



TOWARDS EMPOWERMENT

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AGEING WELL – AGEING POSITIVELY

Royal College of Physicians of Ireland

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Empowerment

If older people want more power over their own lives, they must take the lead in asserting and using it

Others cannot do it for them but they can support, the state, the community and the family

What is needed is a revolution in attitudes towards older people and ageing

Ageing is better than being dead, at any age



Barriers to Empowerment

Ageism is the greatest barrier by stereotyping and discriminating against people on grounds of their chronological age

12.5% of people over 18 (382,000) experienced ageism and about 70% of them more than once but nearly 60% took no action (CSO 2005)

Age was the single largest ground for complaint to and cases taken up by the Equality Authority, mostly in employment, but also in health and social services, education and training, insurance and financial services.



Barriers to Empowerment

Some recent examples of arbitrary upper age limits:

FAS - 66 years the age limit for training

Mental Capacity Bill - age limit of 67 for the office of
Public Guardian

Ageism can impact on people at any age but particularly
for older people

Ageism is unjust, wasteful of human talent and damaging
to many individuals who internalise negative views and
live down to them



Elder Abuse

Elder abuse is the most extreme form of ageism

“A single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action, occurring in a relationship where there is an expectation of trust, and which causes harm or distress to an older person”.



Elder Abuse

Types of Elder Abuse

Physical, Sexual, Psychological, Financial or Material,
Neglect and Institutional Abuse

The 2002 “Protecting Our Future” report has led to the
HSE employing 4 Elder Abuse Officers and 27 Senior
Case Workers



Elder Abuse

Growing Problem

HSE 2008 report shows that cases rose from 927 in 2007 to 1,840 in 2008 (83% older people living alone). Based on other countries 3/5% of older people may be affected or 14,000 to 24,000



Future Action - General Approach

General Approach

Eliminate ageism and elder abuse and develop policies to make a positive ageing the norm for all of us

Recognise and strengthen the enormous contribution that older people already make as family carers, volunteers and workers



Future Action - General Approach

General Approach

Adopt the life cycle approach bringing together people of all ages in one common process

Develop policies and services to support groups of older people at risk of elder abuse



Future Action – Some Proposals

Government

National Positive Ageing Strategy in consultation with older people

Legislation to ensure the rights of older people to full services and proper protection

Statutory Bodies

Adequate services for an ageing population

Involve older people in planning, management and review of services



Future Action – Some Proposals

General Public

Challenge and report ageism and elder abuse

Older People

Demolish ageist stereotypes by being interested and interesting and assertive

Become advocates for themselves, their families and communities