

News

Professor Jean McHale, co-academic lead for the Birmingham Policy Commission on Healthy Ageing comments on the House of Lords Select Committee Report **'Ready for Ageing?' (<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/lords-select/public-services-committee/report-ready-for-ageing/>)** published on 14th March 2013.

We welcome the House of Lords Select Committee Report "Ready for Ageing". As it rightly highlights an ageing population is likely to provide an increasing challenge for the delivery of health and social care services in the future. These questions need urgent engagement and the Report calls for rapid Government action, a White Paper in this area before the next election along with new Commissions addressing both the issues of pensions, savings and equity release and the health and social care system and how its funding should be changed to serve the needs of an ageing population.

But what is missing in the Report is the broader engagement with the question of the rights and responsibilities of the older person, both nationally and internationally and indeed how the language of human rights should frame this debate. While the Report rightly recognises the issue of discrimination there is much more which can and indeed should be explored in relation to these questions. Critically the Select Committee report also does not engage with the increasing challenge of delivery of health and social care services to a very culturally diverse ageing population as particularly represented across the cities of the UK.

In Birmingham the 3rd University Policy Commission Healthy Ageing in the C21st century is currently exploring these questions . Ageing is too frequently seen as a problem- the old are often see as "other" . This in itself is a problem- the old are marginalised and at times stigmatised. An increasing ageing population- which is not simply a question of rising needs but also of a new voice. This isn't just and shouldn't simply be a debate around vulnerability. It isn't only a question of rationing but rather a question of rights. The ageing population are becoming an increasingly significant population group- who may indeed determine the course of elections in the future. They are an increasingly culturally diverse group which raises new opportunities and new challenges in relation to conceptualisation of the debate and the provision of services. The need for a new dialogue and public discourse around ageing is critical. Here in Birmingham the Policy Commission is drawing upon expertise from clinicians, economists, social scientists, biomedical ethicists and lawyers to take forward this debate. The Policy Commission Healthy Ageing in the C21st will make recommendations in its report published in November both as to how both citizens and government can advance healthy ageing in a multi-cultural society in the UK in the future.

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