

The SEEFA Agenda

SEEFA is the South East England Forum on Ageing and aims to bring people together to influence later life strategies, policies and services to make life better for current and future generations of older people. SEEFA's Policy Panel comprises people who by virtue of their own life experiences are *experts on later life* and who can actively engage with policy makers and commissioners to influence later life policy.

Summary of SEEFA's key messages

Ageing itself is not a social and economic problem. It is an inter-generational issue, presenting both opportunities and challenges.

Ageist attitudes based on misunderstanding about the value and contribution of older people and perpetuated in the media must be challenged. Negative attitudes and behaviour cause real harm.

People are unique individuals, each with a different story. We need to recognise the diversity of ageing, not 'lump' everyone in together.

All older people including those from minority ethnic groups, LGTB, people with specific health needs and disabilities etc. should be treated as individuals. Measures should be taken to engage properly when planning services, to listen to older people at the point of delivery of services and to seek and act on feedback.

Older people are not an economic burden but are net contributors to the economy

Taking all their various contributions together, people aged 65 or over are calculated to be making an annual net positive contribution of £40 billion to the UK economy (i.e. net of the costs of pension, welfare and health support). By 2030 this positive net contribution is forecast to rise to £77 billion.

Older people are active citizens and assets within their families and communities.

Older people make a massive contribution to society as carers and volunteers - an annual average of 75 hours in charitable work and 73 hours in voluntary community work, valued at over £11 billion. They also provided on average 326 hours in free care for grandchildren, parents and other family members, an annual contribution valued at over £15 billion [Source: MGM Advantage's *Retirement Nation* report (2012)].

Equal access to employment opportunities for older people will benefit business and society as a whole.

Employing older workers brings tangible economic benefits to the country, to employers and to the workforce as a whole. Negative attitudes to older workers continue to represent a major barrier.