Age-Friendly Local Economic Development in London

A policy-review of London borough strategies in relation to employment, volunteering, education and civic participation

July 2016

0.0 Executive Summary

Population-ageing is often depicted as a national problem that needs to be addressed with an issue of a growing number of a non-working older population relying on a working-age minority. The counter-argument to this is that, if the benefits of ageing can be realised and the socio-cultural systems and practices be supportive of individual contributions throughout the lifespan, this is actually a positive change. Indeed, there is plenty of research that has described and monetised the substantial contribution older people bring from employment, volunteering, informal caring roles and more. The question of the extent to which this contribution is supported and maximised by local systems and practices is, however, unclear.

Back in 2007, the World Health Organisation (WHO) developed a series of check-lists by which cities could self-assess their level of 'age-friendliness' with one of these specifically entitled 'Civic Participation and Employment' covering volunteering, education, employment and consultation. The purpose of this research was to investigate the extent to which older people are involved in local plans and strategy and the extent to which the specific and well-known barriers that older people can face are recognised and sought to overcome.

Almost inevitably, this research found considerable variation between boroughs in the extent to which older people's contribution in the areas of volunteering, employment, education and consultation-participation but, in most cases, the specific needs of older people are not clearly targeted as a separate demographic. Emphasis on older people remains in health contexts as service-receivers rather than in terms of the contribution they can make. Indeed, where specific demographic groups are referenced, age is often overlooked with a focus on people with impairments, low socio-economic status and groups with certain ethnicities. Specific difficulties older people face in, for example, the job-market, are also not adequately addressed by targets for 'working-age' populations. Despite this

overall picture, there is evidence of some local initiatives that evidences intent to support older people to maximise these contributions and the question that remains is how best to manage the transition of successful initiatives to new areas and to develop the systems within a supportive age-friendly socio-cultural climate to consistently evaluate and improve the way in which older people's contribution can be maximised.

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1.0   Introduction

1.1 Age-Friendly Cities

The ageing of populations is one of the most impactful and publicised changes that is currently being felt at a global level. In England, it has been estimated that the number of people aged 65 and over will increase by over 2 million in the 10 years from 2012 to 2023 (ILC, 2014) and that, by 2037, 1 in 4 people will be aged 65 or over (ONS, 2012). Furthermore, the number of people aged 90 and over has increased from around 125,000 in 1971 to over 500,000 in 2012 (ILC, 2014) and the number of centenarians has more than quadrupled in the last 30 years (ONS, 2014). In fact, the Office for National Statistics has reported that 1 in 3 babies born in 2013 can now expect to reach 100 years of age (ONS, 2013). In accordance with this national trend, London's population is also ageing although more slowly than the country as a whole and with great variation by borough (ONS, 2015). Furthermore, the general trend is that, looking to the future, a variety of factors related to health-care improvements and generational birth rates have resulted in the expectation that the increase in the numbers of 'older people' will continue to rise.

With an increasing proportion of the population fitting into the bracket of 'older people', consequently, discussions of how to address the inevitable impacts of people living longer have been increasing in prevalence over the last couple of decades. In particular, the fear that a decreasing proportion of working-age people will need to somehow support the anticipated proliferation of older, retired people has been well-publicised. Despite this, in London, much still needs to be done to implement changes to ameliorate or maximise the potential benefits of these changes. Guidance for these changes was provided, in 2007, by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in their long-anticipated guide that, based on findings from 35 cities worldwide over a two-year period, provided a check-list of features that an 'age-friendly city' should have in order to improve the capacity of individuals to make a difference throughout their life-course. With many media-sources referring to the ageing population

as a 'time-bomb' (Independent, 2013) or burden (Telegraph, 2014) the findings from the WHO report remain particularly relevant as a means of constructing a new image around how people of all ages can be viewed in terms of the contributions they can make both in local communities as well as with regional, national and potentially international scope. Fundamentally, it also approaches the issue with a perspective of how age-friendly cities can benefit everyone, irrespective of the differences that are usually used to categorise and differentiate between groups.

Specifically, the report focused on features of places that maintained functional capacity over the life-course across the following categories, each of which were developed through consultation with older people prior to the WHO research being undertaken: outdoor spaces and buildings; transportation; housing; social participation; respect and social inclusion; communication and information; community and health services; and civic participation and employment.

1.2 Existing Research

The financial benefits provided by older Londoners to the capital were captured in the GLA paper 'The Economic Contribution of Older Londoners' (2013) which reported that older Londoners contributed an estimated £47bn to the capital through paid work, £5.3bn through caring roles either for other adults or grand-children, and a further £0.8bn for

voluntary work. If one considers the unreported benefits in addition to this £53bn total such as the substantial amount of 'spending power' reported by the WRVS (2011), one can very quickly appreciate the benefits that are already being accumulated from an ageing population even without considering the untapped potential that also exists.

Indeed, in London, the growth in numbers of older people exceeds all other population groups and it is anticipated that, by 2050, there will be more than 1.6 million people aged 65 and over (GLA, 2013) so there is clear value in providing the means and opportunities for active people in the 'third age' to contribute 'both economically and socially to national prosperity, and in doing so, mitigate some of the wider challenges associated with ageing' (RIBA, 2013). The WHO report referred to in section 1.1 breaks this down by categories for which the relevant check-list for 'civic participation and employment' covers the following:

• A range of flexible options for older volunteers is available, with training, recognition, guidance and compensation for personal costs.
• The qualities of older employees are well promoted.
• A range of flexible and appropriately paid opportunities for older people to work is promoted.
• Discrimination on the basis of age alone is forbidden in the hiring, retention, promotion and training of employees.
• Workplaces are adapted to meet the needs of disabled people.
• Self-employment options for older people are promoted and supported.
• Training in post-retirement options is provided for older workers.
• Decision-making bodies in public, private and voluntary sectors encourage and facilitate membership of older people.
(World Health Organisation, 2007)

Whilst there is robust national legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Equality Act 2010 set in place to address discrimination against age (as one of the protected equal-

ity characteristics), attempts driven at a national level to increase employment and training opportunities for older people have been relatively ineffective. Notably, this continues to be the case despite evidence of improvements in employability outcomes for younger people. As reported in 'All's Fair in the Work Programme?' (London Councils, 2015) there is evidence of a 'strong disproportionate impact by age and disability' with those aged 55+ 'significantly underperforming' and with fewer than 7% of referrals aged 60+ achieving a job outcome. Consequently, it has been concluded that one of the factors likely to improve success-rates in this area is the provision of 'personalised, tailored, local support' (London Councils, 2013).

Despite this negative picture, there is some evidence for optimism. 'Fuller Working Lives' (DWP, 2014) has recently reported on some improvement in the number of older people in work and 'Employer Attitudes to 'Fuller Working Lives' (DWP, 2015) showed a general trend of positive attitudes towards older workers. Nevertheless, older people continue to be over-represented in statistics of the long-term unemployed (defined as a year or more) and a third of organisations spoken to in the 'Employer Attitudes to 'Fuller Working Lives'' report had nothing tangible in place to support working in later life.

With Dr. Ros Altmann's influential paper 'A New Vision for Older Workers: Retain, Retrain, Recruit' published in March, 2015 out-lining a number of key recommendations for employers, older workers, government and the media, this report is timely in its review of whether councils in London are recognising the potential contribution older Londoners can make to their communities in their strategies and to what extent, six years on from the WHO report, older Londoners' civic participation and opportunities for employment are supported by age-friendly policy and practice across the capital.

1.3 Our Approach

PAIL and AUKL thought this area was important to explore as part of ongoing work on age-friendly cities and supporting older people's contribution and so, for this project, we have investigated the extent to which each of the 33 London boroughs have considered older people in their strategy documents related to the WHO criteria for age-friendly cities under the category of 'civic participation and employment'. Drawing on the methodology undertaken for the 'GLA Older Persons Research Project - Planning Policy Review' (Three Dragons & Associates, 2016) which was done in relation to 'spatial planning', we have framed the research around each of the bullet-pointed areas shown in

section 1.2 corresponding to 'civic participation and employment'. Broadly speaking, this can be broken down into the four areas of employment, volunteering, education and civic participation. Resources used for the desk research have, in accordance with the trend to provision of local authority information going 'digital by default', been accessed online either through web-searching for key-terms or navigating each of the London borough's own websites. Case-studies were sought by invitation. In these cases, where particular pieces of work or projects being undertaken were indicative of a good practice 'theme', the respective involved personnel with these projects were invited to participate in interviews.
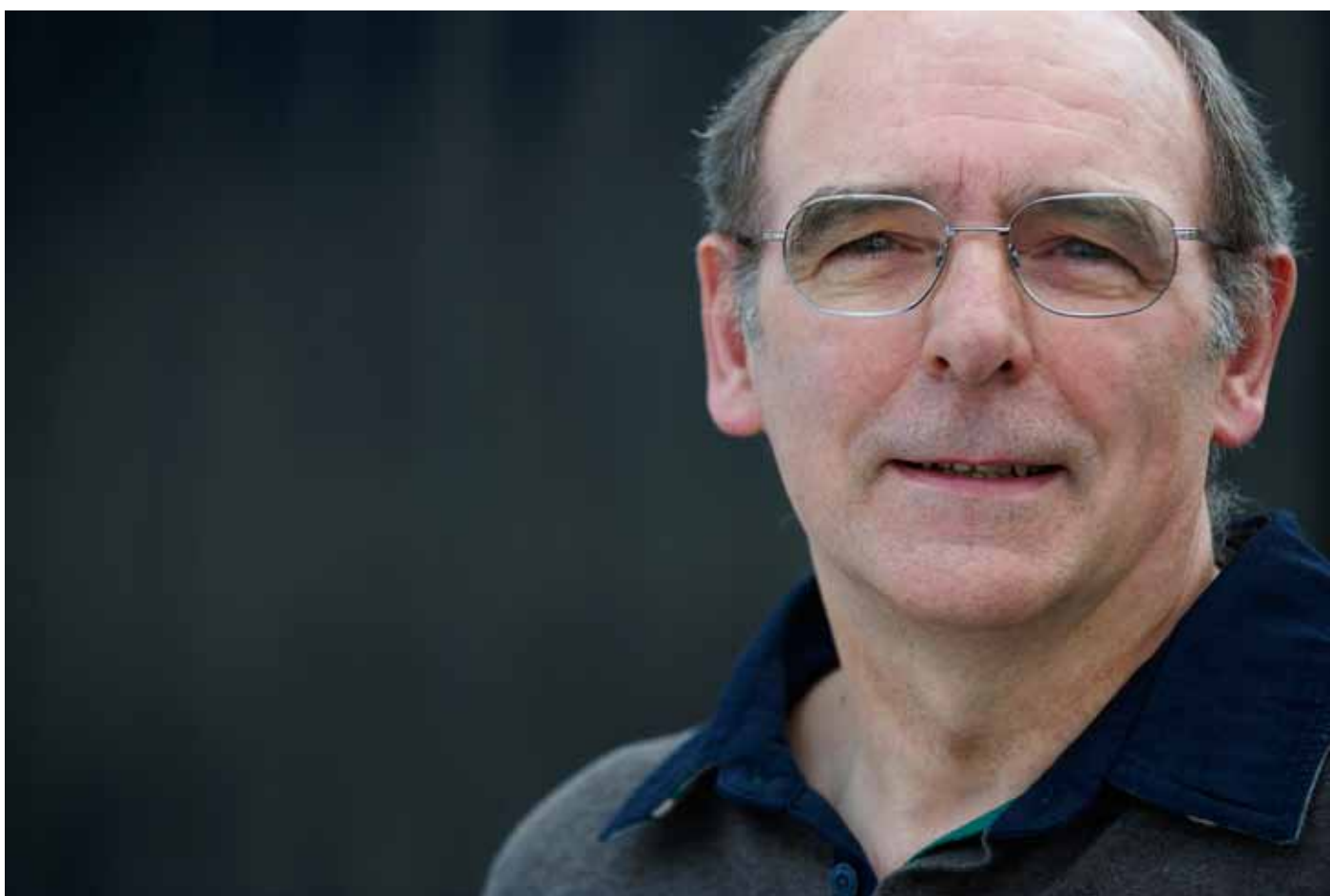
2.0 Findings

2.1 Employment

As would be expected, councils themselves are strong advocates of equal opportunities to employment in their own recruitment policies and practices. In accordance with national legislation, employment procedures are transparent and a commitment to treating all applicants equally irrespective of age is explicitly mentioned.

However, in terms of recognising older people in local strategies as a distinct group with specific barriers and difficulties in relation to employment and in terms of improving available support in relation to this, there was a great deal of variation by borough. Whilst it is recognised that a considerable attribution of resources spent on employment is managed centrally through Job Centre Plus or the Work Programme, there is a local role in terms of ensuring that national programmes are both accessible to and better tailored for the needs of local older people.

Categorisation	No. of Boroughs
No references to older people or specific needs they may have. Older people may be included in broad objectives but without any specific reference in targets. Job shops and national support the only referenced support resource	19
Specific difficulties faced by older people recognised and/or statements of intent to support older people separate from those of other groups.	6
Difficulties faced by older people in the job-market recognised and means of addressing these difficulties are specified in strategy	5
Initiatives specific to the support of older people in relation to employment are evidenced and referred to	3

Table 1: No. of boroughs with observed strategy content related to older people and employment support categorised at four levels

Key Points:

• References to older people are notable by their absence in most strategy documents related to employment. Families and younger people are almost exclusively the residential group targets and some services are age-restricted for younger people only.
• Overall visions frequently aspire to 'improve opportunities for employment for all residents' but categorisations by 'working age' don't adequately address the specific, and known, barriers that people over the age of 50 face and the difficulties faced by people aged 65 and over are rarely referenced at all.
• Where documents do refer to supporting 'people who face additional barriers to employment', closer scrutiny reveals that this seldom includes older people. Instead, these targets are related to people with mental health issues, lone parents, people with physical disabilities, people with low skills, migrants, people with low socio-economic status and certain minority ethnic groups.
• The most relevant sub-group for 'older people' referred to with any frequency is the 'long-term unemployed' but, again, this doesn't address the specific barriers and challenges to employment faced by older people.
• In the few cases where older people are referred to as a separate group facing challenges related to their age and age-related circumstances, this doesn't translate into the setting of targets to monitor or address this inequality. Any target-setting is typically included within the broader 'working age' range of 16-64.
• Older people seeking employment advice are typically re-directed to 'Job Centre Plus' though in a minority of boroughs, they can also be re-directed to older-people-specific support such as Prime.
• Whilst proportionally few, some councils do have documented objectives targeted towards older people specifically. These include; financial incentivising of 50+ recruitment to employers, working with the 'Prince's Initiative for Mature Entrepreneurs', a 'Lifelong Opportunities' action-plan referencing 'providing employment, training and benefit advice initiatives for the over 50s'.

2.2 Volunteering

Older people contribute a significant amount to the economy through volunteering both in terms of giving time and expertise to organisations in an unpaid role as well as through providing care for significant others and grand-children. Indeed, a greater proportion of people over the age of 50 engage in some form of voluntary work than any other age-group. Nevertheless, as with the issue of employment, there is a need to recognise that the sort of volunteering opportunity and format will invariably differ for older people than for, for example, a young adult in full time education seeking to enhance their CV.

Almost without exception, council websites provided links and guidance to varying degrees of comprehensiveness in relation to volunteering. However, the extent to which opportunities were suitable (and even open) to older people's participation was variable.

Categorisation	No. of Boroughs
No volunteering opportunities open to older people evidenced	4
Various volunteering opportunities present without reference to age	25
Explicit recognition of the importance of enabling older people to volunteer	2
Volunteering opportunities present with specific programme/s for older people	2

Table 2: No. of boroughs with observed documentation and website content related to older people and volunteering support categorised at four levels

Key Points:

• All councils bar one (that had a non-functioning link at the time of research) had a link from their main web-site to some form of volunteering information or guidance page.

• In strategy documents, volunteering is referenced primarily in relation to younger people looking to improve employment prospects after school. For older people specifically, references to volunteering were typically within health-related documents rather than employment-related documents.

• Links to third party web-sites usually gains access to a great variety of volunteering opportunities both at a local and wider level.

• Volunteering options for 'younger people' only are far more prevalent than any targeting older people specifically. Where older people are exclusively sought for volunteering, it is usually in a health-related context as a service-user.

• Third-party organisations linked from council web-pages do typically provide a 1-to-1 'matching' service to link people with specific volunteering opportunities of interest.

• Very few statistics were readily available through website-navigation from organisations with respect to the proportion of their volunteers aged 50+.

2.3 Education

Education is a key area of local council strategy and, as one would expect, there are robust planning and strategy documents in relation to education in place. Generally speaking, these are predominantly focused on young people with an aim of preparing young people for work and aiding their transition into further education or employment. Adult education courses that are sign-posted to are typically run by local academic facilities although some voluntary sector organisations do also provide specific funded courses. Whilst 'adult education' is open to adults of all ages, there are potentially differing types of courses that would be likely to attract older people and there are certain courses that would appear to be of more relevance to people of later generations (e.g. web-based computer courses). It should also be noted that the cost of many of these courses is prohibitive to many low-income older people.

Categorisation	No. of Boroughs
Nothing specific to older people.	17
Some reference to older people without any specific education targets	8
Statement of intent to support older people within 'adult learning' but lacking clear objectives or initiatives in place	4
Evidence of a commitment to supporting older people and corresponding initiatives evidenced	4

Table 3: No. of boroughs with strategic documentation related to older people and education categorised at four levels

Key Points:

• In all cases, the area of education is predominantly focused on young people with 'adult education' accounting for a very small proportion of the documented material

• Education for 'older people' typically falls within the far broader topic area of 'adult education' without recognition of the specific needs and interests of older people

• In more recent documents, there is a growing emphasis on 'lifelong learning' but these are rarely linked in with measurable objectives pertaining to involvement of people aged 50+

• In terms of accessing local opportunities, references to older people are far more prevalent within health-related documents and there is a far stronger focus on community 'activities' rather than educational opportunities

• Although in the minority, some boroughs do have specifically-targeted educational opportunities aiming to 'improve participation rates' of older people

• There is evidence in some boroughs of councils working with local organisations to provide specific IT-support to older people. One borough has a 'Champion for older residents' who has specific targets around improving tablet-proficiency

• Statistics for older people engagement with

learning in later life are not routinely published making it difficult to set targets and assess progress

2.4 Civic Participation

The WHO report refers to the importance of older people having a voice and being actively encouraged to participate in decision-making at a local level. Whilst many older people actively participate in local groups and organisations that seek to influence policy and make a difference within their communities, this does not detract from the need to actively seek out the opinions and the participation of all older people, including those who may be more isolated or harder to reach.

For the purposes of this section of the report, the focus is particularly on local councils consulting with residents of all ages and providing opportunities for older people to have their say and for their opinions to be recognised and considered in decision-making.

Categorisation	No. of Boroughs
No evidence of consultations involving older people	0
Evidence of open consultations with which older people can participate	15
Statement of intent to targeting consultations to older people specifically without clear evidence of success	5
Evidence of targeting consultations to get feedback from older people specifically on a variety of topics	13

Table 4: No. of boroughs with strategic documentation related to older people and civic participation categorised at four levels

Key Points:

• In strategic documents, there is widespread reference to the aim of engaging with and listening to

the voice of all local residents.

• All council websites have opportunities for local residents to have their voices heard in relation to selected consultations

• There is clear evidence for offline routes to consultation and pro-active opinion-seeking from older residents in most boroughs

• Some boroughs have developed specific older-people questionnaires, reference groups or they have employed older-people champions to specifically target the views of older people

• Demographic data related to consultation-participation is not, in the majority of cases, accessible, making it difficult to clarify the extent to which the current consultation-engagement mechanisms works for older people

2.5 Local Examples of Good Practice

Evidently, the extent to which local borough initiatives in relation to employment, education, volunteering and civic participation are inclusive of, or specifically targeting, older people vary considerably by area. Evidence of some specific initiatives for older people can be found but the extent to which the results of these initiatives are relayed outside of their boroughs of operation for replication are unclear. The following examples of good practice show evidence of a targeted approach to addressing the needs of older people in areas related to incentivising employment from the employers perspective, accessible computer-skills training and training in employability for older people specifically. All information contained was obtained through interviews with involved personnel.

2.5.1 – Incentivising employment from the employers perspective: Lewisham Council – 'Employment of over 50s'

Many people can find difficulties in finding employ-

ment for many different reasons but there are specific barriers that are more relevant to older people and 'back-to-work' schemes consistently fail to achieve the same sorts of success-rates for people aged 50+ as they do for younger people. Whilst there is a clear need to support individual older job-seekers with possible low self-confidence (particularly if they have been long-term unemployed), developing relevant skill-sets for the modern job-market and recognising application of relevant skills to new areas of work, there is also a clear need to address this issue from the other side; the perspective of the employer.

Since January 2015, Lewisham council have been offering any business, whether inside or outside of the borough, a £2000 support grant for any older person (50+) who is claiming JSA but not involved in the Work Programme that they employ (at minimum wage or above) for at least 30 hours a week and for a duration of 26 weeks or more. Provided that the criteria are met, this £2000 can potentially be used to cover wages over an extended induction period or to invest in relevant training to support the return to the work-place with relevant in-role training. At present, the council has reported that success-rates of employees staying in work for at least half-a-year are at around 52% which compares very favourably with the success of more general 'return-to-work schemes' in getting older people back into work. Nevertheless, a success rate of only just over half does show that there are multiple barriers that need to be addressed in this complex issue. It was also noted in interview that the £2000 is not given until after the 26 weeks are completed so any training paid for before this time would not carry a guarantee of being reimbursed and there is little in the way of monitored ongoing support once the older person is in the role. It was also unclear how this initiative worked alongside the Job Centre push for people to find work. Clearly, employers want employees who are keen to work and in whom their investment will be repaid with results rather than individuals who are pressurised into applying for and accepting a job under threat

of loss of benefits. Nevertheless, the fact that the council is seeking to address 50+ joblessness from the perspective of the employer as well as the employee appears promising and, with refinements and closer working with the job centre locally, has the potential to increase understanding of the barriers to older people finding employment and in so doing earn results for older people in the locality.

2.5.2 Accessible computer-skills training: London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames and Age UK Richmond

The importance of providing relevant educational opportunities and training for older people is clearly implicated in the relevant literature. In particular, with so many opportunities for employment, volunteering and participation in consultations going online, training in digital technologies is clearly of particular pertinence to older people who are still under-represented in statistics of computer-use and digital-literacy. Age UK London's own research has picked up on the views of older people who would like to develop their knowledge in this area but do not have access to a computer or feel that training is not affordable to them.

The London borough of Richmond is somewhat uniquely advantaged in that they have a named councillor with a specific role as 'older people's champion' who has prioritised the mapping of and support-provision of digital training for older people as part of this role. Working closely with their local Age UK, links have been developed between the voluntary sector and local colleges, social housing providers and local CCGs to endeavour to provide a variety of opportunities for older people with different levels of computer-literacy and incomes. Importantly, Richmond Council's website lists a wide variety of training courses and technology support services all tabulated in one place and with clear details of location, target attendance, cost and structure. Whilst some courses do incur a cost, many of these initiatives are also free for older

people to attend. Though their partnership with the council, the IT Project Lead at Age UK Richmond reported that they have provided a range of courses at beginner and intermediate level and they have taken courses out into the community in churches and residential settings to try to improve accessibility for older people. Building on this, they are also adapting the support they provide in response to the changing needs of older people in the borough.

In particular, they have noted that usage of tablets has increased greatly so sessions are currently being run for older people to bring their own tablets in and get one-to-one support from knowledgeable volunteers. In total, they report that around 200 older people are being supported annually through this work and the flexibility of the support means that people of all levels can be given one-to-one assistance whether it is simply sending an email or gaining advice on developing websites for new business-ventures.

2.5.3 Training in employability for older people: WiseAge - Resourcing Older People's Employment Support

Return-to-work initiatives still fail to achieve the same results for older job-seekers as they do for younger people but, despite this, there is very little evidence of the provision of local employment-support specifically tailored to older people and/or with staff who are aware of the specific barriers older people face in returning to work. Various initiatives through Job Centres have been implemented over the years but sustained improvement and employability of older people remains a recognised issue. Indeed, there is evidence that older people looking to return to work are not receiving the equivalent benefit through available support as those in younger age groups. (London Councils, 2015).

In response to these difficulties, with the funding

of 'Trust for London', WiseAge has developed a programme of support to raise knowledge of older people's issues in relation to employment such that staff providing support will have the specific awareness of the relevant issues and perspectives of older people. Entitled ROPES (Resourcing Older People's Employment Support), this 'training the trainers' programme for organisations with 50+ support includes seven modules covering; the current situation of over-50s, ageism in recruitment and employment, finding work as an over-50, what can be done to support workless over-50s, borough-mapping, using the developed ROPES Resources Toolkit and promoting workplace age diversity locally. So far, WiseAge reports that the project has reached out to 34 organisations and 8 employment experts across 6 London boroughs (Lewisham, Lambeth, Greenwich, Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Newham) and has recently been financed for further application in 9 more boroughs.

Increasing recognition that older people face very specific challenges to returning to work, this project seeks to equip those people who provide employment support for older people with the knowledge to enable them to more effectively tailor their support. Whilst the project is still in development across the capital and evaluations over time will indicate the degree of success in getting older people back into work, the clear recognition that this project places on the difficulties older people face will be critical to increasing understanding of the initiatives that need to be in place to help break down these barriers.

3.0   Summary of Findings

3.1 Interpretation of Results

Inevitably, there is considerable variation between boroughs in how councils have sought to encourage the local contribution of older people through employment, education, volunteering and civic participation. Nevertheless, the general impression is that in most cases, the specific needs of older people are not clearly targeted as a separate demographic. The largest exception to this is only in the context of a health-setting and, in particular, references to 'promoting independence', 'falls', 'dementia', 'ageing well', 'dying well', 'telecare', 'benefits' and 'diet'. The relevance that work, education and volunteering may have in this context is generally over-looked. Emphasis seems to be focused on minimising the impact of age-related decline rather than maximising the potential impact of age-related contribution. Fundamentally, the context of 'older people' in policy-documents refers to those with increasing frailty and predominantly those needing care for this. The 'younger old' (tentatively placed between 50-64) are included within the broader heading of 'working age' without widespread recognition of the different experiences of employment, education and employment that someone aged 60, for example, might have from someone aged 30. Indeed, where specific demographic groups are targeted in strategy documents, age is all too often overlooked with a focus on people with disabilities, low socio-economic status and groups of people with certain ethnicities.

Whilst local employment support specifically for older job-seekers is, for the most part, very limited and volunteering opportunities tend to be quite general, the aspect of civil participation is strongly supported across the capital. For all boroughs, there was evidence of older people's participation in consultations and there were a number of offline initiatives developed to ensure that older people have their voice heard. The next challenge is to recognise the contribution older people can make through actions as well as words, and then to put in the necessary initiatives, targets, monitoring and learning mechanisms to overcome existing barriers and support this intention.

3.2 Limitations

As with any desk-based research of this nature, findings are contingent on the relevant documents being available through the means employed of accessing them. Since this project was focusing on council websites, the document-review is necessarily restricted to those documents that could be retrieved online. This being the case, should there have been any documents in draft-form awaiting approval or any documents that had not been made available online, these could not have been reviewed in this project. All information contained is based on documents retrieved through council websites and relevant links up to the end of 2015.

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