning is in place for all staff. The Company has established a Learning Academy which offers a wide range of on-line and taught work and interest courses, and a Computer Training Centre. Saga has recently appointed a Careers Adviser and a Training and Development Officer. Kent Guidance Consortium has invited Saga to become a member of the IAG Partnership and is funding the Careers Adviser to achieve NVQ 4 in Guidance. Staff can approach the Careers Adviser at any time for a personal discussion. Through the Training and Development Officer, Saga is ensuring that all staff have Personal Development Plans which are aimed to help the career development of individual employees within the Company. Mature employees are fully involved in the Company's personal development policies. When employees retire, pre-retirement courses are available through external providers and paid for by the Company.

TRADE UNIONS

2.45 Some IAG Partnership managers (eg Derbyshire, York and North Yorkshire) referred to the close relationships they are establishing with TUC Regional Offices, especially in relation to learning provision. Trade Unions have a critical role to play in advocating and supporting the work and learning needs of older people.

2.46 TUs are well positioned to assist older workers, for example by:

- Specifically targeting the learning needs of older workers through learning representatives.
- Reviewing TU policies towards downshifting and part-time working for older staff, and the implications for pensions entitlement. Providing on-going support to older redundant and

- unemployed members who wish to return to work.
- Actively promoting the business benefits of employing, training and developing an age-diverse workforce.

EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

- 2.47 A number of focus group participants advocated the formation of specialist third age employment agencies to find temporary and permanent jobs for the 45+.
- 2.48 In some areas specialist third-age employment agencies exist. A number of these operate nationally and focus particularly on finding work for older people with management and professional experience. Some of the 'all-age' national and local employment agencies actively set out to attract and find work for older workers.
- 2.49 Employment agencies have great potential to help the job market for older people work better; the growth in temporary and flexible employment combined with current demographic trends suggest that there are strong business advantages in their doing so.
- 2.50 Some employment agencies also provide coaching in such key areas as self-presentation and interview skills, and are therefore making important contributions to IAG.
- 2.51 organisations, encouraged unemployed people aged 45+ to become volunteers for these and similar reasons, including recognition of the value of volunteering in restoring lost confidence and self esteem.
- 2.52 Although the initial motives for volunteering could differ, many focus group participants gained considerable personal satisfaction from voluntary work. Some found that their voluntary work was more in tune with their personal values, or changing personal values, than their previous paid employment.
- 2.53 In some cases, focus group members who were registered as unemployed and needed paid employment for financial reasons, wanted to continue with their daytime voluntary work and felt that they would make a greater contribution to their communities by doing so. A few were critical of jobcentre staff for making them apply for unsuitable paid jobs rather than allowing them to continue in fulfilling voluntary work in which they could make full use of their skills and abilities, and/or considered that their involvement in volunteering prevented them from looking for paid employment. None of the participants appeared to have seen the Jobcentre Plus publication '*Financial help if you work or are doing voluntary work*'.

VOLUNTEERING AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

- 2.51 Volunteering can provide the opportunity to develop new skills and experience, explore new areas of work, and to do so in a relatively protected environment. Frontline workers, and especially those in community

2.54 There are important issues here. At the start of each focus group the members were asked what skills and qualities they considered older people could contribute to work and community. In general, the skills and qualities identified tended to fall into three main groups:

- (i) 'experience' of life and work.
- (ii) 'values', especially related to determination, 'stickability', discipline, strong work ethic and sense of service.
- (iii) 'people skills and qualities' including those concerned with nurturing and care, ie patience, a desire to give people time and to listen, mentoring skills, empathy, and the ability to see the good qualities in others, and to motivate them and encourage their positive characteristics.

A significant proportion of focus group members were interested in helping and supporting younger people.

2.55 The skills and qualities identified differ considerably from the more competitive qualities demanded by many employers and suggest that, if many more older people are to be enabled to work, there may be a need for more detailed consideration and study of the types of occupations that are most suitable. It is significant that the industries most interested in recruiting older applicants are retailing and callcentres where highly developed customer care skills are in demand. Some focus group members observed that

there would be more opportunities for older people in industry if there were a more cooperative ethos in many workplaces with emphasis on coaching, mentoring, in-service training and staff motivational policies more generally – all areas which could make use of many older people's skills and experience, and their increasing desire to nurture, rather than compete with, other people.

2.56 The issue of payment for volunteering did not arise either in the focus groups or the telephone interviews. However, if greater numbers of people aged 50+ are to be enabled to volunteer it may be advisable to look again at Recommendation 10 of the Cabinet Office Performance and Innovation Unit Report (PIU, 2000) which proposes that pilots be introduced "to explore new ways of recognising and rewarding volunteering opportunities. The recommendation is in line with practice in the United States where some older volunteers in the US Experience Corps are paid stipends and awarded scholarships to enable them to volunteer on a more intensive basis, including fulltime commitment (Freedman, 1999).

Box 32: Inter-generational mentoring: Guidance Enterprises Group Ltd, York and North Yorkshire

Two careers advisers from the Careers Centre, Northallerton (Guidance Enterprises Group) are helping to establish a youth internet café in Thirsk. The facilities will be used by young people in the evening and by Age Concern during the day. The juxtaposition of the two age groups offers an unrivalled opportunity for the careers advisers and Age Concern to jointly develop an intergenerational initiative. Age Concern will help in training older people as volunteer mentors to work with the young people in relation to personal, work and learning needs.

Staff of the Guidance Enterprises Group are working with the Prince's Trust Programme and Yorkshire Business Education Partnership in identifying and supporting mentors (numbers of whom are 50+) to work with young people in the Group's Prince's Trust initiative, and within North Yorkshire County Council's Bridge Project which provides relevant activities for pupils in need of additional support outside the national curriculum.

POLICY MAKERS

POLICY: OBSERVATIONS OF FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

2.57 Participants and frontline workers had views on a number of relevant national policy including:

- The introduction of legislation to limit age discrimination among employers, preferably earlier than 2006. Few of those interviewed considered that legislation would prevent age discrimination unless it was also accompanied by attitudinal changes. However, there was general agreement that age legislation would provide a clear demonstration of the government's intentions, and the positive national support needed to help those working at local level to overcome age discriminatory practices.
- Demonstration by government departments that they practise active and effective age-diverse employee policies themselves, and therefore act as exemplars of government policy to the field.
- National mechanisms to promote and disseminate examples of employer good practice, and encourage emulation. The Age Diversity and Over 50s Team of DWP, Employers Forum on Age, and Third Age Employment Network are already achieving much in this area, but feedback suggests that more is necessary to ensure that the information reaches individual providers as well as
 - local policy makers.
 - Supply of more low-cost opportunities for the 50+ to retrain, which relate directly to the needs of local labour markets. A number of participants suggested apprenticeship and equivalent schemes for older people.
 - Removal of age restrictions on government-funded projects and initiatives to address learning and training issues, including those funded by the EU.
 - Review of the 6-month qualifying period for New Deal 50+ - or alternatively the introduction of measures to ensure that people aged 50+ who need and want to retrain and reskill can access other relevant local training schemes that relate directly to the needs of their local labour market and to local employers, without having to wait for six months.
 - Introduction of subsidies payable to employers to encourage them to employ older people.

- Local discretion to enable older people to test their skills and experience in unfamiliar occupational areas without prejudicing receipt of State benefits. Concern was expressed that some older people are dissuaded from working because

they may lose their entitlement to current benefits if taking a job does not work out as they had hoped. The fear of jeopardising benefit entitlement can prevent many older people from taking risks.

Box 33: Backup North – Action Team for Jobs, Sunderland

Backup North is a DWP-linked initiative, which uses discretionary funding in innovative ways to find new opportunities for jobless people in Sunderland North. Backup North works with a dedicated Jobcentre Plus Action Team, and this enables jobcentre initiatives and resources to be used flexibly to meet the identified needs of individuals and to help them back into work. The Action Team personal advisers are client-centred and the individual members of staff able to work with individuals on a continuous basis until they are settled in appropriate employment. Staff of Backup North find that older people often need considerable help in identifying their existing skills and experience and in determining the training they require to enhance employability. Individual help is available to help them write CVs and job applications, identify suitable training and enable them to use computer-aided guidance programmes.

New Deal 50plus, Job Trials, Employment on Trial and Programme Centres are found to be especially helpful for older age groups. Backup North is able to pay subsidies to employers to employ older workers. These can be very effective in helping older people to obtain employment. Normally the subsidies don't extend beyond 3 months, but this is normally sufficient.

Backup North employs a Community Development Worker who interrelates with the local community and identifies opportunities to involve people, including older people, in learning and work-related activities. For example, if a crèche is necessary to enable women (parents and grandparents) to take part in learning, she will arrange this in liaison with the relevant community organisations.

Backup North organises confidence-building courses for women and would like to make these available to older men. Many of the older men have lost their self-esteem, at least partly because of the collapse of large-scale manufacturing industry, and there is a need to help them regain confidence and a sense of purpose. Considerable numbers of older men tend to sit about at home and, when they go out, to sit in pubs and clubs. They become resigned to inactivity, and need considerable help and support to regain employability and become active citizens again.

Backup North employs a Promotion Team of local people who are known and respected in the locality. Members of the team use a number of approaches to encourage people to visit Backup North including attending local events, doorknocking, providing individual support, and consulting older people about their work and learning requirements. One member of the team who is 50+ acts as a role model to older men and is particularly successful in attracting them back into work and learning. He is able to go to where the older men tend to congregate, and to speak to them in their own terms and on their own territory.

Backup North has 4 drop-in centres and people are able to visit when they wish to, use the computers and telephones, and read the papers including searching the vacancy columns. These facilities are attractive to older people. Reception staff are good at making older people feel welcome. One receptionist has a gift for remembering everybody's names and older people appreciate this. They feel valued.

FEEDBACK FROM ADULT GUIDANCE

2.58 Arguably, feedback is the most neglected of all the guidance activities, although its potential to effect change on behalf of the public is considerable. Individual and group guidance is only one half of the guidance equation; the other half is helping to create the conditions in which individuals and groups can implement their personal action plans and achieve their objectives.

2.59 The percipience and relevance of much of the feedback received from older adults and frontline workers during the course of the research suggests the need for mechanisms to be put in place which capture the feedback on a more formal basis, and can ensure that it is available in appropriate formats to policy-makers at all levels. These mechanisms should

be supported by local strategies that gather feedback from individuals on a regular basis, including:

- consulting directly with individuals and groups on aspects of provision;
- listening carefully to their observations on how barriers inhibiting involvement and progression might best be overcome.

Section 3: A 10 Point Action Plan

LOCAL STRATEGIC PLANNING

- 3.1 The evaluation approach developed and piloted by Challenging Age has been designed to help IAG Partnerships plan strategically to meet the IAG, learning and work requirements of older age groups
- 3.2 To be effective, the strategic plan should be owned by all relevant members of the Partnership. This

means that they should share in its production. Those IAG Partnerships involved in Challenging Age produced action plans briefly outlining their strategies towards older people (Appendix 2). We set out below a model of a ten-point action plan

Figure 1 **A 45+ ten-point action plan for older adults**

(The following action plan identifies ten key points from the six IAG action plans in Appendix 2. It was drawn up by a member of the research team, Ruth Hawthorn, for a presentation at an event to review local third age IAG provision organised by one of the IAG Partnerships involved in the Challenging Age research.)

1. *Design and agree an IAG Partnership policy for work with 45+.*
2. *Introduce a marketing strategy aimed at the 45+ to include the following key points:*
 - *ensure that marketing of all services uses age-inclusive language and images.*
 - *target some marketing specifically at 45+.*
 - *produce a booklet on local IAG provision available for 45+.*
 - *draw up an age positive good practice checklist for marketing to go to IAGP members.*
 - *identify and develop 'learning champions'.*
 - *collect 'good news' stories.*

3. *Implement a 45+ training strategy for IAG Partners and associate agencies by:*

- *arranging training for IAGP agencies (and those not yet members) in work with the 45+.*
- *planning the annual IAGP conference and other Partnership events to include sessions on work with 45+.*
- *arranging information fairs or equivalent events to inform a wide range of organisations including employers on the needs of the 45+.*

4. *Identify and designate one or more staff within the IAGP to:*

- *specialise (where possible) in work with 45+.*
- *co-ordinate work across the Partnership, liaising with agencies locally and elsewhere that work with 45+.*

5. *Encourage inter-agency working on 45+ issues, for example to:*

- *ensure the IAGP Directory includes information about provision for 45+.*
- *work through existing groups such as the Learning Partnership to raise awareness of the needs.*
- *work with National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE) Adult Learners Week and the NIACE Older and Bolder team to promote the concept of 'never too old to learn'.*

6. *Promote outreach work with the hard-to-reach 45+ by:*

- *sharing good practice between IAGP members.*
- *using focus groups in different communities to raise awareness of IAG and to explore the need.*
- *bringing relevant partners together to design coordinated strategies and initiatives to target specific groups of 45+.*

7. *Look for ways of obtaining funding for work with 45+ from LSC, ESF and other sources.*

8. *Help to open up employment opportunities for the 45+ by:*

- *working with employment agencies, including those that specialise in work with 45+ locally and on a national basis.*
- *exploring the possibility of setting up a specialist third-age agency or initiative within the IAGP.*

- *introducing more information and signs to help and encourage older jobseekers to use the resources available in careers centres, jobcentres and other relevant agencies.*

9. Disseminate TAEN and other 45+ materials to IAGP members.

10. Raise the profile of volunteering in work with 45+.

SETTING A GOOD EXAMPLE

3.3 Members of IAG Partnerships and associated agencies may need to look critically at their own practices and policies when undertaking the review.

3.4 The following observations, based on Challenging Age but also incorporating complementary practice, may be helpful.

3.5 The objective should be to ensure that equal opportunities and age diversity policy, practices and approaches are integral to total organisational and company policy so that they:

- Genuinely influence the way that staff interrelate with and regard

each other.

- Radiate out into positive regard and respect for all customers and are clearly apparent in the manner in which the organisation's services are provided.

3.6 Many focus group members were concerned about inconsistencies in staff attitudes towards older people, and saw effective staff training as a critical requirement. Staff training in work with older age groups can be organised in a number of ways, including:

- In-service training sessions.

Box 35: Customer care training: The Careers Centre, Northallerton, Guidance Enterprises Group Ltd, York and North Yorkshire

The Careers Centre, Northallerton provides customer care training for all new employees as part of the induction process, with refresher training during the year. The training is delivered by members of the management team who communicate their own implicit belief in equality of opportunity and the importance of ensuring that all clients, whether calling personally or by telephone, receive a warm welcome.

- Formal training courses

Box 36: Accredited third age awareness training: Connexions Nottinghamshire

Connexions Nottinghamshire has developed an OCN-accredited training course in Advice and Guidance Skills for Supporting Mature Adults (Ford, 2001).

- Open learning

Box 37: Older Workers Open Learning Handbook: Jobcentre Plus

Jobcentre Plus staff have access to a well-designed open learning handbook on older workers, produced to support training on New Deal 50plus but covering IAG work with older people more generally (Employment Service, 2000).

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Appendix 1

CONSULTING OLDER PEOPLE AND
MAPPING AND REVIEWING
THIRD AGE WORK, LEARNING AND
GUIDANCE PROVISION AGAINST THEIR
REQUIREMENTS

DOCUMENTATION

Appendix 1a

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE

Challenging Age: Focus Group

Note: if the guidance worker is adept at using a flip chart it may be useful if she/he recorded on the flip chart throughout to provide the discussion with a structure that all can follow.

INTRODUCTION AND 'BREAKING THE ICE'

Welcome and brief introduction to project – what it's about.

Ground rules: confidential – nothing said attributed; no criticism of each other; no hogging of the discussion; try to ensure report of discussion group is made available to the participants.

Brief introduction – to say three things about yourself in three sentences.

Flip chart exercise – what special skills and qualities do you feel that older people have which they can give to work and to their community?

OVERCOMING LOCAL BARRIERS

Based on your own experience in (locality), what are the main problems that older people have to overcome to:

- obtain work if they are unemployed?
- develop their careers if they are in work?
- take up suitable education and training courses?
- find the right kind of assistance to help them with work and learning issues if they need this?

What are the main barriers that you personally have experienced (if any) in realising your work and/or learning objectives at 50+?

How do you feel these barriers can be best overcome?

FEEDBACK ON LOCAL PROVISION

Local provision is placed before observations on 'IAG' because it follows on more readily from people's individual and local experience.

What kind of help and services do you feel are/would be most useful to you and other people of 50+ to enable help you to find the right kind of work and/or learning opportunities?

If you have experience of using local IAG services how useful have you found these?

- What have you found most useful?
- What would you change?
- Are there any activities or services that are missing and you feel should be available?

IAG

Inevitably there will be some overlap here with the discussion on local provision, which may mean that this discussion could be abbreviated if there is repetition. However, it is necessary to obtain their observations on 'I', 'A' and 'G' so that we can identify and list these.

The Government recently set up Information Advice and Guidance Partnerships to provide help to adults, including older adults, looking for learning and work.

Do you have any views on:

- the kind of information older people may require?
- the kind of advice older people may require?

What do you understand by the term 'guidance'?

What kind of guidance (or 'help and activities' – whichever proves to be the most appropriate in the context of the discussion) do you consider older people require to enable them to find the right kind of learning and work?

What kinds of qualities would you look for in a guidance worker working with older people?

Do you feel that older people could do with any additional help to assist them with:

- Financial decisions related to learning and work?
- Other related areas where advice may be needed , eg legal?
- Volunteering?
- Making best use of free time?
- Improving overall quality of life?

If so, what kind of help do you feel is needed?

GUIDANCE AND THE WORKPLACE

Was enough done in the workplace to help you with:

- Career development and career change from 50+ (including training)?
- Preparation for redundancy, early retirement or retirement?

If you feel in any way that preparation was inadequate what would you like to happen?

Do you know of any examples of good practice in the local area to help older people at work?

LEARNING

Do you know of any examples of good practice in the local area to help older people to learn and/or to train?

COMPLETION OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRES

Appendix 1b

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS: QUESTIONNAIRE

Challenging Age: Discussion Groups

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This information is required to provide an overall picture of the backgrounds of people who have taken part in the discussion groups. Confidentiality will be completely respected, and individual information will not be passed to any other person outside the research team for Challenging Age.

Note: please ignore any questions that may not be applicable to you

1. Name (optional)

2. Please tick box: female male

45-50 50-60 60-65 65+

3. *Note: in the following questions please tick ALL boxes that apply to you*

Would you describe yourself as:

Retired	<input type="checkbox"/>	Full-time employed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Part-time employed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self –employed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hoping to become self -employed	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Unemployed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Having a disability	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Redundant	<input type="checkbox"/>	Looking for work	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Not looking for work	<input type="checkbox"/>	Looking after the home	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Voluntary worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	Caring for someone	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Student –on a full or part-time course	<input type="checkbox"/>	Retired	<input type="checkbox"/>		

What are the main types of work that you done have during your life? Please include family responsibilities and voluntary work where relevant

5. Under which headings would you describe most of your paid work?

Operative and assembly	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other manual work	<input type="checkbox"/>
Craft and skilled operative	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sales	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal service	<input type="checkbox"/>	Clerical/secretarial	<input type="checkbox"/>
Technical/higher technical	<input type="checkbox"/>	Professional	<input type="checkbox"/>
Management and senior administration	<input type="checkbox"/>		

6. Do you have any type of qualification?

Vocational:

Certificates related to your work	<input type="checkbox"/>	Craft qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/>
Technician qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/>	Professional qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others?	<input type="checkbox"/>	NVQs	<input type="checkbox"/>

Academic:

GCSE or equivalent (O level/GCE/CSE)	<input type="checkbox"/>		
A levels	<input type="checkbox"/>	HND/C	<input type="checkbox"/>
Degree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Post Graduate	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you are unemployed at present, how long have you been without a job?

Less than 6 months	<input type="checkbox"/>	6-12 months	<input type="checkbox"/>
12 months –2 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	2-3 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
Over 3 years	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Are you taking any kind of education or training course now?

Yes what is the subject or course title?

No

Thank you for your time and contribution

Appendix 1c

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS WITH IAG PARTNER ORGANISATIONS AND EQUIVALENT

Challenging Age: Telephone Questions

- 1 What do you see as the particular needs of the older age groups for whom you are providing services?
- 2 What are the main barriers to learning and employment (paid and unpaid) that you find older people with whom you work need to overcome? How can they best be helped to overcome these?
- 3 What provision do you have which is:
 - specifically targeted at older age groups?
 - for all adult age groups but designed and organised so that older age groups are positively welcomed and incorporated?
- 4 What – roughly – would you say are the numbers and percentages of the 45+ and 50+ groups involved?
- 5 Is any of the provision targeted at specific groups of people aged 45+ (eg redundant older workers from particular industries, longer term unemployed, particular localities)?
- 6 To what extent do you work with other organisations on third-age issues?
- 7 Are there any additional ways in which you would like to respond to the needs of older age groups over and above what you are doing?
- 8 What might be preventing you from doing this?
- 9 How are you promoting your services and activities to older people?
- 10 Have you any publicity or related material that you could send us outlining the services you provide for older people?
- 11 Any additional points, including those arising from the self-assessment questionnaire.

Appendix 1d

SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

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CHALLENGING AGE RESEARCH PROJECT: INFORMATION, ADVICE, GUIDANCE, LEARNING AND EMPLOYMENT PROVISION FOR OLDER AGE GROUPS (45+)

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in the Challenging Age research project, which is being coordinated by the Third Age Employment Network and funded by the Department for Education and Skills. This is an important national initiative; current demographic trends mean that an increasing percentage of the actual and potential working population are 50+ (a trend which will continue to grow for the foreseeable future), with important implications for employment, and for learning and guidance strategies for the 45+. The main objectives of Challenging Age are to: inform national policy; and to support IAG partnerships, key partners and related agencies, in helping greater numbers of older people to participate in employment, learning and the community.

There are three main stages to Challenging Age:

- (1) to identify the main IAG requirements of older people, including their observations on current provision, through use of focus groups;
- (2) to map and research local provision, in order to assess the current ability of partner providers to meet the identified requirements;
- (3) to provide IAG Partnerships and related providers with recommended approaches which may enable them to assess current provision and adjust that provision where necessary.

Six IAG Partnerships are taking part in Challenging Age; and Stage 1, which involved local consultations with groups of older people (aged 45/50+), has been completed. Stage 1 produced a richness of data on older people's IAG and learning requirements, and this questionnaire incorporates a number of the key points put forward by older people during the consultations. The questionnaire is a pilot and we would welcome your views on how useful you find it.

Challenging Age is subject to tight deadlines to meet DfES requirements and it would be greatly appreciated if you would complete the questionnaire and return it by e-mail to me by Friday 22 February 2002 at the latest. My e-mail address is geoffjford@tesco.net and telephone number is 01347 822923 should you have any queries.

Notes on completing the questionnaire are listed on page 2.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Geoff Ford
Challenging Age Project Manager

Established by: THIRD AGE CHALLENGE TRUST in conjunction with HELP THE AGED

Company limited by guarantee

Registered in England No 2602523

Registered office as above

Registered Charity No 1002770

CHALLENGING AGE RESEARCH PROJECT

INFORMATION, ADVICE, GUIDANCE, LEARNING AND EMPLOYMENT PROVISION FOR OLDER AGE GROUPS (45+)

Completing the self-assessment questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of a number of 'key criteria' followed by a 5-column rating system (A to E). Please mark the appropriate column, or columns, with an X. The rating should apply to your own organisation and not to the IAG Partnership as a whole. Please be as honest as possible. No one provider is likely to offer all the services suggested, and the intention is to build up a snapshot of current provision for older people within the local partnership and network of related organisations, and the local quality development and related requirements. From this it is intended to identify recommendations for local usage and also for incorporation into the national report.

Individual organisations will only be identified in any reports that are locally or nationally disseminated where they clearly contain important elements of good practice in their work with older age groups, and only then with the organisation's permission.

The rating system is as follows:

- A Represents an example of good practice within your organisation (subject to continuing quality development).
- B Satisfactory, but requires further development.
- C Not yet satisfactory, and requires further development.
- D This aspect of provision for older people is currently subject to internal review.
- E Not relevant to current service provision.

A space has been provided at the end of the self-assessment questionnaire for any additional observations you may have, both about your own replies and the content and format of the questionnaire. The telephone interview will also provide an opportunity for you to discuss with the researcher any observations and comments that you may have.

**INFORMATION, ADVICE, GUIDANCE, LEARNING AND EMPLOYMENT
PROVISION FOR OLDER AGE GROUPS (45+)**

Name of organisation:

Contact:

Telephone number:

Key criteria	A	B	C	D	E
1. Marketing materials and strategies clearly inform and encourage 45+ people that the organisation's resources and services are available to older age groups.					
2. There is a strategy to ensure that 45+ people feel welcome and valued.					
3. The organisation's own age diversity policy is evident in its frontline staffing (i.e. those staff immediately in contact with the public).					
4. The organisation is able to provide 45+ people with relevant, accurate and up-to-date information and advice on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - careers (a) - job vacancies (b) - work initiatives to help older people (c) - local learning opportunities (d) - volunteering opportunities (e) - finance and benefits (f) - local transport (g) 					
5. The referral system is supported by a client tracking mechanism.					

Key criteria	A	B	C	D	E
<p>7. Procedures are in place to assess 45+ clients':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IAG requirements (a) - skills, experience and abilities (b) - basic skills (c) - learning styles and preferences (d) - computer skills (e) - levels of self-confidence (on a continuing basis) (f) - and to discuss the results of the assessments with the individual clients (g) 					
<p>8. 45+ clients have access to guidance workers who can help them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify and explore occupational areas that may suit their skills, experience, abilities and potential (a) - discuss their work and learning needs in the context of their personal circumstances (i.e. holistic guidance) (b) 					
<p>9. Practical help is available to assist 45+ people with CV preparation, job applications, interview skills and job search.</p>					
<p>10. Where advisable, arrangements can be made for individual 45+ people to have access to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - work experience and short work placements (a) - job trials (b) - learning tasters (c) 					
<p>11. Peer support is actively encouraged by staff, and 45+ clients (who wish to) have planned opportunities to meet together during the day.</p>					
<p>12. The organisation tries to ensure that 45+ people who need to return for further IAG are able to see the same IAG worker or personal adviser.</p>					

Key criteria	A	B	C	D	E
13. Advocacy is provided by staff able to negotiate directly on behalf of older individuals or groups for whom there may be barriers to access (e.g. learning, work, benefits, transport).					
14. The organisation – either directly or in collaboration with others – is actively involved in helping employers to understand the benefits of employing an age-diverse workforce.					
15. 45+ people (either individually or in representative groups) are consulted regularly about IAG, learning and work provision and issues relevant to the third-age group.					
16. Procedures are in place to ensure that feedback received from the 45+ age-group is implemented by senior management and relevant policy makers.					
17. All staff in contact with the public receive appropriate training to help them appreciate the needs of older people and to work with them effectively.					
18. Staff adopt approaches that recognise the experience of ageism, and seek to motivate and support the 45+ age group.					

ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENTS

Please use this page for any additional observations you may have, both about your own replies and the content and format of the questionnaire. We are interested to know whether you found the format and the content useful. The telephone interview will also provide an opportunity for you to discuss with the researcher any observations and comments that you may have.

Appendix 2

IAG PARTNERSHIP ACTION PLANS

Derbyshire IAG Partnership: Draft Action Plan

The following ideas for action arose from a discussion between Derbyshire IAG's Quality Standards Adviser and the researcher. Individual partners may wish to use the report to inform their business plans, but many decisions about how to use the research will require discussion between all members of the IAG partnership. The first step will be a discussion at Partnership Executive level.

In reading this action plan it is important to bear in mind that there may be some uncertainty amongst the public about adult guidance services delivered by the Careers Service and those delivered by the IAG Partnership. This suggests a need for more effective marketing and publicity (see below) and for action points to be addressed by the Partnership as a whole.

Text in italics indicates the researcher's comments.

Policy and the Statement of Service

A policy level steer is needed to support work with the over 45s. Changes in policy and practice in response to the report may need to be supported by quantitative evidence. *(The limited statistical data gathered as part of this project are recorded in the interview notes.)*

Currently Derbyshire Careers Service's Statement of Service is very general. Older people and other specific groups

will be identified in a revised Statement in line with the Guidance Council's new assessment requirements.

Marketing and publicity

Findings will be presented to the partnership's marketing group with a view to developing a strategy geared to targeting specific groups, including older people.

The next IAG conference could address the theme of 'targeting specific groups' and include a strand on work with older people.

Existing groups such as the Learning Partnership's IAG group will be used to publicise good practice in work with older people.

Language, especially the use of jargon, will be given careful attention when publicity material and information for clients is written and revised. *(Clients could be consulted about draft documents.)*

Interagency working

Provide more opportunities for partners to share information in order to support client referrals.

- a) Currently, staff in the IAG partnership organisation are trained in signposting clients to relevant provision. This could be followed up with more in-depth training

workshops and include partners who are not currently seeking Guidance Council accreditation. Input might be requested from local experts such as 'The Bridge's Older People's Coordinator, older people who participate in activities and groups at 'The Bridge', local TAEN (Third Age Employment Network) members *and NIACE's Older and Bolder team.*

- b) Expand the IAG partners' directory to include more detailed information about their activities and services. A comprehensive index would be needed to enable effective usage.
- c) Use information about partners to help staff and clients find practical solutions to specific problems. For example, a leaflet on access could highlight solutions such as the Library Service's housebound provision, outreach learning opportunities and social car schemes.

A partnership newsletter is published every quarter, and is well supported with contributions from a range of partners. *It may be worth assessing the newsletter's circulation and readership, and evaluating its effectiveness in keeping staff informed.*

The partner's Service Level Agreement referral policy needs to be revised to require the recording of information about referrals received and made, and the outcomes of referrals.

Access and outreach

Evaluate existing IAG outreach provided by partners to ensure that resources can be targeted at the areas with the greatest need and least provision.

Conduct further research into other outreach provision. For example,

identify the information and services provided by community buses and any links with the partnership's work.

Engage partners in an internal audit of the accessibility of their premises to people with disabilities and mobility problems. This will help ensure appropriate referrals and will inform plans to improve facilities in line with disability legislation.

Capacity-building

Consider offering training workshops on topics which fall outside the Guidance Council quality standards in order to help groups develop their ideas, organise their own activities and provide feedback to partners.

Information, Advice and Guidance

A number of staff in partner organisations have been trained or are in the process of being trained to OCN level 3 in information, advice and guidance: some of these are funded by the IAG partnership. A mapping exercise to identify partners with level 3 trained staff and the location and venues in which those staff operate would highlight any gaps in current IAG provision and help target resources.

Community Information Points are being introduced by the IAG Partnership in collaboration with the Library Service and the County Council's Lifelong Learning Division. The Partnership needs to evaluate the impact of this new provision and consider how it could be integrated into the Library Services and Lifelong Learning Division's strategy.

Staff

Partners may not be able to secure additional staffing in the short-term, although some may be able to increase

resourcing levels. For example, the Careers Service business plan could establish the case to the Learning and Skills Council for additional funding to develop guidance provision to adults.

Staff's understanding of third-age issues could be improved by setting up a multiagency development group involving a third-age organisation, and by providing training sessions (see interagency working above).

Funding

Provide more direct information about sources of funding to support, develop and sustain third-age (and other specialist) projects. Train staff to write effective bids.

Engage in more multi-agency bid-writing to strengthen bids and enable partners to access new funding streams.

Learning Provision

Discuss with NIACE's Adult Learners' Week team and Older and Bolder team ways in which older people can be encouraged to regard 'serious' as well as leisure learning as appropriate. The message – 'You are never too old to learn' – is important.

The Careers Service and Employment Services could jointly run an introductory course for the over 50s similar to that piloted by Employment Services North.

Consider developing the concept of 'Learning Champions' to publicise the achievements of older people. Alison Ledbury at the University of Derby and Barbara Watkins, Regional Manager of TAEN, are appropriate contacts.

Employers

Consult with employment agencies which specialise in work with people over 50 for guidance about how job advertisements may be phrased to attract older people without discriminating against younger ones. *(Employment agencies and TAEN may be able to provide examples of good practice in educating employers about third-age issues. The TAEN directory contains useful contacts. The Department of Work and Pensions publishes Age Positive good practice guides for employers.)*

Implementation

The costs, potential benefits and other implications of implementing these suggestions need to be considered. Funding, securing partner commitment and ownership, and identifying lead partners in any developments or new initiatives will be key issues.

Kent Guidance Consortium (KGC)

kent and Medway IAG

Partnership: Draft Action Plan

This outline action plan arises from a discussion between the KGC Training Manager and the Challenging Age Researcher for Kent and Medway IAGP. The discussion is based on the findings of the research and the summary account, which identified a range of potential development issues.

Background

In December 2001, KGC commissioned a consultant to deliver a workshop for partnership members entitled “Third Age Learning and Work: strategies for Information, Advice and Guidance”.

The workshop was based on the Briefing paper “Ageing to Advantage” from the Third Age Employment Network. (KGC subsequently has taken up membership of TAEN) This workshop was well received and commented on by partner respondents to the telephone interviews.

The workshop groups identified two main priorities for action

- Identifying learning providers that already have a strategy for working with older people, analysis of demographic data, and locating employers particularly interested in recruiting 50+ workers in the Kent and Medway region.
- Identifying the IAG provision available through partners.

The former is the subject of a current mapping project. The second has been met through participation in the national Challenging Age project.

Future actions

Clearly, the substance of this draft action plan will be the subject of further discussion within the partnership in order to move forward toward an agreed strategy. It is recognised that the Business Plan for 2002/3 is almost completed; however, any agreement on strategy that derives from this action plan may help to inform the detail of the Business Plan.

Funding

It is intended to use the Challenging Age research findings for the Kent and Medway IAGP, as the basis for specific ESF and LSC Local Initiative Fund proposals. There is particular interest in the recruitment of guidance advisors to work specifically with the older age groups.

Training

KGC has developed a programme of accredited OCNs at levels 1,2 and 3 which is awaiting national validation by the QCA. The Challenging Age summary identified a staff development need that relates to a specific standard of knowledge and awareness of the issues for mature people. KGC has made provision for this by ensuring that the accredited OCNs developed through

the DfES project with Greater Nottingham IAG, "Supporting the Mature Workforce", can be accredited through APL to this new OCN for Information, Advice and Guidance.

The next stage will be to consider the training needs of partnership staff and delivery of this specific OCN, which could be offered as optional units at levels 2 and 3.

Professional Development

Linking to the interest in a cohort of expert guidance advisors for the older age groups, is the wider concept of building capacity for the partnership through the development of good practice models.

An outline project was discussed that linked model theories of practice to delivery ; detailed evaluation of the delivery and further testing, through to identification of good practice for professional development of all appropriate partnership staff. Such a project would require a robust research and evaluation structure working in close collaboration with guidance professionals. Built into this proposal is the potential for the partnership to cascade the learning derived and sustain the expertise long after the duration of the project itself.

Networking

An issue for many providers is the time constraints on active networking. Yet the value of keeping up-dated on an area of work that is growing in numbers and potential demand, is well recognised. Local information sharing helps to make good referral for mature clients. Two specific action points were noted for further discussion:

- Dissemination of Third Age Employment Network publications through the area networks of guidance practitioners.
- The production of a KGC partnership directory to include specific details relating to the over 45 age groups

Marketing

It is clear that many partners have, to date, given little consideration to the impact that their marketing materials and promotional activities may have on potential, or actual, older users of KGC. To an extent, this stems from organisational Equal Opportunities policies that suggest that opportunities that are open to all, will attract all people equally. Evidence from the Focus Groups suggest that this is not the case.

In this context, consideration will be given to two actions.

- A review of current KGC policy statements that can impact on the over 45 age groups.
- A good practice Checklist for marketing materials and promotional events that include targeting of the over 45 age groups.

Employment and Employers

The need for better local labour market intelligence on the employment opportunities for the over 45 age groups was widely identified in parallel with pleas for readily accessible vacancy, work –experience and job-taster placement information.

It was noted that this was a task too big for any one partner. KCG was seen to have the potential to network relevant

partners in a body of activity that could relate well to developing work with SMEs ; dynamic use of New Deal 50 plus; linking to the Age Positive campaign of the DWP and to be of direct benefit to the mature job seeker or job changer. The articulated demand from some focus group members was for “employment consultants who were guidance advisors.” This activity could also be linked to the Trade Unions Learning Champions programme and offer a route into workforce development for current employees. Funding could be sought for an innovative project through ESF/LIF.

Accessing hard to reach over 45 age groups

There is evidence of interesting practice in outreach activity from some partners that would commend itself to replication elsewhere. However, there is little

evidence of a strategic segmentation of the 45+ age groups with planned activity to ensure access to the area’s complex community of mature people. Such a strategy would be dependent on a thorough understanding of the differing needs of the age cohorts that comprise the 45 plus age groups, the geographic and ethnic make up, health , personal finances, actual status and the aspirations for change of status.

An activity that brings together the knowledge of all partners, could be useful in a first mapping that could develop a planned approach to ensuring the reality of IAG provision being accessible to all. The issues of marketing and promotional activity (2.4 above) would be informed by this approach.

Lincolnshire and Rutland IAG Partnership Area: Draft Action Plan

During January and February 2002, the TAEN Challenging Age Project Team carried out two focus groups with people over 45, and 11 telephone interviews with information, advice and guidance providers in the Lincolnshire and Rutland area. Following a planning meeting on 14 March 2002 it was agreed that the IAGA team would consider the following as possible ways to take the work forward.

- A third age awareness-raising event. This could be tried first in Grantham or Lincoln, and involve local IAG providers including the Employment Service, local providers of learning opportunities, local employers and members of the relevant focus group. If successful, it could be run in other parts of the Partnership area as a road show.
- Focus groups in other parts of the Partnership area not already covered by the project, such as Mablethorpe, to explore local need (for example some coast towns have a relatively high

proportion of retired people not looking for work).

- Liaison with funding and other bodies in the region to explore the possibility of setting up a dedicated third age IAG resource. This could include the LSC, the Learning Partnership, EMDA and Experience Works in Loughborough or Nottingham.
- Disseminating the work carried out so far through the forthcoming IAG conferences, which will be attended by representatives from the agencies interviewed for the project and other partners.
- Feedback to the participating agencies by sending them a copy of the summary report for the Lincolnshire and Rutland area.

The option of holding a meeting of the 11 participating agencies and the focus group members was discussed and will be further considered. It will only be worth doing if it is clear what could be taken forward from it.

North London IAG Partnership: Draft Action Plan

North London IAG Partnership is organising a planning event for Partnership members in April 2002 when the Action Plan will be drawn up and agreed collectively. Ruth Hawthorn, the Challenging Age research worker responsible for liaison with the

Partnership, is attending this event.

Currently there are staffing changes at North London IAG Partnership, which include changes at management level.

Sunderland IAG Partnership Action Plan 2002-2003

The results of the work carried out in the Challenging Age Project has found that there are a number of common issues and concerns regarding IAG services to older people such as the lack of positive representations of older people in IAG literature. During 2002-2003, Sunderland IAG Partnership will:

Identify an IAG adviser who will be responsible for becoming a 'specialist' on issues surrounding older people regarding IAG services, employment and training. The adviser will work with organisations that target these groups and establish strong links such as the Experience Corps and Age Concern as well as locally based organisations to look at 'Interesting Practice' such as the 'Grey Force' in Pennywell. The IAG 'specialist' adviser will promote best practice with older people across the Network.

Ensure that any new promotional literature carried out by the Guidance, Advice and Information Network (GAIN) or The learningplace which will contain images of people, will aim to include representation of older people if appropriate.

The GAIN Network and IAG advisers working from The learningplace will ensure that promotional materials on how to access IAG will be targeted to those organisations who work with this target group. Advisers will also be encouraged to collect 'Good News Stories' of people who have accessed IAG services.

By December 2002, Sunderland IAG Network will organise and hold an information fair/event focusing specifically on older people. The Information Day will bring together a wide range of organisations within the City and region. These will include local FE/HE provision, the Employment Service /Job Centre Plus, learndirect as well as employers in the City who employ older people e.g. B&Q.

Gather feedback from older people on IAG services in the City. The feedback from the two focus groups which came together specifically for the Challenging Age Project was that the participants extremely enjoyed being able to find an arena in which they could focus on issues directly related to them and give these issues a voice. The IAG advice workers will link in the six area forum lifelong learning co-ordinator's and the forum members to establish a group of older people across the City of Sunderland to look at issues directly related to them. This information will be feed back to the IAG partnership.

Finally, the IAG Co-ordinator will keep abreast of the issues regarding older people seeking IAG services and feed this back to the Network and IAG Partnership and other IAG Partnership regionally.

York and North Yorkshire IAG Partnership Challenging Age Action Plan

1. INTRODUCTION

York & North Yorkshire IAG Partnership took part in the Challenging Age DfES Sponsored evaluation and consultation during 2001-02. Geoff Ford as Consultant held two focus groups in the Hambleton area, and also consulted with the Target Third Age project in

York. Following a meeting with Geoff Ford and Joss Mortimer of the Northallerton Careers Centre on the 12th March 2002 the following represents action points to be taken forward by the IAG Partnership.

2. ACTION POINTS	ACTION RESULTING
<p>2.1. There are considerable numbers of older people in the York & North Yorkshire population, the Challenging Age research has shown that these people require further help in terms of self confidence and self advocacy.</p>	<p>Delivery Partners requested to specify target groups for mainstream IAG delivery within the IAG Business Planning process for 2002-03. Older people are designated a local as well as national priority group.</p> <p>Several of the Community Education Outreach IAG workers have highlighted work with older people for development and delivery.</p>
<p>2.2. More information in Careers Centres relevant to older age groups was identified as an issue</p>	<p>The issue of signage leading to encouraging older people to use resources in Careers Centres will be taken forward with Career Centres management members. We are also aware that IAG needs to encourage older people to use Careers Centres, counteracting the new Connexions marketing materials also going in.</p>

<p>2.3. Consultancy raised the issue that staff need training and awareness raising in issues related to IAG on finance and benefits.</p>	<p>Business Plan proposals 2002-03 include financial guidance as one of the subjects for the four training workshops proposed for staff development during the year.</p>
<p>2.4. Consultancy shows that older people require information and advice on voluntary work and closer links to sources of information about voluntary work.</p>	<p>The IAG network will be distributing booklets early in the operational year 2001-02, one of these is on sources of useful information on the internet. The Do it website is specifically mentioned in that booklet.</p> <p>Most of the local network groups include people from the local CVS including the Volunteer Bureau staff. Network co-ordinators will be asked to determine whether they should also invite volunteer bureau staff to speak at network meetings during the year.</p>
<p>2.5. Geoff raised the issue that there should be more resources offered by the Partnership particularly in relation to sources of help and resources for older people.</p>	<p>We will now start to research a booklet on useful sources of information for third age clients to add to the others being distributed during the year.</p>
<p>2.6. Older people's willingness to be consulted on their take up of IAG services was highlighted.</p>	<p>The Business Plan highlights our need and willingness to work with the Learning Partnerships to consult learners. It would be appropriate to include older people within that consultation.</p>

<p>2.7. Marketing literature for IAG and learning was suggested could be improved to incorporate more older age groups, to ensure they know they are positively included and welcome.</p>	<p>The Marketing policy for 2002-03 will incorporate a more “human” approach to advertising materials. For example, we will include photographs of people on the poster advertising IAG Services. These posters will include pictures of older people.</p>
<p>2.8. It was suggested that improved liaison between the IAG Partnership and organisation such as Age Concern and Better Government for Older People could be carried forward.</p>	<p>The IAG Partnership has recently joined the Third Age employment Network, and will review its membership lists for other third age members, with a view to Gap analysis and making up any shortfalls.</p>
<p>2.9. Much work is going on in the local area organised by Employment Services, on tackling age issues with employers. It was suggested that this role could be taken forward with intermediaries.</p>	<p>Awareness of third age issues will be tackled during the staff training awareness day as mentioned previously. This day is likely to look at guidance issues such as learning styles, what older people really want from guidance, learning focus and suitable sources of help.</p>

2. Geoff shared with us the self-assessment questionnaire that been used prior to the focus groups and prior to telephone survey work with the intermediary organisations. The IAG Partnership is intending to survey a number of providers in the area during

2002-03 in order to establish IAG provision by target group. We are considering using and adapting this self-assessment questionnaire in order to do this mapping work.

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