

To: SOCIAL WORK (OPERATIONS AND SERVICES) SUB COMMITTEE		Subject: OLDER PEOPLE IN SCOTLAND: RESULTS FROM THE SCOTTISH HOUSE HOLD SURVEY 1999-2002
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 10 AUGUST 2004	Ref: JN/TJC	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Committee of the recently published Health and Community Care Research Report “Older People in Scotland”. This report draws on information gathered from the Scottish Household Survey 1999-2002 and provides information about the lives of older people, including sections on health, employment, income, leisure activities, public transport, community and poverty.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Scottish Executive, in common with North Lanarkshire Council, promotes and supports active ageing and continued independence in later life. The Scottish Household Survey data assists in informing the Executive strategy and highlights trends in social and demographic characteristics.
- 2.2 This is the second report about older people in Scotland based on results from the Scottish Household Survey. The first report, using 1999 Scottish Household Survey data, has been updated and revised and it is now possible to provide a fuller analysis of some areas of interest to policy makers, including support received by people with long term illness or disability, contact with neighbours and new phenomena such as internet use.
- 2.3 The Scottish Household Survey notes that the definition of “older person” varies between agencies with some now using the European definition of over 50 years, others using the state pensionable age (60 for women and 65 for men) and a further categorisation of over 75 years used predominately in health and social care agencies. This report will therefore at times make reference to various age groupings.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Population

The report indicates that nearly half (49%) of the adult population living in households was aged over 50. A third of all households have at least one member who is of pensionable age. Women living alone form the largest group of people aged 70 plus. Older people belonging to a minority ethnic group represent 1% of the population aged 50 to 59 with decreasing proportions in older age groups.

3.2 Employment and Income

The report acknowledges that the Scottish Household Survey does not deal adequately with this area of analysis and instead draws some of its conclusions from UK Government sources and independent research material. Notably there are now more people in work between the age of 50 and state pension age than in the last 30 years and there are slightly more people aged 65 plus in work over the four year period covered by the report. Poverty amongst pensioners remains an issue and for North Lanarkshire that will be exacerbated by the already high rate of poverty compared to national averages. Incomes for better off pensioners have risen more quickly than for the least well off and older pensioners are more likely to be amongst the least well off.

3.3 Volunteering and Care Giving

About a quarter (24%) of all people aged over 50 had done some volunteering in the 12 months. There is a clear link between higher income and volunteering. In general, more than twice as many people with incomes over £20,000 volunteer in comparison with those with incomes lower than £10,000 (39% compared to 18%). Rural residents are more likely to volunteer than urban dwellers. The main environments for volunteering are church/religious, health and supporting other older people.

The 50-64 age group are the main providers of unpaid care in or outwith the home. Women in general provide care more than men. 31% of older people who provide care do so for between 5 and 20 hours per week. Notably, older people providing care for more than 20 hours per week are more likely to report having poor health themselves.

3.4 Access To Leisure, Information And Resources

The report presents evidence that older people are less likely to take the recommended level of exercise to maintain good health than younger people. A relatively small minority of people aged over 65 have internet access with the highest group being those aged 65-74 where 18% have such access. Internet access is more likely among men, people on higher incomes and people in rural areas. More than half (56%) of over 65's in urban areas have no access to a car and public transport presents a range of barriers for older people. In this section, the report makes clear the link between health, leisure pursuits, access to information and access to transport.

3.5 Health and Social Care

The report suggests that older people (65 plus) who report that they need help or care are in the minority. Even amongst women over the age of 85, when people are most likely to be dependent, only 47% said they needed care.

People who receive care at home are more likely to receive it from another household member than from an outside source. The majority of people living alone and needing care receive more than 4 hours per week from an outside agency and 20% receive more than 20 hours per week. Although the report does not give comparisons by Council areas, North Lanarkshire compares favourably in this regard with almost ten thousand older people in receipt of the Community Alarm service, around four and a half thousand older people in receipt of care at home and around fifteen hundred older people receiving care in care homes.

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR NORTH LANARKSHIRE

4.1 This research study provides analysis which is interesting and informative from a Scottish perspective but provides little information which is specific to local authority areas. However, in combining this research study with information already available within the Council the following trends are apparent.

- i. North Lanarkshire Council has a smaller proportion of older people in its adult population than almost any other Council area in Scotland. However, that older population will be generally poorer, both in terms of income and of health.
- ii. Older people require greater access to leisure facilities, information and resources to assist them in maintaining an active and healthy lifestyle. Notable examples of how this is being tackled in North Lanarkshire include the range of public information leaflets available to older people and reported previously to Committee, extended opening hours in day centres for older people (again previously reported to and approved by Committee) and extensive use of the Community Alarm service at a rate higher than that of any other Council area in Scotland.
- iii. While it is encouraging to note the high level of volunteering and care giving by older people, such activity requires to be properly supported. In this regard, North Lanarkshire is supporting a range of older peoples voluntary organisations through the Section 10 grants and older people feature prominently in the Council's strategy to support carers.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.



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29 July 2004

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