

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

The Highland Council 29th June 2006

Agenda Item	
Report No	

Age and Experience: Consultation on the Strategy for a Scotland with an Ageing Population

Report by Head of Policy and Performance

Summary

The Scottish Executive is developing a strategy for a Scotland with an ageing population, and has invited written comments and opinions to inform this process. The deadline for submissions was the 5th June 2006, but agreement was secured to submit a draft response by that deadline with the final agreed response provided after this Council meeting. This report outlines the key issues in the proposed response which is attached at appendix 1.

1. **Introduction**

- 1.1 The Scottish Executive is developing a Strategy for a Scotland with an Ageing Population. It is being developed because in the coming decades there will be an increase in older people in Scotland, and fewer younger people. People over 65 accounted for 16 per cent of the population in 2004. This is projected to rise to 26 per cent by 2031. To prepare the strategy the Executive is consulting on a range of issues. Key issues identified are around how to ensure that Scotland is a fit place in which to grow old and how Scotland can benefit from this change. The consultation document also recognises that our ageing population structure presents challenges not only for the Executive, but also for local authorities, businesses, charities, communities, and individuals. The strategy is expected later this year.
- 1.2 The Scottish Executive wants to recognise and maximise the contribution made by older people to society.
- 1.3 Views are sought on:
 - Contribution and Opportunity
 - Work
 - Services for older people
 - Health and well-being
 - Housing, transport and surroundings
 - Other matters, which can include a wide range of issues including the use of new technology, different needs of people with disabilities or from minority ethnic communities and how people are viewed by society
- 1.4 The consultation does not focus solely on the care for older people. However, the information presented to the Council at its last meeting on the future arrangements for care provision will be useful to contribute to the consultation.
- 1.5 The Scottish Executive also welcomes feedback gathered in consultation with others. To this end, a meeting of Councillors and Age Concern, Highland Community Care Forum and the Highland Senior Citizen's Network took place to discuss the consultation. This was helpful and views expressed at this meeting have been integrated into the Council's response. These organisations can also feed back their views separately to the consultation.

1.6 Some issues, such as pensions and benefits, are the responsibility of the UK Government. However, given that the Scottish Executive works closely with the UK government on these reserved matters, it is relevant to include Council feedback on these issues.

2. Older people in Highland

2.1 Overall the population of the Council area is projected to increase by 6,297 people by 2024. The population 65+ is projected to rise from 36,611 presently to 60,641 in 2024 including an 84% increase (13,721 people) in the 75+ age group. Put simply, the population 65+ is projected to rise from 1 in 6 to over 1 in 4 of Highland residents. It is therefore essential that the Council plans now for these changes and, most importantly, how it will work with the Health Board in endeavouring to ensure that budgets are aligned to meet the needs of the older population in years to come.

2.2 The population projections for Highland are set out in the table below. Figures are presented to the years 2010 and 2024 and comparison is with the year 2004.

Age	2004	2010 (from 2004)	2024 (from 2004)
0 - 15	39,683	-2,877	-7,612
16 - 24	19,230	2,128	-2,810
25 - 34	22,786	-2,698	-1,374
35 - 49	48,407	-1,555	-12,371
50 - 64	44,623	4,535	6,434
65 - 74	20,304	2,922	10,309
75 - 84	12,543	1,428	8,760
85+	3,764	1,340	4,961
Total	211,340	5,223	6,297

2.3 The increases in the older population are substantial. The population 65+ is projected to grow by 5,690 people to 2010 and by 24,030 people by 2024. The population 75+ is projected to grow by 2,768 people to 2010 and 13,721 to 2024 (almost double its present level).

3. Consultation Response

3.1 In drawing on comments from across services and from the consultation with other groups as highlighted in paragraph 1.5 a response to the consultation has been drafted. It is appended for Members' consideration. The key issues highlighted in the draft response include:

- A population with better health and a greater sense of well-being will age with less demand on health and social work services, therefore opportunities for active ageing need to be developed and promoted
- The contribution older people make to the community is often undervalued and needs more recognition
- The role of volunteering should be further explored and expanded. Many voluntary organisations rely heavily on older people as volunteers
- Many carers of older people are husbands and wives and are themselves elderly. Carers find it hard to build up funds for retirement so action must be taken to ensure that older carers do not fall into poverty
- The pension gap for women must be addressed. Lower lifetime earnings for women mean lower contributions and lower pensions
- Changing expectations must be taken into account. Older people rightly now have higher expectations and therefore expect to be provided with much more personalised services and choices.
- There needs to be support – including financial support - for older learners who want to take up learning opportunities whether in community, Further or Higher Education settings.

- A more inclusive society must be promoted that values and interacts with older people and provides opportunities for social, leisure activities, by for example promoting community safety and awareness of elder abuse.
- In seeking to make sure that housing is suitable for an ageing population, we need to ensure that appropriate advice and guidance is given to developers on inclusive design.
- There is a need to continue development of home improvement schemes/grants particularly relating to equipment/adaptations for older people, for example heating changes, level access showers
- People have identified not being able to drive anymore as a great concern for the future as many people who live in rural areas tend to be more reliant and/or dependent on car ownership
- Greater recognition of the links between poverty, old age and rurality need to be made. This is not reflected in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, the key source of information now used in the Executive for tackling deprivation.
- Spatial patterns of population imbalance should be considered as well. For example demographic imbalance is often more extreme in remote rural communities. This is also influenced by a lack of opportunities for young people, as well as development constraints and can undermine the viability of local service delivery. This raises concerns about the sustainability of these communities. Rural sustainability, linked to demographic balance, should form another plank of the Executive’s approach to regeneration in Scotland which currently focuses on urban deprivation.
- Another issue worth considering for the strategy is the support for inward migration to the country to impact positively on the demographic balance.

4. Summary

- 4.1 The Scottish Executive is developing a strategy for a Scotland with an ageing population, and has invited written comments and opinions to inform this process. Ageing is a particularly important issue for the Highlands where the trend is more marked than for Scotland as a whole, with the number of people aged over 75 almost doubling by 2024.
- 4.2 The attached draft Highland Council consultation submission is attached. It is wide ranging with emphasis on both the promotion of active ageing and service developments.

Recommendation

Members are asked to comment on and agree the Highland Council response to the consultation document “Age and Experience: Consultation on the Strategy for a Scotland with an Ageing Population”.

Signature



Designation Head of Policy and Performance

Date 21. 6.06

Background Papers

1. Draft Highland Council response to Age and Experience: Consultation on the Strategy for a Scotland with an Ageing Population
Author/Reference: Cath King, Policy Manager

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The Highland Council Response to Age and Experience: Consultation on the Strategy for a Scotland with an Ageing Population

This consultation has been compiled through consultation with all Council Services and Elected Members. The Highland Council believes that the contribution older people make to the community is often undervalued and needs more recognition, therefore, whilst it is recognised that voluntary sector agencies will be submitting their own responses, Senior Members have met with the Highland Senior Citizen's Network, Highland Community Care Forum and Age Concern as part of an ongoing commitment to engaging with older people. The results of this meeting have informed this response.

With agreement with the Scottish Executive an earlier draft of this response was submitted by the closing date of the consultation on the 5th of June. This response is the formal agreed submission which takes into account the views expressed following a full discussion at the meeting of The Highland Council on the 29th June 2006.

Contribution and Opportunity

The Scottish Executive wants to know how best to support older people who wish to contribute to society, and to recognise the contribution that people have already made. For example,

- *What do you think are the main ways in which older people contribute to society and Scotland?*
- *Are there other ways they might be able to contribute more in the future?*
- *Do you think there are obstacles to older people contributing to society? What are they, and how can they be overcome?*
- *What do you think about ageism and age discrimination?*
- *What else could be done?*

The Highland Council response:

There is a need to ensure that older people are involved in developing policy and strategy. A good example of this being put into practice in Highland was the care home consultation where older people's views of what is important to them have informed the tender specification.

Older people are not an homogenous group and like any other group in society their contributions and needs are varied. However there are two notable areas to be considered: many voluntary organisations rely heavily on older people as volunteers; and many carers of older people are husbands and wives and are themselves elderly, older people are also more likely to be involved in caring for a friend or relative than any other age group (Scottish Household Survey bulletin no 7, SE 2002).

Obstacles to older people contributing to society can include stereotyping of older people and prejudice, lack of awareness of opportunities to contribute and financial ability to participate, isolation, physical barriers and mobility. Older people may face

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less favourable economic and social circumstances; mobility and health may be affected and can lead to isolation and apprehension. Social isolation and loneliness increases with age (Equalities Review interim report).

The Scottish Executive Social Justice Research Programme, 2004, *Involving Older People: Lessons for Community Planning* noted that professionals and older people identified a number of barriers to involvement. These included:

- negative attitudes towards older people;
- older people's low expectations of the effectiveness of involvement;
- and a variety of organisational barriers.

The Equalities Review suggests that there are “trigger episodes” which apply to vulnerable groups and for older people the triggers are becoming older, retirement or bereavement at which time they are more likely to suffer from social exclusion and poorer quality of life. It suggests that recognising these triggers can help to identify a specific target for action against inequality.

Ageism is as unacceptable as any other form of discrimination. At present there is no legal protection from Age discrimination, this will change from October 2006 when older people (and younger people) will be protected from discrimination based on their age in employment and vocational training. However the legislation will not cover access to goods or services and it will not change the state pension age.

There should be positive images of older people in the media. The SE “One Scotland” campaign should be widened to include other equality strands.

The experiences of older people in communities should be valued in promoting integration and cohesion and more intergenerational work introduced.

The role of volunteering should be further explored and expanded. Older people who undertake volunteering work are making a significant and valuable contribution to community capacity building. This can be particularly apparent in rural areas. It should be acknowledged that such volunteers may need skills training, particularly in the use of ICT. Lack of appropriate training may be a barrier to volunteering. A lack of access to public transport can also act as a barrier, particularly in remote rural areas. A good example of the work undertaken by older volunteers is in the field of adult literacies. Often participants comment that they wish to “give something back” to their communities.

Work

The Scottish Executive wants to know what you think about work for people who are not yet retired, for example:

- *Thinking about older people who want to keep working, what stops people from working for as long as they want to?*
- *What help might older people need if they want to continue working?*
- *What do you think can be done to help people build up a better income for when they retire?*

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- *What help might people need to combine work with other things, such as caring, looking after children, or volunteering?*
- *What else could be done?*

The Highland Council response:

Changes to demographics, age discrimination legislation and pensions arrangements all point to continued increase of older people in the workforce. This in turn means a longer contribution to the labour market, tax contributions and economic activity. Flexible working practices and addressing age discrimination in the workplace should be encouraged to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse workforce.

- Demographic changes have implications for school rolls and the roles and use of community schools.
- Sustainability likely to be influenced by the degree to which there can be a flexible and creative approach to the use of assets and resources.
- There is significant potential to capitalise upon the skills, interests and experience of older people in schools, for example, the oral history/drama project in Gairloch with the local Primary School linking with Strathburn House Residential Home “Cold Hands, Warm Tatties”.
- There is also an opportunity for older people to benefit from the resources of a school in the community, for example, using facilities including IT, gym facilities to keep fit and meals, e.g. Dalmhor Residential home in Strontian which has a shared kitchen with the school.

These examples not only promote the efficient use of resources, they serve to bring a community together and bring the generations together, which can help foster positive community spirit.

Age discrimination and organisational policies and cultures stop people from working for as long as they want to. Flexible working patterns need to be introduced in ways that do not adversely affect people’s pensions. This would help people to prepare for a more active retirement and recognise that older people have a key contribution to offer to their communities through sharing the skills they have acquired through their working lives. Flexible working practices and proposed changes to state pension arrangements including awareness of benefits, employment rights and other support would help people who need to combine work with other things, such as caring or volunteering.

Age discrimination in recruitment and selection needs to be overcome. Training and awareness raising to advise employers of legal obligations and challenge stereotypes of older workers needs to be strengthened and the provision of support to employees to retain their employability and meet the challenges of a changing workplace must be introduced.

Access to training and education (Lifelong learning) needs to be improved. The focus of education is largely on young people; to take advantage of an aging population it is essential that organisations including Enterprise Companies and Careers Scotland work with older people.

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Retirement income

It is noted that as pensions are a reserved matter that this Strategy will be limited in its influence in this area. However work could be done to remove means testing, promote awareness of entitlements and improve access to pensions. Scottish Ministers should lobby the UK Government to address pension issues in Scotland.

Recent research indicates a clear geographical dimension to income status in old age. Reference: Income in old age: rural/non-rural perspectives on an ageing population in Great Britain (Lorna Philip, Alana Gilbert and Mark Shucksmith, August 2005).

Older people in remote rural areas are found to be the worst off. Remote rural areas are typically low wage economies. Low incomes during retirement are likely to reflect earlier employment and income patterns. The analysis also highlighted the importance of benefit income to the overall income of older people. The persistence of low income in remote rural areas in particular was highlighted. This could be alleviated at least in part by measures to improve the lower than average uptakes of various state benefits, particularly in remote rural areas. This issue can only become a more pressing concern as the population ages.

It is recognised that many older people are carers. It should be noted that the Carers Allowance ceases when a carer is in receipt of Retirement Pension. Action must be taken to ensure that older carers do not fall into poverty. Older people consulted by the representative organisations the Council consulted with, some of whom were carers, felt this devalued their role and contribution. Carers find it hard to build up funds for retirement. The withdrawal of the Carers Allowance is felt to be a double penalty/disadvantage.

In particular the pension gap for women must be addressed. Lower lifetime earnings for women mean lower contributions and lower pensions. Recent announcements of proposed changes to state pensions should go some way to addressing this issue. Some current UK statistics from the Fabian society:

- Just 17% of recently retired women are currently entitled to the full basic state pension in their own right.
- 2.2m women are not accruing rights to even the basic state pension.
- 1 in 5 single women pensioners risk being in poverty in retirement.
- The median income of retired women is 57% that of men's.
- Patterns in female employment reveal women enjoy a far less favourable position in the workplace – they not only have less earning power (national average earning for women in full time employment are £21,370 a year compared to £30,131 a year for men) but are also much more likely to be found in part time work.
- Women are also only likely to enjoy two-thirds the number of years in full-time employment on average because of career breaks to care for children of elderly relatives.
- Assuming they have a private pension and contribute 12% of full times earnings a year – Scottish Widows' calculates that for every 50p a women saved, a man would put away £1.

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The Equalities Review interim report highlights that older people from ethnic minorities, especially Bangladeshi and Pakistani, are 3 times more likely to have below average income. It also notes that on current trends, by 2035 only a third of older people will have enough income to avoid the need for support from means tested benefits.

Services for older people

The Scottish Executive wants to know what you think about services for older people. For example:

- *What sort of services do you think will be important for older people in the future?*
- *Thinking about services that work well, what makes those services good?*
- *What can be done to make sure that different services work together properly?*
- *How can we make sure that as services develop and change, they continue to meet the needs of older people?*
- *What else could be done?*

The Highland Council response:

Improved joint working is critical to ensure a joined up approach to assessing people's needs and planning and managing their care. In particular there is a need to discuss and consider our relationship with the Health Service to explore how we will work as closely as possible to achieve valued outcomes for service Users.

Whilst the Council agrees that less hospital beds are required than previously it would stress that resources must be released into the community to provide support for people at home which has the potential to improve the quality of life of older people. The maintenance of rural hospitals is critical.

Changing expectations must be taken into account. Older people rightly now have higher expectations and therefore expect to be provided with much more personalised services and choices.

Wherever possible services should be accessible. With people living longer and being healthy for longer it is important we don't fall into the trap of thinking about specialist services for older people, rather we need to think how we get older people involved in existing services in the community. Day services for the elderly which meet social needs under the banner of social work should be enhanced by encouraging these services to make use of community centres swimming pools and need to become more intellectually and physically stimulating.

The Council is currently facilitating planning days based around day care centres involving older people, the council's social work and education culture and sport services, as well representatives from health, national and local voluntary organisations and other local people such as from community councils. The purpose of the days is to review the services available in a locality, covering services available within the day care centre as well as in the wider community. The Council will then

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work with the grouping to better co-ordinate and promote existing services and to determine the need and potential funding mechanisms for new services.

The provision of seamless services needs to be improved increasing continuity so that older people don't have to go to three or four different places to access services. We recognise that people value local services, including the provision of home care, but we need to be realistic about what can be provided locally in rural areas and recognise that there are significant challenges in providing a range of services in remote and rural communities as, for example, not every village or community can support a residential unit.

Older people need access to learning opportunities in their local communities. These are accessible through formally through community learning, Learning Centre networks, colleges, Higher Education institutions, and on-line and informally through libraries which provide many services for older people – self-access to learning opportunities, access to the Internet, resources for leisure, and sources of information. However it is recognised that transport may be a barrier to accessing these facilities, particularly in rural areas

Local communities should be involved in the support of older people, particularly in more remote communities, for example, running transport to the local shops, being a contact person for community alarm in case of emergencies, 'friends and neighbours support groups' etc.

Suggested solutions:

- A structure/scheme could be devised with appropriate funding, to enable the easy involvement of local people in support groups for older people in their local communities. For example:
 - Funding to cover/streamlining of process for police checks for volunteers
 - Simple training courses with incentives (recognised certificate, basic First Aid instruction, vouchers, etc.)
 - Local coordinator to put together rotas for helping / tasks
 - Funding assistance for publicising local schemes
- Development/extension of recognised practical support schemes for older people at home, for example: Handyperson schemes, Care and Repair.

The provision of community alarms and assistive technology should be more readily available for all tenures of housing, with the necessary back up from care services / contacts.

Suggested solutions:

- Additional funding/grants made available for the development of assistive technology for older people across all housing tenure to develop flexible, efficient systems for installation for older people when necessary
- Extension of Supporting People funding to assist in ongoing service user cost of community alarm system where necessary

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It is crucial that older people are involved in the design and delivery of services and are provided with clear and accessible information about availability of services including Home Care and Personal services. For example, user views have been important in developing a tender specification for procuring improved residential care in some areas of the Highlands.

Wider services are very important to older people. The older people representatives that the Council consulted with indicated how important rural post offices are. They are often linked to shops and often form a focus for older people in the community. It is also important not to forget the need for the development of private sector services, for example accessible shopping centres and entertainment.

DDA compliance potentially plays an empowering role access to goods or services and should be given high levels of emphasis.

Health and well-being

The Scottish Executive wants to know what you think about helping people stay healthy and well in later life. For example:

- *What do you think are the most important things for good physical health in later life?*
- *What are the things that contribute most to good mental health and well-being in later life?*
- *What can be done to support those things?*
- *What else could be done?*

The Highland Council response:

A population with better health and a greater sense of well-being will age with less demand on health and social work services. There is a significant stream of evidence being produced in Scotland, and further afield that proves that increased confidence and well-being increases self-reliance and reduces the need for state support. Curiosity and lifelong learning contributes to cognitive well-being and optimism, as does participation in cultural and sporting activity. Investment in services to middle aged and older people, matching that for young people such as the significant active schools programme, would provide significant savings in the longer term. There needs to be support – including financial support - for older learners who want to take up learning opportunities whether in community, Further or Higher Education settings.

Within an overall promotion of active ageing, creative approaches to learning need to be used to engage older people, including using the arts. A social practices approach – learner centred - needs to be established for older learners who undertake community learning. Health practitioners should be encouraged to “prescribe” learning opportunities for older people. This would necessitate Awareness Raising of Local Learning Opportunities for health practitioners. Community Learning Partnerships are already encouraged to address the issues facing older learners in their strategy and action plans.

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For older people with limited mobility the Internet can provide opportunities for communicating with others. However research has shown that in Britain only 15% of the 65+ age group regularly use the internet. Local opportunities in non-threatening surroundings such as community libraries are offered to overcome both lack of experience and lack of knowledge, but these are capable of further development.

There are very good examples of project work which have engaged older people in a variety of arts, crafts, reminiscent and creative outputs. The challenge locally is to move from individual, one off projects to more coordinated, long-term services.

Good services in communities are essential to promote this. Having a social circle and life which is stimulating can maintain intellectual capacity and ward off depression and isolation and contribute to good mental health and wellbeing in later life. Feeling secure in terms of financial, emotional, personal safety is also important along with leading a healthy and active life, with access to care and support when required.

Income is crucial to health and wellbeing. As noted previously pensions are a reserved matter and this Strategy will be limited in its influence in this area. However work could be done to remove means testing, promote awareness of entitlements to support and improve access to pensions.

A more inclusive society must be promoted that values and interacts with older people and provides opportunities for social, leisure activities, by for example promoting community safety and awareness of elder abuse.

Housing, transport and surroundings

The Scottish Executive wants to know what you think about our houses and environments. For example:

- *What should be done to make sure that our houses and homes are suitable for an ageing population?*
- *What should be done to make sure that our transport system is good enough?*
- *What should be done to make sure that our towns, cities, villages, and neighbourhoods are suitable for an ageing population?*
- *How can we plan better for an ageing population?*
- *What else could be done?*

The Highland Council response:

Housing Design

In seeking to make sure that housing is suitable for an ageing population, we need to ensure that appropriate advice and guidance is given to developers on inclusive design.

This advice and guidance relates as much to the internal specification of development as to external appearance and layout. There is evidence (Building our Futures: Meeting the housing needs of an ageing population, International Longevity Centre

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UK) that the market is not catering for the changing needs of older people, in that space – such as a second bedroom - is a key requirement. It is important that the Executive works with the development industry to ensure that a realistic assessment of space requirements is taken into account at pre-planning stage.

Older people will be enabled to stay in their own homes for longer if the design of new housing targeted at older people or people with community care needs meets varying needs standards and is adequate in terms of space standards to enable appropriate equipment, for example wheelchair access, assistive technology and extra care (including 2nd bedroom which could be used for a carer to meet changing needs as necessary).

Issues:

- Sufficient funding - to enable the building of housing to appropriate specification.
- Will older people downsize to new, appropriate housing?

Suggested solutions:

- Sufficient funding
- Incentive schemes for older people to move from larger houses to appropriate housing (thus freeing up larger public rented and private housing for other use)
- Publicising the advantages of moving to appropriate housing
- Better information about housing options available for older people
- Better allocations system to suitable public housing for older people – through Common Housing Register

There is a need to continue development of home improvement schemes/grants particularly relating to equipment/adaptations for older people, for example heating changes, level access showers.

Suggested improvements:

- Improvement Grant funding targeted at older people, in particular, extension of the Care and Repair scheme where necessary. Low income, low equity, fear of debt by older people mean that they may be unlikely to fund adaptations themselves
- Access to better information about home improvement schemes/grants available

There is a need for provision of extra care housing where necessary: schemes for older people with on site care, guidance and assistance regarding the development of facilities for older people near housing in remote rural areas.

The Scottish Executive has recently produced some very useful Planning Advice Notes relating to design - Designing Safer Places, New Residential Streets and Inclusive Design. Whilst the design principles outlined in these Notes apply to all sectors of society, the elements relating to reducing fear of crime or well designed pedestrian layouts (for example the Home Zone concept) are of particular relevance in ensuring the layouts meet the needs of older people. It may be appropriate for the Executive to prepare additional guidance which specifically relates to planning for an

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ageing population. There will of course be key differences throughout Scotland, but this advice could form a useful template.

In planning for an ageing population, we have to appreciate that many wish to remain in their own homes, and it is important that adaptability is built into the design of new homes right from the start. It is also important that the flexibility to extend houses to provide for independent living (“the granny flat”) is maintained.

Housing Location

There is some growing interest elsewhere in the UK for the retirement village concept where the size (>100 dwellings) allows economies of scale and the development of facilities and care services that would not be viable in smaller developments (see Joseph Rowntree Foundation findings April 2006). Wider evidence shows that older people see these as a positive choice.

In some areas of the Highlands, the development of residential areas which are specifically for the older age groups has taken place (McCarthy & Stone in Inverness, Highland Park Retirement Village in Barbaraville and Firhall in Nairn being three examples). This trend is expected to continue and will need to be a focus of forward planning work through the preparation of local plans. It is important that these exclusive facilities are linked into mixed age facilities as far as possible to give the benefits in terms of services and facilities which may not be supported otherwise.

In the majority of the Highland area this would perhaps not be appropriate due to demographics and infrastructure. In addition one of the findings of consultations with older people in Highland was that housing for older people should be developed in mixed communities not necessarily large developments exclusively for older people “*No one who was asked stated expressly that they would choose to live in a “retirement community”. Although some said they might consider it, for the majority of people being part of a community was important. Often people commented that it is nice to see young children playing when we look out the window*” (North & West Sutherland Community Care Forum: Sheltered Housing and Day Care Review: Inverness. April 2005). However there should be further research into how this model can be applied in more urban areas in the Scottish context.

The key link between home and services such as health care or shopping facilities and other personal services makes the provision of local services critical, particularly within larger developments.

Transport

Transport is a key issue for older people. People have identified not being able to drive anymore as a great concern for the future as many people who live in rural areas tend to be more reliant and/or dependent on car ownership. Community transport is hampered by the fact that it relies on challenge funding and often short term, resulting in sustainability problems. Community transfer not included in older people free travel pass which particularly disadvantages older people in rural communities.

Suggested improvements:

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- Increase in sustainable subsidised community transport such as dial-a-bus, dial-a-taxi and community car schemes which are also available in the evenings and responsive to individual needs.

Planning for an ageing population should be improved through community planning processes with support to do so from the Executive.

Other

There may be lots of other things that need to be done to help Scotland benefit from its ageing population. We need to think about things like new technology, or the different needs of people with disabilities or from minority ethnic communities. We might need to think about how different generations can work together, and about how older people can have a better say about the services they get. We might need to think about how we can encourage businesses to provide products and services designed for older people; or about how older people are viewed by society.

The Highland Council response:

The Strategy should be for everyone in Scotland. Young people will become older and many may also become carers. Work to prepare for old age should take place throughout the life cycle and the definition of older people should begin with those aged 50+.

Whilst the Council would wish to encourage and support healthy and active old age, it must be recognised that disability and mobility issues increase sharply with age. Demographic forecasting is important to the design and delivery of services as the increase in the number of older people, and long term projected population decline have implications for resource allocation and the shape of public services. There will be increasing numbers of over 65's who will be both requiring health care and make up the caring workforce. Community planning should be further developed to address these issues.

Older people must be involved in planning as they are not an homogenous group and efforts should be made to engage with hard to reach older people.

At present, the minority ethnic population is proportionately younger than the "white" population, however, the older population will become increasingly diverse and there may be issues about providing culturally appropriate services.

There are a number of gender related issues, including income and poverty as mentioned earlier, but also of life expectancy.

Spatial patterns of ageing need to be considered. This includes:

- How we analyse the links between place, deprivation and old age. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation is only one source of information for understanding deprivation. It is not useful for identifying rural deprivation nor for identifying the links between ageing and deprivation. Recent research (noted earlier in this response) indicates a clear geographical dimension to income status in old age which needs to be taken into account.

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- Spatial patterns of population imbalance should be considered as well. For example demographic imbalance is often more extreme in remote rural communities. This is also influenced by a lack of opportunities for young people (e.g. access to affordable housing, learning and employment) as well as development constraints (e.g. land and services) and this can undermine the viability of local service delivery. This raises concerns about the sustainability of these communities. Rural sustainability, linked to demographic balance, should form another plank of the Executive's approach to regeneration in Scotland which currently focuses on urban deprivation. The only recognition of this to date is limited to the Initiative at the Edge. Unfortunately this initiative covers only a few designated areas and is not well resourced.

Another issue worth considering for the strategy is the support for inward migration to the country to impact positively on the demographic balance. Inward migration of young people, if at a large enough scale, can counter some of the worst effects of an ageing or declining population. Links can be made here with other strands of Executive policy. Further information on the approach to supporting inward migration in the Highlands can be provided; although in summary the approach involves a range of activities to:

- welcome inward migrants,
- to help them to settle in and
- to ensure that they can access the services they are entitled to.