

CRSP CONFERENCE – FEEDBACK FROM THE OLDER PEOPLE'S GROUP – DR JANET HARVEY, CHAIR.

Three papers were presented at this group: two on long term care for older people and one on the government White Paper on Security in Retirement.

The group came to the conclusion that a lack of joined-up thinking, a lack of joined-up provision of services on the ground and a lack of participation from disadvantaged groups in helping to formulate policy still existed.

The group felt there was still a silo effect and a lack of holistic approach in designing policies and services. It was noted the knock-on effect that one social policy could have on another area of policy, for example, payment for Higher Education (in the form of top-up fees) by students and their parents is curtailing the ability of older people to save for their retirement.

It was generally felt that the UK still suffered from wide-spread 'short-termism' in its approach to problems and their solutions. This was seen as a general tendency within UK governance but was noted particularly in relation to pension provision. Also in relation to pensions, the group noted the lack of trust that older people reported both in terms of the government's approach to this area but also in relation to private insurance companies and financial services in general.

A potential was noted for 'inter-generational schisms' which it was felt could be fuelled by younger people being faced by the prospect of a smaller Welfare State, high housing costs (and associated difficulties of breaking into the housing market for those who have accrued Higher Education Debts), repayment of student loans and, at the same time, being required to help fund the retirement of a much larger pool of older people through deductions from their salaries. This kind of analysis was underpinned by the notion that 'our generation' have voted to withdraw what our generation have enjoyed (e.g. free Higher Education and Student Grants).

The group noted that strategy formulation and academic theories are reasonably well-developed in the general area the group are addressing, but there is a considerable implementation gap.

Despite all of this, the older people's group took comfort from the fact that they felt that it was not necessary to throw ever more money at the issue of improving the lives of older people, since many of the positive pointers for the future very much centre on the promotion of social interaction and improving social relationships as a way of enhancing the experiences of those in later life.

JH.27.09.06