

Our Journey Together

Older and Bolder's
Closing Conference

Conference
Proceedings



Acknowledgements

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Foreword to the Report

This report presents the proceedings from Older & Bolder's closing conference, **Our Journey Together**, which took place in Dublin on April 25 2013. More than 150 individuals and groups who had been active in Older & Bolder campaigns convened in the Croke Park Conference Centre to mark the distance travelled together, to share experience and lessons for the future, and to renew energies to continue their own advocacy for older people's rights and entitlements following Older & Bolder's closure on June 30 2013.

Older & Bolder would like to express appreciation to all who attended and who contributed to a memorable, albeit bittersweet, occasion. On the one hand, there was sadness that Older & Bolder, an advocacy alliance of 7 organisations is closing. On the other, there was pleasure that the National Positive Ageing Strategy had finally been published the previous day by the Minister for Older People, Kathleen Lynch TD. Publication of the strategy followed a 7 year campaign by older people, led by Older & Bolder. The Minister has committed to the completion of an implementation plan to accompany the strategy within 6 months which will incorporate actions, timelines and performance indicators for the strategy. Older & Bolder's final advice to older people is to sustain pressure on Government and on their local public representatives for the urgent publication of this implementation plan.

All of Older & Bolder's publications and submissions will be available through our archived website, www.olderandbolder.ie and we hope that they will prove useful as resources for future advocacy in support of older people and of social solidarity in Ireland.

Between 2006 and 2013, The Atlantic Philanthropies provided 3 grants to Older & Bolder. On behalf of the many thousands of older people who campaigned with Older & Bolder during this period, we extend thanks to The Atlantic Philanthropies for the generous grants which enabled the work described in this report.

Though Older & Bolder is closing, the work of the member organisations of the Older & Bolder alliance will continue. Older & Bolder wishes success in the future to: Active Retirement Ireland, Age & Opportunity, Alzheimer Society of Ireland, Carers Association, Irish Hospice Foundation, Irish Senior Citizens Parliament and Senior Help Line – Third Age.





Opening Remarks

Mr. Owen Keenan, Chairperson, Older & Bolder

Introduction

Good morning. I would like to welcome you all to our conference, which we decided to host following the announcement of the closure of Older & Bolder.

Over the last few years, in the context of cutbacks and the recession, it has been very difficult for Older & Bolder to make a difference but, with your help and involvement, it managed to do just that. Older & Bolder may be closing, but we still need to fly the flag for older people, for as long as it is necessary. The commitment has been there, from so many individuals and groups, sharing insights and coming out on demonstrations. Older & Bolder's advocacy work would certainly have had a poorer influence without the involvement and commitment of its supporters. You ensured pre-election promises were kept, and convinced politicians of the need for a National Positive Ageing Strategy. You resisted cuts to home care services. There is a good deal to acknowledge.

Looking to the Future

Other models of advocacy for older people now need to be explored. I am sure Older & Bolder will stay alive in commitment. Patricia Conboy has played a huge role in advancing older people's issues in Ireland, with help from her colleagues Mary Cleary, Diarmaid O'Sullivan and Sean Dillon. I would like to acknowledge the role of Atlantic Philanthropies in terms of their strategic insight in funding Older & Bolder and in implementing the early stages of the work programme. I would also like to acknowledge the role of Tom O'Higgins, Older & Bolder's previous chairman.

Changes bring challenges and new possibilities. The ageing sector has become increasingly resourceful and in tune. Significant progress has been made and yet so much more needs to be done. It is important to meet new challenges with confidence and determination.

When the voluntary organisations that make up Older & Bolder came together in late 2006, their aims included the development of a national strategy on ageing. Getting there was a longer and harder road than envisaged back then. We are delighted to have it finally published yesterday.

I would like to congratulate the Minister for Older People on the launch of the National Positive Ageing Strategy. However, this marks only the beginning.



Our Journey Together

Ms. Patricia Conboy, Director, Older & Bolder

Introduction

Good morning. You are warmly welcome to Older & Bolder's closing conference. I look out at all of you and I see the faces of so many people we have come to know as friends and supporters. You have been at the heart of Older & Bolder over these past years. We have shared an amazing journey as we campaigned together for older people's rights and entitlements. Today, we are recognising the fact that our shared journey is ending and that you will be travelling on – but without Older & Bolder.

People have been saying to me, and to my staff colleagues, 'This must be very hard for you'. The truth is that it is hard. I do feel sad today that a platform as potent as Older & Bolder is being let go. And I know that sadness is shared by many of you. But I also feel a sense of shared pride in the work that we have done together in Older & Bolder.

This is a day to reflect on the journey we have shared, to mark our many achievements and to recognise that your journey continues into the future. You have skills and expertise. Many of you are experienced campaigners and lobbyists. Our hope is that you will use all of your capabilities to continue to work for the Ireland we imagined together: an Ireland that affirms ageing and the rights of all older people and that enables everyone to live and die with confidence and dignity as equal, respected and involved members of our society.

In this presentation, I am going to concentrate on three themes: the National Positive Ageing Strategy; Older & Bolder's campaign and advocacy experience; and I'm going to offer some thoughts on age advocacy in the future. So, first to the Strategy.

National Positive Ageing Strategy

This conference is a bittersweet occasion. On the one hand, Older & Bolder is closing. On the other, we are gathering the day after the publication of the National Positive Ageing Strategy. And we all know that Older & Bolder began in 2006 when five organisations came together to campaign for a political commitment to the development of a national strategy on ageing. Our campaign has been sustained over seven years, through two Programmes for Government and the tenure of three Ministers for Older People. We congratulate Minister Kathleen Lynch on publishing the Strategy yesterday. Equally we know that it would not have happened without you. You have acted as individuals and with your local groups to support this campaign from the bottom up. I'm thinking of people in places as far apart as Wexford, Sligo, Cavan, Cabra, Clondalkin, Donegal, Kerry, Limerick, Cork, Offaly.

You have signed postcard petitions, contributed to consultation meetings, lobbied Ministers and TDs, participated in photo calls and media launches, attended meetings in the Oireachtas. You have exercised power; you have demonstrated persistence; you have responded to leadership from Older & Bolder; you have shown that this Strategy mattered to you; and we now have, for the first time in Ireland, a national strategy on ageing.

But my fellow campaigners, you know that your work has not ended with the publication of the Strategy. You may well ask, 'Will this Strategy make a tangible difference to my life as an older person?' The Minister has promised an implementation plan for the Strategy within the next six months. The reality is that the impact of the Strategy will be easier to evaluate when we see the implementation plan. And that is yet another reason why we hope you will now lobby for this next step.

Campaigning on Bread and Butter Issues: 2008 – 2013

The second theme I'm addressing is Older & Bolder's campaign and advocacy experience. Alongside our work on the National Positive Ageing Strategy, we conducted, between 2008 and 2013, four pre-Budget campaigns and one pre-General Election campaign. All of these campaigns were on bread and butter issues for older people.¹

Every public campaign is an effort to influence targeted decision-makers and to win hearts and minds in the court of public opinion. Over the past four and a half years, Older & Bolder navigated our campaigns on behalf of older people over the most difficult terrain. Ireland is enduring an appalling economic and fiscal crisis. There is endless dispute about who is taking the most painful cuts and bearing the burden of austerity. Advocacy is never for the faint-hearted and, in the current circumstances, it takes nerve.

Key Strengths

Though the context for campaigning and advocacy was tough, Older & Bolder has had some key strengths as a platform for older people. I am going to identify three of those strengths here.

The first strength was that ours was a consolidated advocacy voice. The alliance had eight member organisations speaking with one voice on the National Positive Ageing Strategy, social protection, health and social care.

We had a mandate. We presented a united front to decision-makers. Our advocacy had depth. It was grounded in research and informed by the expert knowledge of the members of the alliance.

That raw material was translated and framed for our campaigns by a small and inventive team of staff with some consultancy support. Older & Bolder built credibility and reputation with decision-makers and these are invaluable assets.

¹ Powerpoint images from Older & Bolder's pre-Budget and General Election campaigns were displayed to recall those campaigns. The images highlighted campaigns to: Protect Basic Supports for Older People (2009); Defend the State Pension (2010); Support our High Five (2011); Make Home Work (2011) and Rescue Home Care (2012).

The second strength of the work was that you, as older people and older people's groups, actively participated in our campaigns.

You told us in consultation meetings that you cared about issues like income, transport, the quality of health services. You reminded us that we needed to be relevant to you. And to be relevant to you, we had to put bread and butter issues on the Older & Bolder agenda. We did so. The National Positive Ageing Strategy was important but it wasn't enough. Older people welcomed the chance to gather under the Older & Bolder flag and to support campaign 'asks' such as Defend the State Pension, Make Home Work.

Our base among local groups grew and diversified over the past five years. Your stories and experiences were central to our campaign messages and methods. And the relationships we developed with our local base around the country became another priceless asset for our shared work.

The third strength was that we had independent philanthropic funding from The Atlantic Philanthropies. We worked in a space that was independent of official national and local structures. We were outside the tent. We could speak out clearly and firmly on Government policy and decisions. And we did so. Last year, through national and local political lobbying, we halted cuts to home help hours.

Last year also, we launched an online campaign tool showing how TDs had voted in the Oireachtas on a motion to reverse the home care cuts. Some politicians objected. We responded to their concerns but we stood firm. We were unconcerned about Government funding, and that independence was an asset.

Future of Age Advocacy?

Having identified the strengths of the work, I want to make some observations about age advocacy in the future. For the past four Budgets, older people have been defended by consolidated advocacy from the age sector. Now that the decision to close Older & Bolder has been made, the advocacy landscape will change. For age advocates, the concern is that older people will not be as well protected in the face of future austerity measures; and we know that the Government is announcing the next Budget on October 14 and 15. In the normal run of things, preparation for a pre-Budget campaign should begin six months out and that is around now.

There is now a gap in the advocacy space at a national level, and a corresponding need for urgent action by decision-makers in the age sector to close that gap sooner rather than later.

Participation in Today's Conference

But back to our conference. There have been many campaign calls from Older & Bolder over the past few years. You have answered them time after time. And, for our conference today, we do have one final call. This is about the character of your participation in our conference. My colleagues and I want to avoid a wake. So many people have written and phoned us to express regret at the closure of Older & Bolder, and at the resulting loss to older people. We recognise that some of you will also want to express your views about the closure. There are cards in your pack. We are inviting you to write a parting message on those cards and post them on our display board at the back of this room.

Our conference call is to ask you, in true Older & Bolder fashion, to concentrate today on the work at hand. We hope you will think about how you can use your own skills and abilities to advocate individually and in your local groups in the coming months. There will be an early Budget this year and you need to begin to prepare for that now.

Hopes for Age Advocacy in the Future

In conclusion, I want to express on my own behalf, and on behalf of my colleagues, a sincere hope. ***There are powerful champions among you.*** You will continue your journey, advocating for older people's rights and entitlements. We hope that at least some of you will lead new age advocacy initiatives in the future. We hope that all of you will be involved. We will be reassured and joyful if new versions of advocacy emerge of the high calibre that older people deserve and need. Finally, what might such advocacy look like? I suggest that it would be:

- Rooted in principles of social solidarity, equality, respect and integrity;
- Based on an advocacy agenda defined by older people, and responding to the needs and preferences of older people in all their diversity;
- That it would be advocacy operating from independent spaces;
- Advocacy led by creative and bold advocates who have the skill to seize their moments for national and local influence;
- And who know when to explain, when to debate, when to charm, when to shout, when to march.

Now, friends, supporters and colleagues, it is over to you. Thank you for listening.

There is now a gap in the advocacy space at a national level, and a corresponding need for urgent action by decision-makers in the age sector to close that gap sooner rather than later.



The National Positive Ageing Strategy

Kathleen Lynch TD, Minister of State with responsibility for Disability, Older People, Equality and Mental Health²

Tribute to Older & Bolder

Good morning all, I am delighted to be here with you today and I would like to thank Patricia for her invitation.

I am a bit conflicted about what to say here today given that the event marks the end of Older & Bolder as an umbrella advocacy organisation for older people in Ireland.

At the same time, it is about celebrating its achievements, sharing experiences and identifying lessons for the future, which is a positive thing.

As Minister for Older People I would like to pay a special tribute to Older & Bolder and indeed the seven organisations that make up the alliance for their consistent hard work and dedication in promoting the welfare and quality of life of older people. I know the work of the seven constituent organisations will continue.

Publication of National Positive Ageing Strategy

I have been asked to speak about the National Positive Ageing Strategy, which I am delighted to say was published yesterday. At the launch of the National Positive Ageing Strategy yesterday, I stated that the push from outside Government is often more powerful than Government itself in effecting change and I would like to commend Older & Bolder for its work in recent years in pressing for the Strategy. In addition to pushing from the outside, Older & Bolder was a member of the NGO Liaison Group that provided such valuable assistance in the development of this Strategy

While Older & Bolder is coming to an end, I believe that the individual organisations that it represented will continue to be instrumental in progressing the implementation of the Strategy into the future and ensuring that it makes a real difference in the lives of everybody as they age in Ireland. I hope that the valuable relationships that have been built up between my Office and your organisations during the development of the Strategy and during last year's European Year for Active Ageing will continue to strengthen as we work towards our shared goal of an age friendly society in Ireland.

² Minister Kathleen Lynch was unable to attend the conference due to cabinet business but she provided a copy of her prepared speech and extracts relating to Older & Bolder, the member organisations of Older & Bolder and the National Positive Ageing Strategy were shared with participants at the conference.

Implementation of the Strategy

And now let me talk about how the Strategy will be implemented and monitored. Ireland's new Health and Wellbeing Framework was recently launched in the Mansion House. This Framework, *Healthy Ireland* emphasises a personal and collective responsibility for protecting health and preventing disease over the life course and was developed to establish formal structures to enable a whole of society approach to health and wellbeing. In essence, *Healthy Ireland* has the same goals for the population in general as the Positive Ageing Strategy has for older people.

In order to ensure that the implementation of the National Positive Ageing Strategy becomes embedded in a national approach to improving overall health and wellbeing, the Positive Ageing Strategy will be translated into key deliverables through the *Healthy Ireland* structures. A high level implementation plan and associated timelines for *Healthy Ireland* will be developed in 2013. A separate implementation plan, based on the strategic direction laid out in the National Positive Ageing Strategy, will then be developed. And at the launch of the Strategy yesterday I committed to completing this implementation plan in six months. This implementation plan will be developed in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, including those that have been part of the Older & Bolder alliance. I want to make sure that this implementation plan will facilitate:

- the translation of the goals and objectives of the Strategy into action;
- the development of key deliverables in a more detailed manner, taking account of relevant linkages between statutory agencies;
- the development of timelines and performance indicators;
- the specification of 'direct responsible individuals' across Government and wider civil society;
- the implementation of the Strategy will be monitored on an on-going basis to ensure that it remains reflective of older people's needs and preferences in the years ahead.

Monitoring and Review

Structures and processes will be developed to review the implementation of *Healthy Ireland*, which will be used as the mechanism through which the implementation of the National Positive Ageing Strategy will also be monitored. Units responsible for older people and for health and wellbeing in the Department of Health will collaborate in the development of indicators to monitor the implementation of the National Positive Ageing Strategy. A multi-stakeholder National Health and Wellbeing Council that is reflective of the life-course will be established in 2013. The composition of this Council will, therefore, be reflective of older people and their representative organisations

The Department of Health will convene an Annual Positive Ageing Forum (similar to the Carers' Forum that is convened by the Department of Social Protection) to assess progress from the perspective of older people and their representative organisations. Annual updates on positive ageing activity will be produced including the preparation of an Annual Report. This will be presented to the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy. The Cabinet Committee on Social Policy, chaired by the Taoiseach, will oversee the implementation of the National Positive Ageing Strategy.

We are very conscious of the constraints imposed by the current budgetary situation but, now that we have a visionary and creative National Positive Ageing Strategy, we have the opportunity to lead changes in work practices and processes and to realign resources and reinvent our attitudes towards ageing to deliver real results for all of us that are ageing. Whether or not we respond successfully to the ageing of our population will depend on the willingness of every sector of Irish society, the statutory, community, voluntary and private sectors, to adapt in good time to the changes that population ageing will present in the coming decades.

Positive ageing is in everyone's interests and the arrangements that we are putting in place to ensure that Ireland progresses further to being an age-friendly society are the arrangements that we are putting in place for everyone in our society.

Thank you very much.



Effective Campaigning: Sharing your Expertise





Introduction to Facilitated Group Work

Mr. Diarmaid O'Sullivan, Campaign Researcher, Older & Bolder

Good morning all. I'm not going to speak for too long as my role is to introduce the next session where all of you will be doing the talking at the tables you are now sitting at. We're very proud in Older & Bolder that all of the campaigns we have run have started with conversations in rooms like this. Most of you have participated in these events in hotel rooms and community halls from Donegal to Cork and from Kerry to Dublin. These discussions informed our policy positions and campaigns on everything from pension policy to transport to health and social care. So it makes sense that we spend time today to gather what we can from your experience of our campaigns and how this experience should inform future campaigns on behalf of older people.

Group Work Discussions

Participants then took part in facilitated, table-based discussions on the subject of effective campaigning. They were asked to share their experiences of Older & Bolder campaigns and to identify how they felt this experience should inform future campaigns on behalf of older people. People shared experiences of their involvement in a range of campaigns: Defending the State Pension, primary care, the medical card protest, Make Home Work, National Positive Ageing Strategy, pre-budget campaigns and High 5. Many had been involved in more than one campaign. Feedback was collated on flipchart sheets which were displayed on the day as wall charts and subsequently analysed by the Conference Rapporteur, Ms. Liza Costello.

Why People Got Involved

Different reasons were given for people's involvement in campaigns: to change things, to highlight a sense of solidarity among older people, to give something back to the community, for a sense of satisfaction, because of negative portrayals of older people in the media, because of threats to medical card entitlements, and because they were invited by Older & Bolder. Two factors underlined these reasons: a desire to address social inequalities with the goal of improving the rights of older people and, through the work of Older & Bolder, the opportunity to do so.

As one group noted,

“it's important to get involved”.

And as another said,

“It felt good to be part of the marches and protests. Taking a stand against inequality. It felt good to spread the word about Older & Bolder”.

4 key themes emerged in the group discussions.

1. From ‘an ear to the ground’ to a National Forum

Many groups praised how Older & Bolder succeeded in mobilising people on a local level so as to coordinate successful national campaigns. As one group put it,

“Older & Bolder thought locally and acted globally”.

Here, people highlighted the value of Older & Bolder’s coordinating role – informing people of campaigns and events, developing and circulating advocacy tools. They also highlighted how Older & Bolder staff travelled the country in order to engage with people at local level. This was seen as a highly important aspect of their work. By contacting, supporting and mobilising people locally, Older & Bolder provided opportunities to individuals and local groups to influence public opinion regarding older people and even policy. As one group noted, this

“felt as though [we were] given courage and power to highlight [our] needs”.

In relation to this, the way in which Older & Bolder staff “really listened” to people at local level was raised again and again as a critical factor in their success. People highlighted how, through all of Older & Bolder’s campaigns, older people were at the forefront:

“Older & Bolder never spoke down to older people”.

“...‘Doing it for the old dears’ became a thing of the past with Older & Bolder”.

“Older people were doing things for themselves with Older & Bolder”.

“They never spoke down to anyone”.

This, it was felt, promoted active thinking among older people; as one group described it,

“An empowered vision was created and shared”.

In really listening to, and engaging with people at local level, they could and did,

“harness people’s skills, talents and awareness in their campaigns”.

Thus, Older & Bolder became:

“a national forum that gave a focus, voice and empowerment to local groups and a national voice for change”.

Without Older & Bolder’s mobilising work, local groups had a limited capacity to influence public debate on issues affecting older people. But with it, people cited its power and relevance for local groups, and how it created the opportunity for meaningful engagement on national issues “with the potential for immediate response”. One group described this as also involving a “branding of national issues”.

2 “It can really work”

One strong theme, which has clear importance regarding the future of advocacy for older people, was the way in which many people spoke of the joy of learning first-hand that advocacy can really make a difference, and more importantly, *how* it can make a difference. More than one shared their surprise at how effective good advocacy and lobbying work can really be: it got the issue on TV, in the papers.

It could even lead to change in policy. Working with Older & Bolder, delegates described how they learned of the advocacy value of:

- quality, evidence-based information;
- clear, targeted, relevant messages;
- working locally.

Older & Bolder showed people how to engage, for example by personally contacting local TDs and informed lobbying of TDs, by using the vote, by achieving mass visibility. Delegates also spoke of learning of the value of different, sometimes newer advocacy approaches and tools. For instance, some shared their personal learning curve regarding the potentially cost-effective use of social media in advocacy and lobbying. Others spoke of the value of having printed pamphlets and other documents, such as the Make Home Work charter, while lobbying: “It’s something you can hand to your politician at the door”. This was related to the issue of clear, quality information. People spoke of their success in using other tools like postcards, getting signatories, email and even making telephone calls; one delegate described standing outside their local post office to get signatories.

The last example above highlights another ‘lesson’ which people said they gained through working with Older & Bolder: the need for tenacity. Less tangible perhaps than the more practical skills and knowledge gained regarding lobbying tools, nonetheless this was seen as very important. Older people’s issues are not always heeded, noted one delegate, particularly in the context of a recession. Tenacity is required if there is to be any hope of success.

As one group put it, working with Older & Bolder was

“a lesson in going under and around brick walls”.

In relation to this, people praised the professional approach of Older & Bolder. It was well organised, it projected positive images, it had a strong visual impact. There was ‘no woolly headedness’; clear targets and focus were maintained. The lesson seems to be is that it is easier to stay on message for a long time, when the message is clear and is campaigned for in a professional way.

A strong legacy left by Older & Bolder is that older people have been empowered to act in the interests of older people:

“Older & Bolder gave me that door to take where I needed to go.

The government is now aware older people have a voice”.

Practical Lessons Identified for Working with the Media

Delegates shared their knowledge of working with the media in a campaign or lobbying exercise, which they attributed to working with Older & Bolder:

- The media can be used to your advantage (the Make Home Work campaign was cited as a good example here);
- Both local and national media should be targeted;
- Use local radio, Parish newsletters, free newspapers;
- In an effective campaign you should be informed, respectful, prudent.

Practical Lessons Identified for Working with Politicians

Delegates also agreed that while working with Older & Bolder, much had been learned regarding effective engagement with politicians. Here are just a few of the more practical lessons shared:

- Use bullet points to make your points to politicians;
- When meeting politicians have three points ready;
- Quality, targeted information is essential;
- Ask for a specific action;
- Timing is important: target local TDs pre-election, pre-Budget;
- Elections focus the attention of decision makers;
- Use the vote;
- There's value in a positive approach – “no whinging”;
- Be proactive;
- Be strategic;
- Engage with politicians locally, regionally, nationally.

3. Realising “We’re not alone”

Older & Bolder linked organisations and individuals to each other. In doing so, it created a sense of solidarity among older people, a sense of “strength in numbers”. Delegates described how this increased the strength and capacity of older people to bring about change.

As one group put it,

“We’re not alone”.

This sense of solidarity was seen as vital to past and future advocacy and campaigning work. It could motivate people: one participant described feeling angry at a consultation event at which he listened to older people discuss issues faced by them, which motivated him to become involved in campaigning work. Others shared their enthusiasm, how they “came away feeling energised”.

A related point, raised by many delegates, is that Older & Bolder captured well the experience of being older. This was because through their work they highlighted important issues, such as the intersection of ageing and disability. But it was also because, in their media campaigns particularly, they captured the diversity of people's experience of ageing and of being older. This sense of solidarity and strong visibility of older people had another impact. As one group noted: "We took to the streets and showed our influence"; another commented, "TDs now know we vote". People discussed how "politicians took heed", how older people became a force to be reckoned with:

"The power of the grey vote should never be underestimated".

4. What now? Looking towards the Future

Throughout the group discussions, one question emerged over and over again: what will fill the vacuum left in Older & Bolder's wake? People spoke of the value of the alliance aspect of Older & Bolder – how it involved key organisations coming together to promote shared messages. They also praised the executive of Older & Bolder. Many commented positively on the high level of work achieved by such a small number of staff, and on how Patricia Conboy was an effective spokesperson for older people. Older & Bolder gave a national voice to older people that linked in with and reflected experience and issues at a local level. Some highlighted the importance of its independent status in fulfilling this role, of the value of "funding without strings", noting it gave Older & Bolder "a unique power". Without this, one group agreed, "critical voices are closed down".

Despite all the lessons learned, delegates found it difficult to see how this national voice could be protected in the future:

"That organising is vital – talking is not enough".

"There's a need for a national voice. How can older people move forward?"

"How can the momentum be maintained?"

People spoke of how many burning issues remain. Some of those highlighted include: the importance of being enabled to live at home; protecting free travel and rural transport issues; protecting medical cards; access to community health services and to quality care in hospital settings; the needs of vulnerable older people; the need to promote older people's contribution to society.

There was a strong desire to maintain the momentum generated by Older & Bolder and an awareness of the importance of continuing to work together. Some positives were highlighted, for example the fact that older people have a strong volunteer base throughout the country, and that promising models of engaging with older people are emerging on a county level, in Wexford, Wicklow and Cavan. Yet despite these advantages, the fear remained that, without Older & Bolder, local efforts will not be coordinated nationally, and without this, they will be less effective in effecting change:

"Campaigning takes a lot of time".

"Should organisations merge to create a stronger voice?"

"We need an ambassador".

"Who will coordinate? "

Many felt that these concerns could only be addressed by the establishment of a new advocacy organisation, with a similar coordinating role to Older & Bolder.

Rights and Entitlements of older people: An Ombudsman Perspective





Introduction to the Session

Chairperson: Dr. Ruth Barrington, TASC Board of Directors

First of all, may I thank Older & Bolder for the invitation to join you here today and to chair this very interesting and stimulating discussion. We're going to focus on rights and entitlements of older people. I compliment Older & Bolder on the successes that you've had over the past few years in your campaigns to protect the rights of older people. Judging from the discussion at our table, there is a lot more work to be done. I hope that the spirit of Older & Bolder will continue and that organisations involved in Older & Bolder will find a way to continue to speak with a single voice to protect the rights and entitlements of older people.

As you heard, the Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly can't be here today because she has thrown her hat in the ring for the position of European Ombudsman and we wish her every success with that campaign. However it won't be a disaster if she doesn't get it because she will continue to be our Ombudsman. Any of you who had the good fortune to hear her speak at the Third Age press conference in March will know just how insightful she is about the situation facing older people in Ireland and how passionate she is to see improvements in the lives of older people.

Although she cannot be with us today she has nominated an excellent substitute. I'm delighted to welcome Ms. Bernadette McNally. I had the pleasure of working with Bernadette in a previous existence and I know how innovative and committed she is as a public servant to the quality of healthcare and health services.

In 2012, Bernadette was appointed Director General of the Office of the Ombudsman and Office of the Information Commissioner. She also supports the secretariats of the Standards in Public Office Commission, the Referendum Commission and the Commission for Public Servant Appointments. Multitasking is clearly one of Bernadette's many qualities. Before her appointment to Director General, she worked as a senior investigator at the Office of the Ombudsman for three years, so she has a really good understanding of these issues. She had particular responsibility for health and social care complaints. During that time, she developed an initiative with 17 agencies to raise public awareness on various options available to make a complaint in relation to health and social care services in Ireland. The project developed a number of resource tools, including the website: www.healthcomplaints.ie.

Bernadette is an occupational therapist by profession. During her career, she has worked in the United Kingdom as well as Ireland. She was also Director of Social Care Services in St James' Hospital. So she has a really excellent set of experiences and competencies to speak about rights and entitlements for older people.



Rights and Entitlements of Older People: An Ombudsman Perspective

Ms. Bernadette McNally, Director General,
Office of the Ombudsman

Introduction

The content of today and the work of Older & Bolder is very dear to my heart so I'm delighted to be here. Emily O'Reilly sends her sincere apologies. She has been a very sincere admirer of Older & Bolder and all the organisations in it for a very long time. She is delighted to have been asked to be here, but a series of meetings had been scheduled in Europe and she was unable to reschedule. She had however put together some content for today which I intend to use. I have added some of my own experience to it.

My formative adult years were spent as a healthcare professional, working with that small group of older people who unfortunately, through illness or disability, end up in an acute hospital. That gave me a very privileged insight into the difficulties they experienced and the difficulties their families experienced. I got to work with a number of highly respected professionals who have since done a lot of work to champion the rights of older people. That experience was really relevant to me when I went into the Department of Health as an advisor and since then when I officially became a civil servant working with the Ombudsman.

Yesterday, I had a flashback to being a young graduate occupational therapist, having to present at a multidisciplinary journal club, with intimidating people in the audience like Professor Des O'Neill and Professor Bernard Walsh, geriatricians who have championed the rights of older people for decades now. It was in the 1990s; I presented a randomised control study from California which set out to prove that if older people were living in the community, engaged in meaningful activity in a structured way, their physical and mental health would be better and their life satisfaction generally would be better. We all suspected this was the case at the time, but there was no scientific research to prove this was the case. That randomised control study proved beyond any doubt that this was the case. It resulted in investment by the American government in healthy older people living in the community.

Tribute to Older & Bolder

Twenty years on, when I look at everything Older & Bolder has done over the past few years, I am reminded of that research. Older and Bolder has worked hard to empower older people to maintain their health, wellbeing and contribution to our society. All the team at Older & Bolder must feel a sadness at what is gone but a huge sense of achievement at what has been gained. So much has been done.

I think looking at the audience and sensing the atmosphere in the room, Older and Bolder must be reassured that its vision will be sustained and that all of you here

today and your colleagues around the country will, with some imagination, commit to sustaining Older & Bolder's vision. On behalf of the Ombudsman I want to offer my warm congratulations to Older & Bolder and to all of you involved in those really successful campaigns. The National Positive Ageing Strategy that was published yesterday is definitely a testament to all the work that you have done and I am sure you have been a thorn in the side of many politicians and officials to make sure that Strategy would be published. Testament to your work is also that new concept of *grey power*, a power that suddenly came to the fore in the last few years and that is now a power not to be under-estimated.

Population Ageing as an Opportunity

Kofi Annan the UN general secretary said a couple of years ago:

“A society for all ages is one that does not caricature older persons as patients and pensioners. Instead, it sees them as both agents and beneficiaries of development. It honours traditional elders in their leadership and consultative roles in communities throughout the world.”

I think this is very relevant to what we are talking about today. You have all seen the figures before, they're in the newspapers every week. But I think it is useful to remind people of the situation. At the moment, one in 12 people in the Irish population are aged 65 or over. In 2050, that will rise to one in 4. Normally when you see that in the media, it is presented in the context of 'Will this be an economic burden?' 'Are services ready?' But if you look at what Kofi Annan said, this is a huge opportunity for our society. If we really do engage and enable and empower all these older people to really participate in community and in society, we will be in a fabulous position in 2050. But there is some planning required. There is a huge amount of work to be done to ensure that we are well placed for that situation.

Role of Ombudsman

The Ombudsman has spoken on a number of occasions about the role played by advocacy and lobbying. Older & Bolder can be justifiably proud that they have worked so collaboratively, constructively and indeed successfully with your member organisations to highlight issues impacting on older people and their families. While times may be bad economically for our country, (the conference) today is an example of what can be done with a shared vision, strong leadership and a team of determined and competent people.

The role of the Ombudsman and her team does not encompass advocacy. Ombudsman staff must remain independent and impartial as each and every complaint is examined. They cannot advocate for a member of the public or indeed for a public body. Advocacy and impartiality cannot be bedfellows. For an Ombudsman to be effective, credible and trusted, the Oireachtas, every public body under jurisdiction and every member of the public must have full faith that the office has no bias or pre-judgment and no agenda other than to establish the truth of what has happened and, where there has been poor administration, to rectify it. Every case is examined on its merits and the outcomes presented as fair and reasonable, based on the evidence. As a result of dealing with hundreds of thousands of complaints, however, the Ombudsman has developed a strong insight into common injustices and trends in poor service delivery and the impact this can

have on people. Armed with this information, the Ombudsman uses appropriate opportunities to highlight issues and injustices and to ensure they're addressed.

Over our 28 years of operation, we have dealt with about 80,000 complaints and several hundred thousand enquiries. Thankfully we have had many successes for individuals and groups. And we hope that public administration is a little bit more accountable, a little bit more efficient and a little bit more citizen-focused as a result of our interventions. It is also important to say that while we do not uphold all complaints, we do hope that, in a significant majority of cases, people do go away with more information than they came to us with, and with a greater understanding of what happened and why it happened.

Last October, legislation (Ombudsman (Amendment) Act 2012) governing our office was extended to include an additional 180 public bodies. Included now are for example:

- All the VECs and third level education agencies;
- National Treatment Purchase Fund;
- HIQA;
- National Transport Authority.

Another welcome development in that legislation was that, for the first time, all public bodies have a responsibility to deal with complaints in a timely manner and to ensure that users of the service have enough information on their rights, particularly at local level, where their complaint can go next, whether there's an appeal function, how they can access the Ombudsman etc.

Perspective on Nursing Home Care

Last month, Emily O'Reilly spoke at a Third Age Ireland event. In her speech she referred to nursing home care and expressed her belief that a good nursing home would have to be one that engaged community interests, schools, local voluntary groups, local businesses. In other words that residents of the nursing home would remain as members of the local community, sharing activities. The idea of people living in nursing homes, isolated from their communities, disappointed her. She drew the comparison between some private nursing homes situated in isolated areas with no community links and 'well manicured warehouses' because their residents lack any connection with their neighbourhood. The comment caused a major reaction, from the private nursing home sector in particular. Interestingly, in addressing the annual conference of *Nursing Homes Ireland* in 2009, the Ombudsman had already highlighted the same concern. On that occasion she said:

“Why should the creation of essentially artificial homes for our elderly, isolated from a vibrant community outside, be increasingly the model of choice for so many? Are there community solutions engaged in by other countries that we could usefully transplant?”

She asked for innovative thinking regarding long-term care for older people. The Ombudsman had absolutely no intention of causing any upset to any provider of nursing home care. On the contrary she has spoken at a number of events in that sector over a number of years, particularly because she has a huge respect for what many of those members are doing, the investment they are putting into their

facilities to make sure there is ‘a home from home environment’ that is, where possible, integrated with the community. She was however attempting to prompt debate and discussion about our vision for those people who do require 24 hour care.

Professor Des O’Neill discussed her speech in an article in the Irish Times the following week. While he shared concern about some of the language used, he complimented the Ombudsman on raising such an important issue and on bringing some emotion into an issue that he said was often depressingly devoid of such. Older & Bolder, as we know, has done a huge amount in making home care a real option for people – an accessible and cost effective choice. But where care needs are too high to support a viable home care programme, appropriate residential care must be available that meets high standards and live up to the standard of ‘a home from home’; that ambitious and sometimes clichéd objective we as a society could make a reality. I hope the Ombudsman’s speech at Third Age Ireland has helped prompt discussion in this regard and that we will see a bigger sprinkling of examples throughout the country of ‘a home from home’ environment, a fusion of good nursing care integrated with a community and all its associated activities.

Clarity about Rights and Entitlements

Almost since its inception in 1984, the Office of the Ombudsman has wrestled with the problems that arise when people simply do not know what their rights and entitlements are, and when the State, for whatever reason, fails to spell out precisely what people can expect as their right. The Ombudsman has expressed her frustration at how this country sometimes trundles forward, introducing new schemes, new regulations and new laws without really stopping to think about what sort of ultimate landscape we are trying to create, or what the model of services for older people we are trying to achieve is. I know that the Ombudsman greatly welcomes the National Positive Ageing Strategy and looks forward to greater transparency and clarity with what this country’s plans and priorities are, for example that old chestnut: is it to ensure people can stay in their homes for as long as possible? If so, are the resources of the State really directed towards that end? Will our local authorities, our transport, our social protection, our health and our social care systems work together effectively to make home care a really sustainable choice for the vast majority of older people?

Pursuing the rights of older people has sometimes challenged the Ombudsman and taken her and her predecessors into very choppy waters. Be it the investigation into the former Department of Social Welfare about lost pension arrears, be it with the Revenue Commissioners with regard to redress for tax affairs, be it the Department of Health regarding nursing home subventions and the right to nursing home care; these all tested the Ombudsman’s commitment to investigating the issues, establishing the truth and seeking to provide proper redress. I think the Ombudsman’s experience over the years is probably relevant to many of you. That old saying – if it’s worth doing, it’s worth doing right – has been a key guiding principle in the office. Finalising those reports was often only the beginning of the journey that ultimately saw some justice done. For the advocates and campaigners among you, a vision, an energy, a dogged determination are only some of the requirements to pass that finish line.

Examples of Complaints dealt with by the Ombudsman.

Some examples of cases we have examined in the Office may provide insight into the work we do to protect the rights of older people on an everyday basis. Many of you will fill the vacuum left by Older & Bolder and continue to advocate for the rights for older people. These examples may prompt you to make a complaint to us in connection with yourself, a family member or someone you represent. Some of these cases were brought to our attention by advocates; without those advocates, the older person involved would not have received the redress they did.

Example 1: Medical card

An 80 year old man had enjoyed a medical card for many years. In 2009 his medical card was reviewed and taken from him even though his income had not changed. In 2012, his medical card was restored. He began to make enquiries at local level about why it had been taken from him in the first place and why he had to pay for his medical care in that period. When he didn't get satisfaction, he came to the Office of the Ombudsman. It transpired that he had separated from his wife in 2009 but had remained legally married. When we looked at this case, the HSE accepted they had been wrong to assess him as a single man. They had already restored his medical card, and were happy to reimburse him the medical expenses he had accrued in the three year period, a total of €761.00. More importantly, this forced the HSE to look at the issue of separation, an increasing issue in society for a number of older people.

Example 2: Homecare grant

This (now defunct) grant was part of the homecare package scheme. It was a cash payment. A 90 year old woman, who was living alone, was highly disabled and required 24 hour care, applied for this grant. Like many, she had a dedicated family trying to put a 24/7 rota in place. They were also buying in private care. They knew that if they got this grant, they could top up the private care so that they could fill the 24/7 schedule. They discussed it with the HSE and passed the financial requirements. Just after they had completed the forms the scheme was abolished and they were told they would not receive it; a certain number of home care hours were offered instead. These hours did not meet the number of care hours needed. They tried to resolve it locally, could not, and came to us. We worked with the HSE, who acknowledged there had been poor administration in a few different ways. Firstly, they should have communicated with people in the area that the scheme was about to be abolished. Secondly, if the application had been submitted it should have been processed. Thirdly, the HSE had sent the form to a GP and it had got lost in the system, so it remained there for a while; there had been an obligation on the HSE to follow that up in light of the fact the scheme was about to be abolished. The HSE accepted our findings and settled that case with us. The family were given €8,500 to cover care costs.

Example 3: Mobility allowance

This third case got a lot of media attention. A woman was refused the Mobility Allowance as she was over 65 years of age. The Department of Health accepted that the Mobility Allowance scheme was in breach of the Equal Status Act. They agreed to give her the allowance and paid arrears to her estate as she had since passed away.

A number of people since came to us, but unfortunately the Department of Health and the HSE refused to give these people the Mobility Allowance. Hence, the beginning of a battle. Around the same time we had received complaints about the motorised transport grant. The definition the Department of Health were using was very much around physical disability. But people for example with intellectual disability, with behavioural problems, with visual impairment, who had major mobility issues and could not use public transport, were being disqualified. The Department rejected our recommendation so the Ombudsman used her special power to make a report to the Oireachtas. Minister Reilly and Minister Lynch were called before an Oireachtas committee a number of weeks ago. Unfortunately, the Dept decided after its appearance before the committee to abolish both schemes because they were in breach of the legislation. But the Department agreed to set up a review, which is now taking place. The outcome – that both those schemes had been abolished – was extremely disappointing and frustrating for the Ombudsman. Her view was that the Department had many years to right the situation and had failed disabled people. The Ombudsman is looking forward to the outcome of that review and the final report from the Oireachtas committee.

Example 4: Local Authority housing adaptation

An older woman was living alone, had one hip replaced and was about to go back to hospital to get her other hip replaced. She was on a crutch and could not access her bathroom facilities so she asked the local authority for a grant to help with the bathroom adaptation. The local authority said no, but that they would move her to a different house with shower facilities. This woman had lived in the area for 30 years and did not want to move miles away and lose contact with her friends and family. So she complained and when she got no response, she came to us. Thankfully, the local authority has agreed to fund her adaptation as soon as possible. They agreed it was wrong of them to close her file, they reopened her file, are not insisting she move house and they will, as soon as possible, make the adaptation.

Becoming Empowered

I hope these examples illustrate the services our Office provides. I hope they also demonstrate that wrongs can be righted and perhaps they might empower you to pursue your rights or the rights of those you know. Pursuing injustices can deliver redress and introduce positive change for all those involved, not just the individual concerned. I know if the Ombudsman were here, she would want her final message to be about you continuing to have your voices heard, to identify injustices, and to work together collectively and dynamically, as Older & Bolder has done, to have those injustices named in the first instance, and then addressed. At macro and micro levels, policy is influenced in many ways. Good communication from trusted and relevant sources is critical and sources that bring realistic solutions to the table often find it easier to have that door opened.

Thank you for having me here today and congratulations again on your achievements. On the Ombudsman's behalf, may I wish Older & Bolder a wonderful retirement. I hope it enjoys its retirement as a grandparent, looking quietly from afar, admiring the knowledge and skill it has nurtured in the next generation, enjoying new successes but also being content to stand back, confident the competence is there to sort everything out.

Bernadette McNally's speech was followed by a brief questions and answers session, in which the following points were made.

Interface between Advocacy and Work of the Ombudsman

Bernadette McNally: We cannot be an advocacy organisation but we do a lot of what we call default advocacy. Increasingly, interest groups are coming to us with issues they are concerned with. For example, over the past couple of days, we have had a number of phone calls to do with this new rule that people in acute hospital beds are being prioritised for the Nursing Home Support Scheme (Fair Deal) over others who have been on the waiting list for longer periods. A complaint coming through the HSE complaints system could take six months before it reaches us on a matter like that. But if an issue is brought to our attention by an individual or an interest group, we can do what is called an own initiative investigation and investigate a matter in the absence of a formal complaint. I think it is very useful for groups that are out there, to talk to us and inform us. They can bring information to our attention that we can use directly and indirectly. We are also happy to go out and speak to groups around the country. We would be delighted for people to get in touch.

National Positive Ageing Strategy

Ruth Barrington: Can I just express my own hope that the spirit of Older & Bolder will continue and that the organisations that came together to form Older & Bolder will find a way to make this work. For instance, there is a real issue around the implementation of the new National Positive Ageing Strategy. I once heard the issue of implementing new policies in this country being described as 'implementation deficit disorder'! If this Strategy is to be implemented, it is going to require a very focused, targeted attention of people who really care about its implementation. I think there is a key role for organisations representing the interests of older people to keep their eye on that particular ball.

Community Rating of Health Insurance

Ruth Barrington: I would also like to raise the issue of community rating of health insurance. This is a principle the government adopted in the 1990s in the health insurance market. What community rating means is that younger members subsidise the care of older, sicker people. It is about intergenerational solidarity. Younger members subsidise the care of older people, by paying more than they need to, and when their turn comes to be older and sicker, they benefit from the contributions made by the next generation. Unfortunately, government has not protected this principle: successive governments have failed to make community rating work for older people. That is a very serious issue with serious repercussions. I would be very happy to speak to any organisation regarding this current situation and what needs to be said regarding older people who are main beneficiaries of health insurance.

Leave a Parting Message for Older & Bolder

Facilitated by Ms. Mary Cleary, Administration and Finance Manager, Older & Bolder

Immediately before breaking for lunch, Ms. Mary Cleary drew participants' attention to postcards in their conference folders. She reminded them of the opportunity to write a parting message to Older & Bolder and to post those messages on a display board at the end of the room.

Parting messages were subsequently analysed by the Conference Rapporteur and main themes identified (c.f. pp. 28 of this report).



Speaking up: Making a Difference





Introduction to the Session

Chairperson: Mrs. Catherine McGuinness, Retired Judge of the Supreme Court

Mrs. McGuinness prefaced her introduction to the session with an expression of admiration for the work of Older & Bolder. She said that she shared the sentiments already articulated at the conference about the value of a unified voice on older people's issues and hoped that a mechanism might be found to sustain the work in the future.

She then introduced the panel of guest presenters and explained that the purpose of the session was to explore, by hearing from individuals with diverse perspectives and experiences, how people and groups can use the media and political systems to make a difference.



Take Ownership of Older People's Issues

Dr. Sara Burke, Journalist and Health Policy Analyst

Introduction

Good afternoon everybody and thank you for asking me here.

Much of my work in journalism and health policy analysis is about reading unreadable policies, trying to translate them into plain English and get through the spin that is propagated every day by the government and the HSE. This is at the opposite end of influencing change through personal testimonies or telling people's stories. However, I think there is a critical role for campaigning and hearing the voices of older people in bringing about change. And that's exactly what media organisations want. Thinking about this today, I realised that two of my first breaks in journalism resulted in or were enabled by older people telling their own stories on issues facing older people.

Leas Cross Experience

In October 2006, I managed to get a copy of the delayed, unpublished report of the inquiry by Professor Des O'Neill into abuse in the Leas Cross nursing home. This report had been commissioned by Mary Harney after the Primetime Investigates programme in May 2005, part of which report we ran verbatim in Village magazine. Months later I went on to cover the official launch of Professor Des O'Neill's report and witnessed the spouses and families of people who had died in Leas Cross being denied access to the launch. I sat with these families, who were sitting in cars outside Dr Steevens' hospital, being denied copies of the inquiry into the death of their loved ones. I held up a microphone to the HSE official physically blocking these families and the opposition TDs, who they eventually let in. This led to me having a strong relationship with the families and covering the stories of some of the people who had died in Leas Cross. In these stories, their spouses and children recalled their lives before they went into Leas Cross, and shared photos of them in their youth, as well as the concerns the family had had while they were in Leas Cross. These stories were discussed on the programme Questions and Answers. The Primetime Investigates story and coverage thereof led to the closure of that nursing home and to regulation of all nursing homes, public and private.

People's stories make a difference. I can still see the image of a man badly bruised in a chair in Leas Cross due to unnecessary use of restraints and poor care.

Medical Card Protests

Another of the other big breaks I had was covering the emergency budget in October 2008, when Brian Lenihan announced that the government was taking medical cards off people aged over 70 years. This was the first time I was asked

into *Drivetime*; I was listening to the budget speech in studio when Mary Wilson was the first to confirm that medical cards were to be taken off those aged over 70 who already had medical cards, and that this did not just affect new applications. I realised immediately that this was political suicide. I covered the protests, the daily press conferences, the backtracking by the government on income levels for older people, and that extraordinary protest meeting in Westland Row church when ministers and TDs were booed off the altar. This older people power resulted in a virtual U-turn on medical cards for all over 70s, with only 12,000 losing their medical cards. A year later, 336,000 older people still had full medical cards, many I suspect above the income limit.

I could argue against your success. Why should richer older people have medical cards at the expense of poorer younger people? Equally I could argue – and I have – that medical cards for older people is a very good public health measure because it means people access health services at an earlier point in time, without fear of cost. That's good for prevention and their long-term health. But the point is that people power, and in this instance older people's power, made a big difference.

Be Bold

I hope these stories show how older people and their families can influence change and the power of older people.

A few thoughts on engaging with the media:

- There is a huge need for a diversity in voices in the media and in the political domain, a need for different ages, ethnicities, genders, geographies;
- The media wants personal stories, especially 'misery porn', so getting positive good news stories out there is a challenge;
- Prepare, don't just wing it – you can't be over-prepared or over-practised;
- Don't forget there is real power in people's voices – it is what people remember.

I encourage you to just do it: the more you do it, the easier it is. Be yourself, tell your story, put your head over the bar and make some noise. Engaging in media work takes courage but change does not happen without people, and certainly not without people with courage. And while Older & Bolder won't be there to do it, you older people still are and I am hopeful you will continue to do so: to speak out, be bold, have courage, to take and keep ownership of older people's issues by making noise.

Thank you very much.

“I am hopeful you will continue to do so: to speak out, be bold, have courage, to take and keep ownership of older people's issues by making noise”



The Use of our Political System as a Campaigning Tool

Mr. Sean Dillon, Public Affairs Manager, Older & Bolder

Introduction

“We in America do not have government by the majority. We have government by the majority who participate”.

Thomas Jefferson

I want to spend a few minutes talking about our experience in Older & Bolder interacting with our political system as part of our campaigning. I often explain this part of campaigning as more of an art (some might say a dark art!) as opposed to a science because much of it has to do with basic old fashioned human interaction, powers of persuasion and selling and often, unfortunately, has little to do with following an exact nine step processes that guarantee you success every time! We do however have a few tips which have proven successful for us and I will touch upon briefly before the end of my piece.

Building Working Relationships

When you sit back and reflect upon politics in Ireland, we have one of the most accessible political systems in the world. And yet, most people don't interact with it other than every five years when it comes to general elections. Those of you that own or owned a pub/shop/café – what would you think of a customer that appeared on your door just once every five years and demanded a discount?

Remember, contrary to populist views, our politicians, with a few exceptions, are human! They live amongst us in our communities across the country, attend the same matches as us, go to the same pubs – those that we know well, we often describe as ‘grand people’, whilst those that we don't we assume are the devil incarnate! To be safe, we in Older & Bolder just assumed they fell somewhere within both of those parameters and we got on with the job of ‘getting on’ with them accordingly.

One of the key lessons for us in Older & Bolder when it came to interacting with our political system is that, just like working with any other bunch of people in society, it is imperative to build up a working relationship with all politicians and to keep working on it. I emphasise again – all politicians – and the need to constantly maintain and work on the relationship, in good times and in bad! I would also point out that in pursuing a campaigning objective, your individual political preferences must be parked and an opportunity given to both government and opposition political representatives to come on board with your campaign or explain themselves if they can't. Appearing at their doors solely during times of extreme crisis, at a general election or just before the Budget will simply get you a place in the queue

with all the other people who didn't work on developing a working relationship and are now scrambling to get priority over your and other people's concerns/issues.

Linking Local and National Action

Our campaigns over the years have worked closely on building this relationship and then linking the local support base with the national organisational side to build up a momentum behind whatever key issue we had been asked to move on. We could never have achieved the successes we had if there hadn't been an organised, coordinated effort between both national and local levels of the alliance.

A group of TDs from across the country coming together for a Parliamentary Party (PLP) meeting on a Tuesday morning, all bringing the same message from their local constituents about an issue, often sets the priorities within that party. It gets the issue noticed and whilst it doesn't guarantee success, the chances of action are far better than if the issue remains unnoticed! In October last year, once our campaign to reverse the cuts to the home care budgets got onto the PLP agenda of the government parties – and we kept up the pressure on the issue across the country – it slowly but surely ground out a reversal of the cuts by December of last year.

Understanding how National Parliament Works

We handed out to you a one pager on tips for campaigning – Part 4 covers the various means of keeping contact with your local politicians. I would also add that it is important to have an understanding of how your national parliament works as well. The use of parliamentary questions through your local politician can often be a great (albeit frustrating means) of ascertaining policy positions or of eliciting historical information on issues.

Again if the issue is big enough, using Private Members time, Topical issues time, Seanad debate time, Oireachtas committees are all well within the capability of being used by you, provided you approach them in an organised and coordinated manner.

This time last year we used the opportunity of a Seanad report on 'The Rights of Older Persons' that we had participated in to get the House to organise a debate on that report. We knew if we got the debate we would get the Minister into the chamber and, once in there, our supporters in the Seanad (across all parties) would put pressure on the Minister to give a commitment to publishing a National Positive Ageing Strategy.

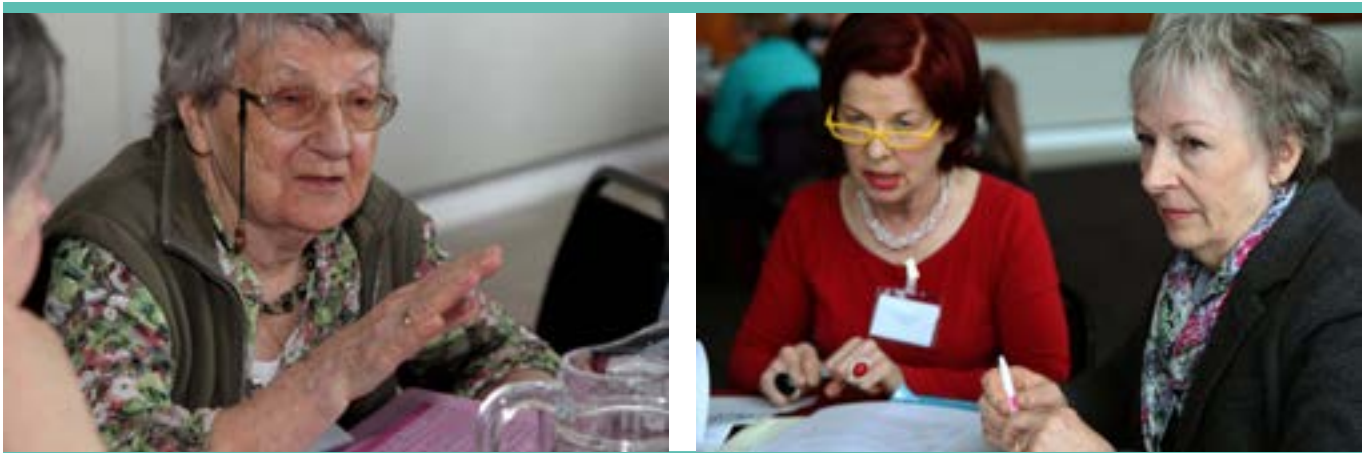
We briefed all senators the day before the debate either one to one, or with a one pager brief that we sent to them. Such was the debate and unanimity of the pressure coming from all Senators across the house about publishing the National Positive Ageing Strategy that the minister ended up coming back into the chamber with a commitment to publish it. A few gentle reminders later and voilà, here we are today with a strategy!

Polite but Firm

One approach that we were unapologetic about in our campaigning standards – and which I have to add occasionally resulted in criticisms from some supporters – we always approached our work with politicians in a polite and respectful manner, regardless of disappointing short-term outcomes or provocation. That’s not to say we weren’t forceful, direct or indeed, on occasion, blunt but we never burned bridges we had worked so hard to build in a fit of pique. I’m often reminded of that Winston Churchill line in this line of work: ‘Tact is the ability to tell someone to go to hell in such a way that they look forward to the trip’.

Finally, to sum it all up, having a planned, coordinated approach with well thought out, constructive arguments delivered simultaneously at both national and local levels will always go a long way towards delivering a successful campaign outcome – you may not win all of the time, but you’ll certainly win more than those who leave it to chance and fortune.

“constructive arguments delivered simultaneously at both national and local levels will always go a long way towards delivering a successful campaign outcome ”





Who is going to take up the Torch?

Mr. Sean Kinsella, Chairperson, Wexford Age Equality Network and Wexford Division, Irish Senior Citizens Parliament

Early Days

When I reflect on the years we have journeyed together, with pride and satisfaction I think how it began for me in 2006 in Wexford when I chaired a meeting called by Older & Bolder and the Irish Senior Citizens' Parliament (ISCP). Later on in 2007 we had a pre-general election meeting at which we invited all the candidates to come and speak about their policies.

Later on we formed the County Wexford Age Equality Network, which is made up of a big number of voluntary older peoples' groups from throughout the county and with the help of Older & Bolder we were able to continue to lobby our TDs at regular intervals. The network, with the help of Age & Opportunity and Wexford Local Development, put in a planning programme to help us grow and develop with confidence, i.e. Ageing with Confidence, Get Vocal and media training.

Our journey together was well on its way. We, as older people were getting bolder, if you like, in a nice way. When you set out on a journey you have to know where you are going, to follow a map; otherwise you will get lost. With Older & Bolder our destinations were always well sign-posted, and one of the first projects was to save and retain the old age pension. It has to be acknowledged that sending in the postcards and getting the signatures worked well. From our experience, political lobbying can have a significant effect. We felt proud and gained in confidence from this success. We also had a campaign to Make Home Work, the right to age well at home. We again contacted all the TDs in their clinics and we were well supported by the staff of Older & Bolder, by their research, leaflets, books and pamphlets. Our mentors in Older & Bolder saw the need for us to pause occasionally on our journey together, to discuss and reflect on the issues before us. Coming out to meet, talk and listen to older people in the regions was very important and worthwhile. This was a very professional approach.

Growing Effectiveness

At times we encountered dark clouds on the horizon, but nothing could dampen our spirits. There was however, one overarching principal which Older & Bolder will always be associated with and that is promoting a National Positive Ageing Strategy for Ireland. It will be a long-term plan for making Ireland a better place in which to grow older.

On our journey together, I think it was significant that we focused on one issue at a time. This gave us a chance to highlight these issues in a more comprehensive way rather than going with a shopping list. It was also important that older people were consulted every step of the way by Older & Bolder, and the older people were able to respond.

For those of us who were privileged to journey together with Older & Bolder, we have become aware that it was also a journey of self-discovery, a journey of participation and fulfilment.

There are several ways of influencing political parties or government and we do that by lobbying, campaigning, meeting our TDs or elected representatives or maybe even marching. Lobbying is the practice of seeking to influence the political process and is as old as the hills. We can all take part in the lobbying process and you probably have if you have signed a petition, attended a mass rally, written a letter or email to your TD or local councillor or attended a TD's constituency clinic, you have been a lobbyist too. Being part of an organised group or network you acquire the skills, knowledge, experience and confidence to prepare well so that we can be more effective in lobbying. Why do we need to lobby? The current economic climate is presenting challenges across all areas of public spending so our voice is needed to protect the rights and interests of older people and that the issues affecting them are given prominence.

The media have a key role in influencing the political agenda. Politicians are particularly conscious of how they are portrayed and come across in the media. Having a good spokesperson is most helpful. Another important thing about the media is that you can build up a relationship with them; whether it's the local radio or the local paper. Trust and confidence can be gained by both sides. Very often you will find that it is the media who are contacting you about a story they are going to write on an issue concerning older people, or maybe they are looking for your reaction to the recent budget. It is all part of trying to influence policies and policy makers.

The journey is not over

The biggest challenge we face is apathy among the older age groups. There are many thousands of people out there who are unattached to anything. I think it is only at a local level, possibly through the network system in each county, that we can engage with them. We have to go out to the people rather than expect them to come to us. That is why I suggest that we should start to talk with people at a younger age and build up contact and trust with them as they grow themselves into old age. Intergenerational engagement is vital for the future.

Since the shocking news broke regarding Older & Bolder, a number of questions and choices have been gnawing in my gut. Having journeyed together for seven years with Older & Bolder, have we come to the end of the journey? Is the tent to be folded up and we all go our separate ways? We have learned a lot from a wealth of different experiences and I suggest we should not lose it. Older & Bolder has proved with the alliance of seven organisations that, by working and journeying together, we can achieve certain goals and we can make a difference.

“We have to go out to the people rather than expect them to come to us”

Who is going to take up the Torch?

Remember the journey which we have begun is not complete. Older & Bolder has shown us the way. Who is going to take up the torch? Which of the organisations is prepared to give the lead? We cannot accomplish much on our own, it needs the help of everybody putting their shoulder to the wheel and working together. We shouldn't worry about failure. We should worry about the chances we miss when we don't try. We should live our dreams and people who say it cannot be done should not interrupt those who are doing it. Walt Disney said, 'All our dreams can come true if we have the courage to pursue them'.

We have it in our power to make this happen; no one else is going to do it for us. Let this be the beginning of something new and wonderful for older people.

I urge you to support those who are willing to lead. You can do it. Yes you can!

Is feidir linn!





Making an Impact: How Organisations can help get Issues on the Media and Political Agenda

Mr. Carl O'Brien, Chief Reporter, The Irish Times

What is News?

What is news? It seems like an obvious question. We see it every day, but what is it? How do you define it? What makes it? News is that thing defined by the aphorism 'man bites dog', another way of saying that the news is the unusual, the new and sometimes the bizarre. It is about one plane that crashes, not the thousands that took off and landed safely. It's the marathon that ends in terror, not the countless others which take place without major incident. Academics have long tried to define what makes news and what journalists mean by their 'nose for news'. The most famous academic study was by two Norwegian sociologists, Galtung and Ruge, who in 1965, published a study that listed 12 factors defining newsworthiness – this was based on studying international news stories.

Many of them still hold true today. These include a bias toward the references to elites (a bomb in the US which kills a small number of people is seen as more important than one in Afghanistan that kills scores), proximity (the closer a story is to home, the more relevant it is), simple narrative (the less complicated a story is the more likely it is to appear in newspapers); and so on.

Coverage of Equality and Human Rights Issues

But these news values also mean that stories that are objectively important don't get the coverage they merit, e.g. social issues like poverty, discrimination, etc. Are they unexpected? No. They tend to be issues that 'have always been with us'. Do they involve elites? Quite the opposite – they often affect minority groups. Dramatic events? No. Equality tends to be a long slow-burning issue, unlike a motorway pile-up or plane crash. Are they politically significant? Most of the time, no. All in all, equality-related issues are often filed under 'dull but worthy', and issues often don't get the coverage they merit. News values, if you like, are stacked up against equality and human rights issues. Overall, in the real world, most would probably accept that news is generally what a journalist – or a news editor – believes to be of wide interest and possibly of some importance.

What makes an Effective Campaign?

How, then, do you make an effective campaign? There is no magic solution, though the most effective initiatives I've come across over recent years share a number of hallmarks in moving issues from the margins to the mainstream.

Human interest

Putting a human face on a story transforms it from being an abstract issue into something that affects real people on the ground. That's why cases studies are so important. It is true in print media – but especially television. Take a look at RTE's nine o'clock news – and especially BBC news – and almost every issue opens with an individual story. At the end of the day, people are interested in people. For example, when the Government was cutting personal assistant hours for people with disabilities last September, it was quickly forced into a climb-down. We saw the reality when we saw people in wheelchairs; frail and vulnerable, young and old, others willing to sleep out. It brought home the cynicism and mindlessness of the cuts. They were reversed within days.

Simple message

The media tries to distil down the complex into the simple; turning impenetrable pages of reports into something that's digestible and comprehensible for a wider audience. Effective campaigns recognise that simple messages are the best transmitted. For example, the No to Lisbon campaign of a few years ago was particularly effective. The issues at hand were complex, legalistic and – famously – many senior politicians admitted that they had never read the treaty. The posters of some of the campaigns read: 'You will lose power, money and freedom'. They had the famous three monkeys posters – with monkey with hand over his ears; over his eyes and over its mouth. The slogan was 'The EU won't see for you, won't hear you and won't speak for you'. You can argue over whether this was scaremongering or distortion but you can't argue over one thing: it worked.

Unified voice

Where disparate groups come together, they tend to have a stronger and more unified voice. Instead of division and mixed messages in a sector, you have a single, strong voice. For example, Make Poverty History drew together dozens of organisations around the world to make progress on issues like trade injustice and debt reform; the Children's Rights Alliance, a coalition of 80 NGOs, played a key role in getting a referendum on children's rights placed on the political agenda and – ultimately – passed. Older & Bolder, too, helped ensure that we have a strategy on positive ageing and helped ease several planned budget cuts. These campaign groups set clear goals with time-lines. It's simple, but effective.

Politics

Once something becomes politicised, it gets a life of its own. An issue is subject to debate in the Dáil; then there's a clash between a Government minister and his Shadow Spokesperson in opposition; then there's a demand for more answers, accusation over cover-up or insensitivity; then the Government pledges to act. For example, I write quite a bit about children in care, and the deaths of vulnerable young people in the State care system. The articles didn't have much of a public impact until the issue was raised in the Dáil. Suddenly, there was a clash between ministers and opposition over claims that reports were being suppressed; the political tussle led to investigation into deaths in care; pressure on the HSE; played a key role in Government's decision to take child and family services away from the HSE and set up a new agency.

Future for Older & Bolder: what comes next?

It's a time of uncertainty for the movement, but there are many reasons to be optimistic. If anything, the success of Older & Bolder provides a hopeful road-map for the future.

- Political heavy-weights: Older people represent around a quarter of people who vote; they matter; politicians listen; there is an open door to the political system. We've seen that over recent years.
- Time and energy: There are many volunteers willing to commit time to campaign; the notion that the older generation is conservative and not willing to rock the boat is nonsense – older people have shown they are willing to stand up and make their voice heard.
- Organised: It is an organised sector. Active Retirement Ireland, Age & Opportunity, Alzheimer Society of Ireland, Carers Association, Irish Hospice Foundation, Irish Senior Citizens Parliament, Older Women's Network and Third Age/Senior Help Line are all well-run, well organised groups.

The challenge is how to harness this. Maybe the answer lies in a new alliance, albeit less formal and possibly less well resourced, but one that can use the experience gained through Older & Bolder in a new incarnation.

“ ...the success of Older & Bolder provides a hopeful road-map for the future”





Speaking from Experience

Ms. Niamh Walker, Retired Individual and Older & Bolder Advocate

Introduction

I hope that everyone here will engage with the media on behalf of the interests of older people.

Older & Bolder will leave a huge gap but we can all be advocates on behalf of older peoples issues. When able to do so, we can stand up for ourselves when dealing with services so that our needs are met appropriately, for example so that we are not sent home from hospital too early.

We need to advocate for ourselves. Yes, as Sara and Carl have pointed out, it is good to start with a human interest story when dealing with the media. I suggest you try to take control of the agenda of an interview by explaining very clearly in advance what you are comfortable to say and what topics you do not wish to comment upon. I have found it helpful to do this. Keep your comments to your own area of expertise and knowledge, a position from which you can speak with comfort and confidence.

Sometimes a reporter or programme producer may want a particular slant which does not accord with your own view. Do not go down the reporter's avenue if it does not suit you. Keep to what you are comfortable saying in public. Prepare for the interview by rehearsing your thoughts. I sometimes find I have just expressed it wonderfully in my mind in preparation but it may come out differently in interview. However the preparation may prepare you to be fluent in interview. Of course some people are not comfortable to speak out in public. Discussing issues of interest and concern to older people among ourselves and with others, such as we have done with Older & Bolder, is of value in helping us to clarify our ideas and in creating a groundswell of opinion. This too is a form of advocacy.

Ambassadors and Advocates

We can all be ambassadors for our age group, engaging directly with younger people wherever we may meet them. It is good to appreciate what help others give us, a seat on a bus or help with a suitcase. We could all appreciate the good things we have such as the travel pass or home help hours for example. We could all write to the relevant Minister explaining how much something we are provided with means to us in our daily lives. Perhaps this would convince the Minister of the value of these provisions.

Tús Maith, leat na hoibre. A good start is half the work. We have had the Tús Maith, the good start, with Older & Bolder. Now it is up to us to continue the work for fair treatment for older people.

Conclusion

At the end of this session, the chair, Mrs. Catherine McGuinness, thanked all the speakers for their contributions, and looking to the future, said:

“They’re extremely helpful and inspirational, and hopefully will help us to carry on”.

Advocacy on Age Issues in the Future



Introduction to Open Forum

Chair: Mr. Owen Keenan, Chairperson, Older & Bolder

During the group discussions, many positives were raised in relation to older people's experiences of Older & Bolder and they were very appreciative of that. Examples include:

- That it was an ear to the ground, emphasising the importance of listening at local level;
- The value of clear messages, and the strategic approach Older & Bolder took in raising awareness;
- The strong sense of solidarity that Older & Bolder represented; and
- The proactive approach that Older & Bolder took and the way in which older people were very much at the forefront of their work.

The big question that seems to have emerged across the tables is essentially around what will fill the vacuum in the absence of Older & Bolder? People raised some burning issues that still need to be addressed in the future. Examples include primary care, home care, State Pension, travel and the National Positive Ageing Strategy.

That's not even a summary of the group discussions today, but only a flavour of some of the issues raised. It's over to you now.



1. Mr. Pat Kelly, Cork

I would like to thank and praise Older & Bolder for encouraging and helping older people to move forward. As an older person, I have a great fear of illness. I cared for my parents for 25 years. I know the level of bureaucracy involved through my own parents' experiences. Two weeks ago, Cork University Hospital was closed for over a week. They were accepting no patients. The number of older people is increasing every year. I dread getting ill and requiring care. In my own experience, the bureaucracy is absolutely mind boggling.

But I have to acknowledge Older & Bolder, also the Carers' Association, for representing and informing people that wouldn't normally have an opportunity to go public. Thank you.

2. Maurice O'Connell, CEO, Alzheimer's Society and Older & Bolder Board Member

I work for the Alzheimer's Society for another week and am then retiring.

I want to concur with many people with the way in which we have all come to a place of recognising we've got something to celebrate. The fact is that over the last number of years, Older & Bolder has enabled many voices to be heard, and I think that's really, really important. And I think the alliance behind the executive have had a tremendous job to do because in their own way, they've had to find their own level with each other in order to enable to Older & Bolder to do their work.

But I suppose I'm concerned much more about the future and where all of this will go. I think that many of us that have participated at very different levels recognise that to let go of something often means that there is something else to be earned and to be fought for. We have a responsibility to take what is good and what we have achieved and make something more.

Because I am at that stage where I am also stepping back, I have been invited by three organisations: Age & Opportunity, Active Retirement and Third Age to work with them and other organisations to explore ways in which older people's voice can be strengthened so that locally they can network within their own organisations, within emerging organisations connecting with national bodies, organisations like the Age Friendly Counties, can find a way of bringing people together locally and begin to build up a unified voice that has emerged over the last number of years. The opportunity to do that means that I have (to undertake) some meaningful activity, but not only that, it will be an opportunity to do a couple of things.

One of the major issues that's close to my heart is the disadvantage of people who acquire disabilities, in whatever form that is, whether it is physical or mental, or through the stages of life that we face in coming to our own mortality. I think one speaker talked about the furnace of Leinster House. It's as hot out here as it is in Leinster House. I think we have to make sure we keep things up. And in doing that, I am throwing in my hat, to say I'm going to be working with these three organisations and other organisations to try and continue some of the work that has begun, but also to try and strengthen the local voice of older people.

3. Mr. Ciaran McKinney, Director of Operations, Age & Opportunity and Older & Bolder Board Member

I've just been struck by a number of comments that were made at our table this afternoon. To my mind, a number of very key messages came through. One is that Older & Bolder really presented as a very slick and professional organisation while at the same time not appearing grandiose; they represented a very professional way of working. That was coupled with a sentiment that was expressed a few times: that older people who took part in any consultation didn't feel in any way spoken down to. I think that's really important. Certainly, I know this from experience, having been involved in other campaigning activities, that sometimes those doing the campaigning can be incredibly patronising. So I'd like to on record say that was obviously never the case with Older & Bolder, and that through Older & Bolder's work, we now have a new platform of older people who have been strengthened to carry on this work. Thank you.

4. Mr. Michael O'Halloran, retired CEO, Irish Senior Citizens' Parliament

I just want to briefly share with you some of my experiences and I want to dampen some enthusiasm of people who get carried away with [things] and who are not able to deliver what is needed but are full of enthusiasm. What is important is older people themselves, not organisations. Organisations will serve purposes but they're not as important as older people and even less important are the people who work for older people's organisations. Older people are the important persons.

Having different kinds of organisations is very important, to reflect the different interests of older people. But the overall organisation that comes into being will have to have characteristics that will enable it to do its work. The one thing Older & Bolder had was a certain detached independence, free of the politics of its member organisations. So how now are you going to have an organisation with that freedom, if it's made up of organisations with their own single interests? The overall organisation will have to represent the poorest older people to the most well off older people – the whole range of older people. The interests are many and the needs are great. Many more will need to be addressed. Atlantic Philanthropies did great good and are still doing great work, but they did a disservice to older people, one, by allowing Older & Bolder to come into being, to fund it and then to withdraw it. There should have been a space given to the Older & Bolder staff and the member organisations to find a new way of moving forward. There won't be independent funding for a new organisation, there may not be independent thought and there certainly will not be the skills of the people working in Older & Bolder. Even this conference is a credit to those skills. We are going to miss that and I think that that is not replaceable.

The last thing is, you need mass membership to have the impact – to do the lobbying in every corner of Ireland, you will need members who are equipped to do it through information and training. Thank you.

5. Mr. Sean Whelan, Kells

It is a great privilege to have been associated with Older & Bolder over the years. One of the lovely things about Older & Bolder was that, as an ordinary member, all I had to do was lift the phone to talk to someone. I could walk into the office on a walk-in basis anytime I was in Dublin, just to say hello or if I wanted information. That made me realise that there is heart in this organisation, that the people who run it are really interested because they allow an individual like me to walk in and out of the office and get advice. I want to thank them sincerely on my own behalf and I'm sure on behalf of everyone else, for that service. They are lovely people and we are going to lose them. That will be my greatest feeling of loss. With the campaign work, I am capable of pushing people myself, but to have an organisation like that to turn to is a great comfort and has been a great comfort.

I mention this issue to everyone I speak to: we get certain benefits as pensioners. We have the travel pass. We don't have 'free travel'. We have electricity (well we did). We didn't have 'free electricity'. We have our television licence. We have four or five different benefits. They are not free. I don't see anything wrong with anyone accepting charity when they need it but I don't need charity now. And I was not given benefits on a charitable basis. I was given them in recognition of 82 years of being on this earth and because 50 of those years, I worked, from 1945 to 1994. I paid social insurance, I paid tax, I didn't dodge anything. When I'm given a travel pass it is a recognition of my service to this country over the years. It is not a free gift, it's a recognition of my contribution. I refuse to allow myself to be demeaned by being given something free. These are benefits. I speak to anyone I know of this. Whenever anyone says you have a free travel pass and a free medical card, tell them "no we don't". Because I find it offensive. I earned it, I got it and I am not going to let it go. Thank you.

6. Ms. Geraldine Plunkett, Make Home Work Champion

I agree absolutely with what the last speaker about entitlements being labelled 'free'. In particular, I'd like to talk about the travel pass. I think that among other things, it is not just about freedom to go here and there; it is a social and health cure. For instance, a friend of mine has a neighbour who is in his eighties, quite healthy but who is not very well off; he owns his house, has the state pension and nothing else. Once a week he goes to Cork from Dublin to visit his married daughter. He goes on the early train, has lunch with her, plays with his grandchildren. Then he gets the train back home. He wouldn't be able to afford that without the travel pass and he comes home on the night train. The point is he would not be able to afford that. So if, for instance, the travel pass is taken away from him, and he's only one of thousands, it is a problem. It keeps people healthy, it keeps people from getting depressed, it's very important socially. It keeps families together, it provides social opportunities. If that was taken away I think it would be a retrograde step for older people, for younger people, for society.

I would like to thank Older & Bolder for everything they've done. It's been a fantastic movement and I hope it's just sowing the seeds of future excellence. Thank you.

7. Mr. Kevin Molloy, Volunteer in the Age Sector

I'm retired ten years and I'm a volunteer in the older people's sector. I got involved in Active Retirement some ten years ago. I have also participated on the board of Older & Bolder as well, as a volunteer. It's like a death in the family but we've got to get up and continue the campaign. I am going nowhere. I am carrying on the campaign. There are networks throughout the country where older people could contribute. We've age friendly cities and counties, being promoted by the World Health Organisation. We have all these platforms we can work on. We must keep these platforms going. Speaking as a volunteer, I certainly won't be going anywhere and I will be contributing, through my own organisation and organisations that I'm involved in. What has been started with Older & Bolder is not going to stop today. It is going to continue with volunteers like myself. It will be the older people that will carry the message and issues of older people. Thank you.



Closing Remarks



Choose Wisely

Ms. Patricia Conboy, Director, Older & Bolder

Hello again,

We have come to the end of Older & Bolder's closing conference, Our Journey Together. I would like to take a few minutes to thank people.

We have heard your many expressions of appreciation and thanks to Older & Bolder during the day and we warmly thank you for all of those. In our turn, we thank all of you, our friends and supporters, for your participation in our conference today and for the support you have given to Older & Bolder between 2006 and 2013. Individuals and groups have given us fantastic support and I hope you will forgive me if I don't single individuals out but say a sincere 'thank you' to one and all.

I would like to thank our guest chairpersons at the conference today: Dr. Ruth Barrington, Mrs. Justice Catherine McGuinness, and I would like to acknowledge Mrs. McGuinness' generous support to Older & Bolder over several years; our guest speakers, Ms. Bernadette McNally, Mr. Carl O'Brien, Dr. Sara Burke, Ms. Niamh Walker, Mr. Sean Kinsella. Sean and Niamh have been wonderful advocates for Older & Bolder, and in their own right. I would also like to thank our Make Home Work champions and particularly three who are in the audience today, Ms. Imelda Byrne, Ms. Mabel Gargan and Ms. Geraldine Plunkett.

Thank you also to our conference rapporteur Liza Costello, to the small army of facilitators who have assisted us with the small group discussions today and to Maria McMullen and Ruth Stenson who assisted with registration.

Members of Older & Bolder Alliance

Older & Bolder is an alliance of organisations. I would like to thank the member organisations: Active Retirement Ireland, Age & Opportunity, Alzheimer Society, Carers Association, Irish Hospice Foundation, Irish Senior Citizens Parliament and Third Age – Senior Help Line. I would like to thank their representatives on the Board of Older & Bolder between 2006 and 2013; and to mention the Older Women's Network which wound up last year but some of whose former members are in the audience today.

I would like to sincerely thank Mr. Owen Keenan, chairperson of Older & Bolder since December 2012. I also wish to sincerely thank Mr. Tom O'Higgins, independent chairman of Older & Bolder from 2006 – 2012 and to warmly acknowledge his support and contribution to our work over that long period of time.

The Atlantic Philanthropies

Older & Bolder received three grants from The Atlantic Philanthropies and, on your behalf, I would like to thank Atlantic Philanthropies for the funding which enabled the work of Older & Bolder between 2006 and 2013.

Other Contributions

I would like to say 'thank you' to Mr. Pat Montague and his team in Montague Communications. Pat provided management and communications support to Older & Bolder in Phase 1 and was the grant-holder in Phase 2. Those early phases got Older & Bolder off to a wonderful start.

I would also like to thank Red Dog and PCC, now Persuasion Republic, who provided valued campaign consultancy support to Older & Bolder.

Evaluators Ann Clarke and Anne Eustace worked with Older & Bolder between 2010 and 2013 and I would like to thank them for their focus on learning from our experience for the future.

Older & Bolder Team

As director, I want to express the most heartfelt thanks and appreciation to my colleagues on the Older & Bolder team. It has been a privilege to campaign with Mary Cleary, Sean Dillon, Fiona Gallagher and Diarmaid O'Sullivan. Alice Mary Higgins was an asset to our team in 2010/2011. In terms of integrity, generosity, creativity, you have been a wonderful group of people to work with. Our team has also benefited from the contributions of Vivienne Clarke, here with us today, and Roisín Boyd and Joan Brady who worked with us in 2011/2012.³

May Your Journey Prove Fruitful

Finally, my fellow campaigners, we wish you a safe passage as you continue your journey. There has been a call for national leadership on advocacy in support of older people and you have heard different responses to that call. This is a conversation for you to continue together now that Older & Bolder is closing.

For our part, we hope you will continue to champion the rights and entitlements of older people. Choices and decisions are part of any journey. You often have to decide which path to follow. *Choose wisely.* You have expertise and energy but energy needs to be focused, not dissipated. *Decide your route with care.*

May your journey prove fruitful. And, my final words, may you play your full part in shaping an age friendly Ireland; an Ireland in which our children and grandchildren will want to remain, and to grow old.

Thank you and safe home.

Audience Response

At this point, the audience gave Older & Bolder, and the Older & Bolder team, a standing ovation.

³ Roisin Boyd, Joan Brady and Vivienne Clarke each provided media support to Older & Bolder at different times and/or in different roles.



**Parting
Messages
from
Conference
Participants**



Introduction

There were three key themes in the parting messages posted by participants in the conference. These were: (1) Sadness and gratitude; (2) Hopes and concerns for the future; and (3) Acknowledging Older & Bolder's legacy.

1. Sadness and Gratitude

Almost all the cards shared a sense of sadness and dismay over the loss of Older & Bolder:

"I cannot describe how much I'll miss the creativity, vibrancy and energising spirit of Older & Bolder. But I hope that spirit, which you have galvanised for so many of us, will live on!"

Gratitude to Older & Bolder was, in a sense, the other side of this coin; messages conveying sadness over the loss of Older & Bolder went on to express appreciation for all that had been done for older people by the organisations. Key issues highlighted were: good quality, friendly communication, and how Older & Bolder empowered people.

"It's been a big help to our organisation. We learned a lot from going to the different meetings around the country."

"Thank you so much for your hard work and commitment – it has made such a real difference to older people such as myself."

"We all owe you a debt of gratitude."

"Thank you so much for everything you have done, for your organisation and your efficiency and most of all for giving a voice to older people, for listening and hearing our concerns."

Many messages of appreciation zoned in on the fact that Older & Bolder had provided older people with a voice:

"Thank you very much for giving me a voice where it counts."

"You provided a positive attitude by acting as a voice for older people."

"Thank you so much for all the heroic work you have done in leading the way in advocacy for older people. Clearly, succinctly and with great insight and clarity you have spoken for them."

People did not only appreciate this voice in its collective sense, as a tool for influencing policy. Some shared how it affected them on a personal level, raising their self-confidence as an individual, and providing a sense of solidarity through difficult experiences:

"It is with great sadness that I heard of this closure. While I cared for my mum 24/7 I was delighted to join in signing petitions. Job well done to all of you."

"Many thanks for giving me the opportunity through the years to gain confidence and courage. I'll miss you."

"I am so glad to have been involved – it opened many doors and gave me a voice for issues I had to deal with".

"We have been to your meetings so, so many times."

Many messages focused particularly on the valuable role played by the staff of Older & Bolder. They were identified as “a useful and uniting force”. People described both pleasure in working with the Older & Bolder staff and praised how effective they were:

“You have been a fabulous team and achieved greatly in such a short time on behalf of so many.”

2. Hopes and Concerns for the Future

Many messages were about people’s hopes for the future, in the absence of Older & Bolder to continue leading the way:

“I sincerely hope that your passion, learning and understanding about ageing in Ireland will be fully embraced in some alternative way.”

“We trust that some group with imagination will use your acquired expertise to speak on behalf of us all. You have been an inspiration to us all.”

Alongside these hopes however, came people’s fears:

“Who is going to inform us now? Who will coordinate protests?”

“There will be a huge gap as a result of the closure.”

“I dread to think what will happen if this organisation folds up.”

“If only funding could be found to keep things going”.

“My absolute regret is that the closure has been decided upon at a time when older people need more, not less, advocacy, such as what Older & Bolder provided.”

3. Acknowledging Older & Bolder’s Legacy

Despite people’s fears and concerns for the future, many highlighted the lasting impact of Older & Bolder’s work, sharing their conviction that Older & Bolder has left a strong legacy that will positively impact on the future of advocacy and campaigning for older people in Ireland. In particular, people shared their views that the example set by Older & Bolder would inspire and inform future work:

“All in the office led by Patricia have earned Older & Bolder a permanent place in the history of advocacy in Ireland.”

“You are leaving a wonderful legacy. We don’t know yet what will emerge from all this work in the future but I am confident it will be important.”

“You and the team have been instrumental in greatly enhancing the lives of older people and changing attitudes towards ageing”.

“You’ve given a new meaning to the colour pink!”

“Your contribution to older people will be remembered for many years to come.”

“Thank you for setting a great model of advocacy work with older people. We hope to use your examples in carrying on this vital work.”

“Well done on all you have done over the years. You will never know how much good has come out of Older & Bolder”.

In doing so, some people pledged to continue the work begun by Older & Bolder in protecting the rights of older people:

“You’ve galvanised a generation of older people to organise, agitate, inform and demand for older people’s rights to be vindicated. So with that achieved, an optimist would be forced to conclude that this is merely the end of the beginning”.

“We came on board with the Make Home Work campaign. We will go forward and built on what we started, thanks to your vision and leadership”.

“We will still fight for the rights of older people. After all the grey vote is still a big voice.”

“Older & Bolder may have closed down but we are not going away.”

“The fight must go on!”

These last two messages perhaps sum up best the views and hopes of delegates, at Older & Bolder’s closing conference:

“The flame you have ignited will not be allowed to be extinguished.”

“You have lit the path but the journey will continue.”



APPENDICES



APPENDIX 1

Older & Bolder Time Line 2006 – 2013

2006	5 organisations come together as Older & Bolder to campaign for a political commitment to the development of a national strategy on ageing. 30,000 petitions collected from older people.
2007	FF/Green Party Programme for Government includes promise to develop a National Positive Ageing Strategy.
July – August 2008	Older & Bolder, now an alliance of 8 organisations, employs 2 staff and sets up offices in Jervis House.
September 2008	Baseline Statement on National Positive Ageing Strategy (NPAS) published.
December 2008	National Conference, “Nothing about us without us” calling for consultation with older people on NPAS convened in Dublin.
November 2008 – June 2009	Consultation meetings with older people on NPAS in Cork, Dublin, Limerick, Sligo, Tralee, Trim, Tullamore and Wexford.
April 2009	Launch of pre-Local Election On the Doorstep campaign to promote wider political awareness of NPAS.
October 2009	Launch of What does Positive Ageing mean to Older People? A summary of feedback from Older & Bolder’s consultation meetings with older people. Strong emphasis on bread and butter issues e.g. income, health care, transport.
November 2009	Launch of Older & Bolder submission on NPAS, chaired by retired judge of Supreme Court, Mrs. Catherine McGuinness.
October – December 2009	1 ST Pre-Budget Campaign: My pension is my shopping, heating, independence. My dignity. Act now to protect basic supports.
February 2010	Older & Bolder established as limited company with charitable status.
March – May 2010	Consultation with older people on social protection issues in Dublin, Galway, Donegal, Tralee.

June 2010	Launch by Mr. David Begg, Secretary General of ICTU, A Secure Pension System for All? Baseline Position on National Pensions Framework.
September 2010	2 nd pre Budget campaign: Defend the State Pension and associated supports.
November 2011	Launch of online film on State Pension. Development & extension of online campaigning.
December 2011	43,533 campaign signatures collected in support and presented to Minister for Finance.
February – March 2011	Pre General Election Campaign: Our High Five: Fairer Health Care, Secure Pension, Local Transport, My Involvement and National Plan on Ageing. Publication of One for All, Age Friendly Health and Social Care: Perceptions and Experiences for submission to Programme for Government negotiations. Inclusion in FG/Labour Programme for Government of commitment to publish NPAS.
April – July 2011	Consultation with older people in Claremorris, Navan, Dublin on health and social care issues. Consultation extended to nursing homes and day care centres for first time.
July 2011	Set-up of media training for Older & Bolder advocates. Working group of legal professionals convened by PILA to research ‘right to care’ for older people.
September 2011	Attendance with ICCL at Universal Periodic Review of Ireland’s human rights record in Geneva.
November 2011	Launch of 3 rd pre-Budget campaign. Designed as 1 year campaign, spanning interests of all member organisations of alliance: Make Home Work, The right to age well at home. Oral & written submissions to Seanad Public Consultation Committee on Rights of Older People.
January 2012	Publication of Older People Speak Up on health, social care and the future of healthcare financing in Ireland; promotion through radio advertising.
January – December 2012	Outreach to Day Care centres, older people’s groups and community groups around the country about Make Home Work campaign. Face-to-face contact with 2,000 older people approximately.

February 2012	<p>Launch of Caught in the Web, Mapping Older People's Pathways to Public Services.</p> <p>Researched by Olga McDaid, TCD; launched by Ombudsman, Emily O'Reilly; event chaired by retired Judge, Mrs. C. McGuinness.</p>
February 14 2012	<p>Courting Hearts & Minds, Being Heard as older and younger advocates, Seminar to mark EY2012, addressed by President Michael D. Higgins.</p>
March 2012	<p>Launch of Seanad Report on Rights of Older People; O&B recommendations incorporated e.g. call for legislative framework for community care.</p>
May 2012	<p>Launch of street mural with O&B advocate, Mrs. Mabel Gargan: "I want to grow old at home".</p>
June 2012	<p>Follow up Seanad debate on Rights of Older People report; on foot of cross-party lobbying by O&B, Minister for Older People commits to publication of NPAS by end of 2012.</p>
June 2012	<p>Launch of Make Home Work Charter by Make Home Work Champions: Mrs. Justice Catherine McGuinness, Mrs. Maura Cranny O'Donnell, Senator Feargal Quinn, Ms. Imelda Byrne, Ms. Geraldine Plunkett, Ms. Anna-Mai McHugh.</p>
September - December 2012	<p>4th Pre-Budget Campaign. Continuation of Make Home Work with pre-Budget message: Rescue Home Care, HSE Cuts Make No Sense, Reverse the cuts to Home Care.</p> <p>Enthusiastic public response at Ploughing Championships, attended by O&B for first time.</p> <p>€5m of the €8 million cuts to Home Care were not implemented.</p>
January 2013	<p>Make Home Work campaign remained 'live' and challenged accuracy of HSE 2013 Service Plan statistics & commitment to sustain 2013 home care service levels at 2012 levels.</p> <p><i>Prime Time</i> briefed and TV programme highlighting the issues broadcast.</p>
February 2013	<p>Older & Bolder announces impending closure to supporters.</p>
April 24 2013	<p>Launch of National Positive Ageing Strategy.</p>
April 25 2013	<p>Older & Bolder's closing conference, Our Journey Together, takes place in Dublin.</p>
June 30 2013	<p>Closure of Older & Bolder.</p>

Continuing Campaigning

Older & Bolder has developed a method of campaigning which has served us well through various successful national campaigns. We have seen older people's energy to advocate on important issues grow each year. Whilst Older & Bolder is closing we hope that the guidelines below will encourage you to continue to campaign for older people's rights and entitlements into the future.

1. Identify and refine

- ⇒ Identify the issue you are concerned about. Refine the issue into a small number of points. Bolster your position by using existing resources, like the facts and figures from Older & Bolder's past campaign literature or research and policy positions which will be archived on www.olderandbolder.ie. Even if policy information about your issue of concern isn't to hand, remember that sharing your personal story or experience can be just as compelling and as valid as statistics.

2. Clear 'asks'

- ⇒ What needs to change? Identify a number of clear 'asks' that would address your concern. Looking at past Older & Bolder campaigns will help. Examples of such 'asks' include; calling for the ring-fencing of funding for vital supports; or a specific change in law to allow for a legal right to care or more flexible retirement planning.

3. Collaborate

- ⇒ Talking with others can help to clarify your thoughts and sharpen your response. When individuals come together or when groups and networks decide to pull together on an issue the impact can be impressive. When a local TD or journalist receives a number of calls about a specific issue they are more likely to take notice. Encourage your friends, family, local group and wider networks to get actively involved.

4. Engage

- ⇒ The number of ways to make your voice heard is only limited by your imagination.
- ⇒ Directly contact your local TD by visiting their clinic, phoning, writing or emailing to share your concerns.
- ⇒ Text, phone or email your comments into radio or television programmes. If you are prepared to discuss how you, or those close to you, are personally affected by the issue it can be very powerful.
- ⇒ At election time, have a set of questions and points ready for canvassers.
- ⇒ Take action as a group, create a petition or organise a demonstration. Use your imagination; Older & Bolder supporters have taken part in parades and have taken a walking tour of local constituency offices to raise their issues of concern.

5. Respectful but firm

- ⇒ As the saying goes, 'you can catch more flies with honey than vinegar'. A deaf ear is often turned to an aggressive approach. We have always found that engaging with politicians and journalists in a firm but respectful manner has allowed for real engagement and positive change.





www.olderandbolder.ie