

Challenging a Lifetime of Discrimination!

**Exploring key issues of age discrimination in
the South West of England**

Conference Summary Report 2005

Content

Page 3.....Introduction

Page 4.....Morning session

- Jayesh Rajyaguru and Chris Pitura – Welcome
- Paul Dunn - Pensions Time bomb & age discrimination
- Robert Johnson – Employment equality legislation
- Ivy Cameron – Case studies & the law

Pages 5 & 6.....Afternoon session

- Pip Tucker – Demographic Ageing in the South West
- Jonathan Coe – Regional Economic Strategy
- Hamish McCallum – English Secondary School Association

Page 6Comments

Introduction

On Saturday 15th October 2005, some 30 delegates spent a full day exploring key issues of age discrimination and developing plans for the Age Equality Network for the South West.

The event brought together younger and older people from across the South West Region in an interesting day of fact finding and debate on key themes:

- Age Employment Regulations (to come into force 2006)
- Pensions
- The Regional Economic Strategy
- The ageing population of the South West

It will be **against the law to discriminate against people** because of their age from October 2006 in employment and vocational training. The new legislation will come into force soon and it is important that younger and older people in particular, are aware of the legislation and contribute to discussions around the law and its implementation.

Younger as well as older people face discrimination:

‘While 70% of people felt they would be comfortable with a suitable qualified boss over 70, only 58% felt they would be comfortable with a boss under 30’. (Age Concern, 2000)

The South West has the **largest proportion of older people** than any other region of the UK and the population is expected to continue to ‘age’ in the future. This will have implications for the economy of the region due to rising labour shortages and housing demand, for example.

‘there is often little incentive for older people to ‘trade down’ to smaller dwellings once their children leave. These trends have important implications for the sustainable use of the region’s development land’ (South West Observatory, 2005).

People of all ages contribute to the economy of the region and the conference provided an ideal platform for debate on how to ensure issues on age were included in the regional economic strategy.

With a population that is living longer and getting older, **pension provision is crucial** for individual wellbeing and the economy as a whole.

The event was organised by Equality South West (ESW), South West Opportunities for Older people (SWOOP), UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) and Third Age Employment Rights (TAEN) with support from the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA).

By bringing older and younger people together, the conference organisers hoped to explore important issues for people because of their age, and to invite participants to form a network of individuals and organisations to share information and champion age equality issues across the region.

Morning session

The event, co-chaired by Jayesh Rajyaguru of the UK Youth Parliament and Chris Pitura of Third Age Employment Network, promised delegates an informative and fun packed day!

Paul Dunn an active trade unionist and architect behind Equality South West, presented some important facts under the title “Pensions Time bomb”.

A crucial issue for young people today is pensions. An ageing population in the region requires a young workforce to pay into pension schemes. The ratio of people claiming pensions to those paying in, is decreasing. With less younger people paying into schemes now, the less financial support there is to support older people. If this trend continues, younger people will also struggle in their old age.

The importance of making pensions attractive to younger people was stressed.

Paul went on to present on age discrimination. There is a real need, he said, for a concerted effort to address problems faced by ageism and suggested that a way forward for this was the creation of an age equality network for the South West that could champion issues of age discrimination.

Robert Johnson from ACAS (an organisation that aims to improve organisations and working life through better employment relations) explained in more detail the new Age Employment Equality legislation due in October 2006.

He explained that the law will cover discrimination on the grounds of an individual's age and apparent age. Employees, job applicants, the self employed, agency workers, partners in a partnership, and those in vocational training, are all protected under the new legislation.

Robert highlighted the need for both employers and employees to find out more about how the law might impact in terms of recruitment and other areas of employment. Furthermore, as the legislation covers everyone of working age there was a real need for employers to take into account the changes and ensure that age equality is built into an organisation's planning and delivery.

Ivy Cameron an experienced trainer on equality issues explained the importance of businesses having robust procedures in place to prevent possible claims of discrimination, and the need to embed a culture of equality at every level of an organisation because of the economic as well as the social benefits such practices would entail.

An interactive session followed this, exploring case studies of discrimination around the different areas of equality (such as race, gender) in the workplace. Delegates were split into groups and asked to decipher whether they believed the case was won or lost. Ivy then explained each case as it was decided on in court and explained the implications of each case for employers and employees.

Afternoon session

Pip Tucker director of the South West Observatory (an organisation that analyses data for the region) gave a presentation on the ageing population in the South West. He highlighted the fact that the region as a whole recorded the largest population of older people in the country and that this figure was continuing to grow at a steady pace.

Coastal areas of the region had the largest numbers of older people and fewer numbers of younger people - a point he linked to the pension's time bomb problem.

He presented some facts: that there is a lack of public transport for older rural communities, and that more and more older people were adding to the regions economy through volunteer work. The latter fact he believed was overlooked when assessments are made on who contributes to the regions economy.

A point was raised from the delegates that data collected and analysed currently tends to reflect a largely white and well informed population and fails to properly account for the diversity of people in the region such as Black and Minority Ethnic people, disabled people, lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

This is particularly needed to ensure their contribution to the economy is not overlooked, and the recognition within the Regional Economic Strategy for the region is made.

Jonathan Coe from the Regional Development Agency gave a talk on the role of the agency and the current Regional Economic Strategy (RES). From the current state of the transport infrastructure to the feel good factor for the region, Jonathan explained to delegates why the inclusion of voices from the communities as well as business, was so important to the continued success and vibrancy of the South West. Jonathon was joined by Ivy Cameron in the latter part of this session to tease out from delegates suggestions on what some of the challenging issues are for both younger and older people in the region such as housing, employment and transport.

A presentation followed with **Hamish Mc Cullen & Becky Holloway** from English Secondary Students Association (a body supported by the Trade Unions Congress to represent the voice of young people aged 11-18) on the successes so far of the association. ESSA hopes to recruit yet more young people from various backgrounds across the country to gauge the opinions and views of an often

forgotten community. Hamish commented on the significance that the government is in support of the principle need for such an association, and invited delegates to promote the cause of ESSA to as many interested bodies as possible.

Comments

There was a lot of positive feedback from the day. Delegates welcomed the event topics for discussion and the information provided from the speakers and facilitators. There was a call for further research in the area of age discrimination and the need for further information following the implementation of the age legislation. The concept of an age network was welcomed by delegates and some commented that they would benefit from a network for exchanging information on age issues and events/work taking place in the region, and on equality issues more broadly.

Challenging a Lifetime of Discrimination – South West Age Equality Network
Conference Report 2005

1. Front Cover
2. Contents
3. Introduction
4. Morning session
5. Afternoon session
6. Comments

For more information on the **South West Age Equality Network** please contact

Zoe.smith@equalitysouthwest.org.uk

ESW, East Reach House, East Reach, Taunton, Somerset TA1 3EN

Tel: 01823 250834

Fax: 01823 447398