

# POSITIVE Ageing in London

The London Regional Forum on Ageing

## Positive Ageing in London Newsletter May 2014

### An active winter and spring!

Since our last newsletter Positive Ageing in London has been very busy with two successful and well attended events, on digital inclusion and on Redefining Ageing and an interesting quarterly meeting focussing on engagement through the arts (see below).

Positive Ageing in London's work has been recognised by PAIL's becoming the official London representative to the UK Advisory Forum on Ageing (UKAFA). A meeting of the Mayor of London's Older People Advisory Forum agreed that from now on, PAIL will elect London's representative to UKAFA and the Mayor's Advisory Forum will be represented on PAIL by the Chair of London Older People's Strategies Group.

### Work programme for 2014-15

We are currently planning PAIL's work programme for 2014-15. Topics suggested for events include urban planning for better ageing, overcoming barriers to older people making an economic contribution, the impact of welfare benefits changes and the situation of people growing older without children. But if you have ideas for subjects that PAIL should be dealing with please send them to us!

The dates of the quarterly meetings for 2014-15 are:

- 3 July 2014
- 16 Sept 2014
- 24 Nov 2014
- Late Jan 2015

We will be back in touch very soon about the meeting on 3 July which will take place at Age UK London. Among other things, we expect PAIL's workplan for the year to be confirmed at that meeting.

### **Welfare Benefit Changes and older people**

Positive Ageing in London is researching the impact on older people of the ongoing changes in welfare benefits.

The introduction of Universal Credit instead of a range of existing benefits, the replacement of Disability Living Allowance with Personal Independence Payments, the so-called "bedroom tax" for people "under-occupying" in social housing and a number of other changes are not targeted at people of pension age. However they will certainly have an impact on many Londoners aged between 50 and State pension age. There will also be impacts on some pensioners, for example if they live in a household with someone below pension age. Effects on older people are also likely to increase over time with increases in the state pension age.

This dimension of the welfare benefit changes is not as well known as other issues and Positive Ageing in London thinks it is important to understand the emerging impact on older people. If you have information on this issue, we'd be really glad to hear from you: please contact Ben Donovan, [bdonovan@ageuklondon.org.uk](mailto:bdonovan@ageuklondon.org.uk)

### **2014 Meetings and Events**

#### **PAIL Events**

#### **Wealth of the web: Broadening horizons online, 27 January**

PAIL's event on digital inclusion and digital skills for older people attracted just over 50 older people and a very good sample of decision makers and service providers including representatives of the Cabinet Office/Government Digital Service, Ofcom and a major bank as well as the Greater London Authority.

It was in two parts: an interactive workshop for older people about people's views and expectations of using digital technology, followed by the launch of Age UK London's research report "Wealth of the Web: Broadening horizons online": <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/london/news--campaigns/wealth-of-the-web/>

The interactive workshop was facilitated by David Wilcox and Drew Mackie, and a report and reflections on it can be found on David's blog at <http://socialreporter.com/?p=2803> Participants worked on scenarios where imaginary older people with different backgrounds and interests decided if, how and what digital technology they would use to meet their needs.

Discussion on Age UK London's report written by Ben Donovan started from the realisation that 78% of people over 75 in London are not online at a time when more and more Government services

(central and local) are becoming “digital by default”. How can funders, service providers and voluntary organisations best encourage and help older people to improve digital skills?

### **Redefining Ageing, 24 March**

Our spring conference attracted some 90 people mainly from local older people’s organisations but including some from the academic, policy and statutory services communities to hear a distinguished panel of speakers.

We had two high-profile keynote speakers. Mary Sinfield, Chair of the Older People’s Reference Group for the New Dynamics of Ageing research programme, spoke first on “Challenging attitudes and assumptions about ageing”. Mary was particularly concerned that the many excellent research reports on ageing need to lead to assertive campaigns for real change. Lord Filkin CBE, Chair of the new Centre for Ageing Better, talked about the “Opportunities and Challenges of an Ageing Population”. Lord Filkin also drew on his work leading on the 2013 House of Lords report “Ready for Ageing”. He talked about some of the changes in attitude and practice which are needed to make Britain ready for ageing.

Dave Martin of Centre for Policy on Ageing/Trading Times talked about shifting boundaries between “work” and “retirement”. Professor Leela Damodaran of the University of Loughborough presented findings from the Sus-IT project, part of the New Dynamics of Ageing research programme, “busting myths” about older people’s use of digital technology. Participants also heard illuminating presentations from Professor Bryan Manning of the University of Westminster and Professor Patricia Schofield of the Centre for Positive Ageing, University of Greenwich.

The presentations by Mary Sinfield, Dave Martin and Professors Damodaran, Schofield and Manning are on [the Positive Ageing in London website](#)

Questions and comments from the floor raised a wide variety of issues including the need for people not to be ashamed of their real age, the need to combat intergenerational divisions and make links with “younger older people”, and the links between this debate and the cuts to funding of local organisations and services. Housing, including new developments like co-housing, was pointed out as a neglected area in general debate about ageing and it was pointed out that the voluntary sector too has to tackle ageism internally. Some participants mentioned the importance of sport, leisure and the arts in supporting independence and making a creative contribution. The view was also expressed that as well as being positive about older people’s contributions, we need to realistically acknowledge that ageing will have large economic costs and plan how to meet these costs.

The speakers all responded and entered into discussion on these points, and the conference finished with a panel session rounding up the key themes.

## **PAIL Quarterly Meeting 10 February 2014**

### **Engagement through Arts**

PAIL's quarterly meeting focussed on presentations about involving older Londoners in arts activities.

Susie Miller, the Director of Capital Age Festival - <http://www.capitalagefestival.org.uk/>, talked about involvement in arts as a model for engaging older people and went on to outline the planned programme for the Festival this year, which will focus on "Older Men and Expression". She stressed the importance of breaking down the barriers between "high art" and community art, and developing positive partnerships based on equal exchange between artists and community groups.

This year's Festival will include a photography activity with 20-30 older men (and women too) being engaged in workshops leading to an exhibition of portraits of older men on View Tube.

One question raised by participants was about the geographical spread of the events in the Festival. Susie explained that it was being extended to several Outer London boroughs according to resources although there were still gaps (and Central London events had attracted a good borough spread of participants). In response to a question it was confirmed that the National Portrait Gallery is involved in the photography event. There was a discussion of what PAIL and/or the Age Action Alliance could do to promote CAF's work: ideas centred round linking with Older People's Day and "Silver Sunday" at the start of October.

George Baddeley, the Managing Director of Silver Comedy - <http://silvercomedy.co.uk/> - spoke on forum comedy as a means of engagement to enhance older people's wellbeing, counteract loneliness, increase self confidence and develop people's comedy skills while also exercising memory. By analogy with forum theatre, it can act as a consultation technique among other uses.

Reactions from participants included the suggestion of using forum comedy as a tool for conflict resolution in safeguarding, and the question of whether it could have a role in PAIL's future work programme.

Jon Pushkin of LOPAG and The Redbridge Music Lounge updated PAIL on an initiative in Redbridge to use music to help tackle the symptoms of dementia and increase the quality of life and social involvement of people with dementia. Participants asked questions about this initiative.

### **Progress update on Positive Ageing in London**

Mervyn Eastman, Vice-Chair, chairing the meeting in the Chair's absence due to ill-health, updated the meeting. The quarterly meeting in December had taken the form of an evaluation workshop to which all members were invited, held at the DWP's Caxton House headquarters. Feedback had indicated positive satisfaction with general progress and the work carried out, while identifying areas for improvement on diversity among active members and on clarity about who PAIL's members are, roles/responsibilities and internal governance.

It was proposed to rerun the same evaluation process using a Diagnostic Toolkit in a year's time to gauge progress in the meantime.

The 27 January event on digital inclusion had been a big success (see above) and there had been quite a lot of further engagement since, with discussions for example in the Digital Inclusion Group of the Age Action Alliance. PAIL would want to be involved in the follow-up, promoting a strong London agenda.

### **UK Advisory Forum on Ageing**

Russell Taylor (Department of Work and Pensions) updated the meeting on the next meeting of UKAFA, scheduled for 19 March. Planned subjects were the new policy initiative from the Department for Health “No-one left alone” and the Department for Communities and Local Government paper “Housing for an Ageing Society”.

### **Policy update from Age UK London**

Gordon Deuchars (Age UK London) introduced a discussion on the Mayor’s draft London Housing Strategy which was under consultation.

Gordon also introduced Age UK London’s planned age manifesto for the London borough council elections on 22 May. It was agreed that this type of campaign was not appropriate for PAIL as such to be involved in, while some member organisations might be interested. For members’ information, this manifesto has since been published [here](#).

### **Information and Practice Exchange**

Members updated each other on key developments that their organisations were involved in.

Members asked for information on Age UK London’s online Opinion Exchange: you can find a link to it [here](#).