

Older People Services Action Framework - Engagement with Ethnic Minority Older People 2018-19

Consultation event with Ethnic Minority Older People in developing Older People's Framework. Attended by Christina McKelvie, Minister for Equality and Older People

The consultation event was held at NKS, Edinburgh on 30th January 2019.

Over 35 ethnic minority older people attended the event from different backgrounds, including several support staff who provide direct services.

The following issues were raised by older people directly with the Minister.

Health Services

One of the main issues raised by the participants was of booking appointments with their GP at their local surgery. Participants expressed their frustration with the current appointment booking system, that they must phone the GP surgery at 8am in order to be seen on the same day or on another day. Participants claimed that even though they make a call at 8am they are told that all the appointments have been taken and they have to call again the next day even for an emergency appointment. Some older people claimed that it could take more than a week to be seen by a GP. This new appointment system is very challenging for those who do not speak the language and are unable to make the phone call at 8am. If someone phones on their behalf to book an appointment, the surgery is unable to arrange an interpreter at short notice even if it is urgent. Some GPs limit an emergency appointment to 10 minutes; patients with language support need more time to make allowance for interpretation. They thought the current telephone booking system was not practical or ideal for those who need to be seen by the GP in an emergency.

Some participants said that they must be able to explain the symptoms of their illness to the receptionist on the phone and then wait for the GP to call back. They must repeat the symptoms to the GP in order for him/her to decide whether they needed an appointment. Participants felt their medical history had to be validated by the

receptionist and felt that it was breach of their privacy. Most of the participants were unable to explain the symptoms of their illness as they speak little English.

Ethnic Minority Lunch Clubs

All participants, some of whom are also carers, highlighted the importance of lunch clubs as they are a lifeline for many older people and their carers. They attend lunch clubs for different needs; some carers treat it as a respite as they can drop off their loved ones at the club, allowing them time for other tasks i.e. banking, shopping and meeting friends for a chat. Some carers treat the lunch club as a place where they meet, share and support each other. For older people the lunch club is a source of information on health, benefits and community events. It gives them the opportunity to get out and socialise and be with people who speak their language and shared culture. Recent funding cuts and closures of lunch clubs has had a huge impact on their unmet needs, general wellbeing and means they are disconnected from friends and community.

Transport

Participants claimed that visits to hospital take up a lot of time, They leave home early and return home late because hospital transport operates on a route depending on whether they are the first on or the last off. A shortage of community transport for shopping and leisure makes it difficult to book one when needed. Older people have a free bus pass which they use for hospital appointments. They never book hospital transport for hospital appointments because too many questions are asked about their health condition. These are often difficult to answer due to a language barrier. Furthermore, if you do not phone a few weeks in advance of your appointment, you are unlikely to be offered hospital transport.

Sheltered housing

Participants raised concerns about their unmet housing needs in later age. They strongly believe that a sheltered housing option for Asian people where their language and cultural needs can be met is needed for ageing ethnic minority older people. Participants from the South Asian community asked why there was no sheltered housing for their community? There is Chinese sheltered housing in different parts of Scotland but none for the South Asian community. Participants stressed the importance of living with people who share the same language, culture and diet to facilitate social interaction and to support each other.

- ❖ **Another consultation meeting with the Scottish Ethnic Minority Older People Forum is arranged on Wednesday 6th March in Edinburgh.**



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