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Older & Bolder's message is that **your input is vital** to ensure a successful National Positive Ageing Strategy

The Minister for Older People and Health Promotion, Áine Brady TD, will hold a series of eight consultation meetings around the country during spring 2010. The aim is to hear at first hand the views of older people on issues that affect them. That means you!

These meetings are part of the Government's work to develop the **National Positive Ageing Strategy** which is a long-term plan for making Ireland a better place in which to grow older.

The strategy will involve all levels of Government as well as city and county councils. It will cover policies, services and practices in areas such as health care, housing, transport, income, employment and independent living. It will also influence the activities of organisations in the private and voluntary sectors.

Older & Bolder is not involved in planning these consultation meetings; the development of the National Positive Ageing Strategy is a Government process, led by the Office for Older People. However, **Older and Bolder strongly encourages all older people to participate** in these meetings. We believe that **your input is vital** to ensure a successful strategy and wish to see an extensive, meaningful and inclusive consultation process.



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consultation process will

our views and concerns

- about positive ageing in Ireland.
- ✓ Generate **enthusiasm for participation** in the consultation and prompt national discussion about ageing and older people.
- ✓ Supply clear and transparent **terms of reference** about how your input will be received and how it will influence the National Positive Ageing Strategy.
- ✓ **Involve all older people**, using methods to include those who find it difficult to attend or participate in public meetings: those who are housebound; in Nursing Homes; lack access to transport; those with disabilities and those from marginalised groups.
- ✓ Ensure **independent, authoritative and trusted individual(s)** chair the public consultation sessions.
- ✓ Help participants understand the **specific questions and issues** to be addressed. Record views and concerns that cannot be addressed in the course of a single meeting.
- ✓ Create a consultation process that is **accountable to you** as a participant; written public feedback to be provided about the responses received and questions asked at the consultation meetings.
- ✓ Involve and inform participants about the **ongoing and future development of the strategy** and the work of the Cross-Departmental Group which has been established to develop the National Positive Ageing Strategy.

An effective consultation process will ask you to evaluate your experience of the consultation meeting.

- Did it meet your expectations?
- Were the elements listed above accounted for?
- You can ask for your experience of the process to be recorded at the consultation meetings.
- We in Older & Bolder would also like to know how you got on in the meetings.

Think Ahead: these meetings are your opportunity to make a contribution to a long-term plan to make Ireland a better place in which to grow older.

Identify issues that are important to you. It might also help to be aware of key themes that were raised at Older & Bolder's own consultation meetings on the subject of positive ageing. Older & Bolder conducted these meetings between November 2008 and June 2009 in Cork, Dublin, Limerick, Sligo, Tralee, Trim, Tullamore and Wexford and they were attended by six hundred and sixty older people in all.

Service Provision

Participants expressed appreciation for services where they existed, but concern was also expressed, across all the consultations, about availability of core services. The range of services most referred to and considered core included: **housing; health; education; leisure; transport and information.**

Participants valued services that were **available, accessible, predictable, sufficiently funded, of appropriate quality and provided on an outreach basis.** However, participants expressed concern where these elements were lacking and where difficulties were experienced in dealing with multiple agencies.

Participants recognised quality service provision where available, however, many felt that the current system was too dependent on **eligibility criteria** that were often complex, hard to understand and inconsistently applied.

Participants viewed access to **affordable quality health care services** as a fundamental and basic right.

Affordable and appropriate transport was named as a necessity in order to access essential services.



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people was stressed by
ability of leading an
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identified as deserving particular attention.

Those consulted stressed the need to make possibilities for **good quality of life** available to all older people and not just the 'actively old'; including members of the most marginalised groups and specifically to older people in residential care and those suffering from dementia.

Positive Ageing and Ageism

Ageism has been defined as a combination of three connected elements: prejudicial attitudes; discriminatory practices; and institutional practices and policies that perpetuate stereotypes about older people.

Some participants at the Older & Bolder consultation meetings identified **ageist behaviour** citing examples of professionals and public servants talking 'down to' or 'over' older people. Others noted that unhelpful media attitudes contribute to an **ageist culture** with older people portrayed as a 'strain on resources' or 'bed blockers'. Ageism was also experienced at a **systematic or structural level**, an example of this being age limits to certain cancer screening services.

A summary of feedback from Older & Bolder's consultation meetings with older people, "What does Positive Ageing Mean to Older People", is available. Please contact us for a hard copy or download it from our website.

Older & Bolder is an alliance of the following organisations: Active Retirement Ireland; Age & Opportunity; The Alzheimer Society of Ireland; The Carers Association; The Irish Hospice Foundation; The Irish Senior Citizens Parliament, and The Senior Help Line.

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