

years ahead: the north east regional forum on ageing

**Institute for
Ageing and
Health**

The Regional Engagement Panel for Ageing and Vitality

Demographic Change: Challenge and Opportunity

The North East is in a strong position to lead other UK regions in tackling the twin challenges of demographic change (the changing age-structure of the population) and the social and economic opportunities which these changes will bring. Our region will be affected earlier and more severely than others, with fewer younger people, a smaller workforce, and increased numbers of older people. Such changes require innovative policy-making and action at regional level if we are to use effectively the large resources of social and intellectual capital in our older people. They must be enabled to contribute as fully as possible to their communities and the region, and live healthy independent lives for as long as possible. *Years Ahead* - the North East Regional Forum on Ageing – brings together a range of organisations working towards this vision of a flourishing, sustainable region with an age-structure much older than that experienced by previous generations.

The Regional Engagement Panel: Ageing and Vitality

Our region is home to world-class research on ageing. It has Europe's leading centre for research in gerontology, Newcastle University's Institute for Ageing and Health (IAH), which is developing a unique 'Campus for Ageing and Vitality'. In partnership with *Years Ahead* the IAH has established the Regional Engagement Panel for Ageing and Vitality (REPAV) to involve older people in the research and policy-making processes which effect their lives.

The Panel will be a means to engage with a wide, representative range of older people and their communities and to consult with them on key issues around ageing and demographic change. It will identify public concerns and thereby help to shape future research and policy-making. It will provide real opportunities for lay people to become involved at many different levels in these processes.

The Panel will be developed as a large representative group of people, reflecting the age-structure and geographical and socio-economic make-up of the North East. We hope to involve up to 3000 people interested in contributing their ideas and experience. Anyone is welcome to take part and participants will be able to be involved in a range of ways. Exactly how much and how often you wish to participate will be entirely up to you. For example:

- At the simplest level, panel members will be invited from time to time to respond to questionnaires about research and/or policy-related issues in areas which are of interest to them.
- There will also be opportunity to participate more interactively in the development of research and/or policy proposals through focus groups and workshops, for example.

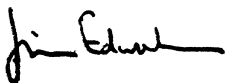
- Some projects will need to recruit older people to assist in research, for example by interviewing other older people, or by evaluating the usefulness of new enabling and assistive technologies.
- There will also be opportunities for some panel members to play a role as lay members of groups concerned with the management, assessment and implementation of projects.
- Members of the Panel will receive regular invitations to conferences and other events to disseminate information about research advances or policy changes which affect their lives.
- All members will receive newsletters about the Panel's activity and other related opportunities to contribute to the intellectual and social development of the region.

A basic principle will be that, wherever appropriate, members are paid for their work. This could range from a modest shopping voucher in return for completing a questionnaire for a 'not for profit' organisation, to an agreed fee for providing similar information to a commercial organisation, to a paid role as a research assistant in some studies. All essential travel and other expenses in connection with Panel activities will be paid.

The development of the Panel represents an extremely exciting opportunity for older people across the region to work in partnership with researchers and policy and strategy makers. Your involvement will make a positive difference to the lives of older people in the North East and helping to create a flourishing region.

If you would like to become a member of the Panel and receive information about potential opportunities to become involved, please get in touch by returning the attached slip – we would be delighted to hear from you.

Yours Sincerely,



Professor Jim Edwardson
Chairman, Years Ahead,
Institute for Ageing and Health,
Campus for Ageing and Vitality
Newcastle University,
Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 5PL