



*For All Older People*

**'The Ghlór Project'**  
**Report on Pilot Study**

**on**

**the possibilities of recruiting and retaining socially excluded older people  
in a participatory policy development programme**

Prepared by: Sarah Schwarting and Dr Emer Begley

Date: April 2009

## Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>1. Introduction.....</b>                 | <b>3</b>  |
| 1.1 Rationale .....                         | 3         |
| <b>2. Literature Review .....</b>           | <b>4</b>  |
| 2.1 Participation and Older People .....    | 4         |
| 2.2 Models and Methods .....                | 7         |
| <b>3. Methodology .....</b>                 | <b>9</b>  |
| 3.1 Model and Method Used.....              | 9         |
| 3.1 Ethical Considerations .....            | 10        |
| 3.2 Recruitment.....                        | 10        |
| 3.3 The Sample .....                        | 11        |
| 3.4 Consent.....                            | 11        |
| 3.5 Agenda .....                            | 11        |
| 3.6 Challenges.....                         | 11        |
| <b>4. Findings .....</b>                    | <b>12</b> |
| 4.1 Method .....                            | 12        |
| 4.2 Recruitment.....                        | 13        |
| 4.3 Themes .....                            | 13        |
| 4.4 Facilitation .....                      | 14        |
| <b>5. Factors Influencing Outcomes.....</b> | <b>15</b> |
| <b>6. Summary of Outcomes.....</b>          | <b>15</b> |
| <b>7. Recommendations.....</b>              | <b>16</b> |
| <b>Bibliography .....</b>                   | <b>17</b> |
| <b>Appendix A.....</b>                      | <b>19</b> |
| <b>Appendix C .....</b>                     | <b>23</b> |
| <b>Appendix D .....</b>                     | <b>24</b> |
| <b>Appendix E.....</b>                      | <b>25</b> |
| <b>Appendix F.....</b>                      | <b>26</b> |
| <b>Appendix G .....</b>                     | <b>27</b> |

# **1. Introduction**

In January 2009 Age Action Ireland undertook a project studying the possibilities of recruiting and retaining socially excluded older people in a participatory policy development programme. This project was undertaken by a student social worker from the States and supervised by Age Action's Policy and Social Inclusion Officer. The two main objectives of the programme were to discover recruitment opportunities for involving socially excluded older people, and also to discover methodologies that are useful in gaining information from older people regarding policy decision making. The aims of the pilot study which ran for ten weeks were to:

(i) review the literature on older people's participation in policy-making; (ii) develop guidelines on how to meaningfully elicit the views of older people; (iii) pilot these guidelines in a number of centres across Ireland (develop information material; establish a workable format for the groups; record data; develop any follow-up material; (iv) develop a model from these pilot groups which can be used in the future.

## **1.1 Rationale**

Decisions in policy making need to be based on the best available evidence from as many different sources as possible. The policy making process should also take into account the impact on all who are or may be directly or indirectly affected by the policy ([www.europemsi.org](http://www.europemsi.org)). In order to carry out these objectives with older people it is necessary to review past literature on these efforts, test out different methodologies, and talk with many different people – older people and service providers alike – to fully develop the programme to the extent of its capabilities.

As the project evolved and social inclusion was not deemed possible in such a short span of time, it was determined that the most important thing would be to develop a methodology for this group and to uncover possible recruitment methods. This report will outline the literature and theory used to develop this project, the methods that were developed and recommendations for the future of the project. The main objective of the groups was to connect Age Action to their respondents and to work with older people to develop concrete goals for future policies for older people.

## **2. Literature Review**

The starting point for this pilot study was to undertake a review of the literature on participatory policy development and older people; with the view that this would inform methods used to recruit participants and tools and materials utilised during the group sessions. This literature review examines the literature on participation and older people, as well as identifying a number of participatory models and approaches that have been used and developed elsewhere.

### **2.1 Participation and Older People**

This literature review sets out to examine best practice and appropriate models; and to aid in developing appropriate research methods and tools. First, social exclusion and barriers to participation are discussed. Social barriers to including older people in a policy decision-making capacity include, but are not limited to, the structures of ageism and poverty. It can be argued that these structures are largely the reasons why people are not involved in a more engaged manner. Ageism excludes older people in decisions about their use of formal services, and older people, including those with a cognitive impairment, must be brought into the decision making process (Brennan, 2008). It is also estimated that up to 10% of households headed by older people in Ireland are in poverty (Age and Change, 2005). They are mentioned here to show that they are being considered, but further methodologies for including people and breaking down these barriers will be explored later on in this report.

The process of social inclusion, for the purpose of this report is defined as follows: “Social inclusion is a move away from exclusion towards integrating all people into society. It is a complex, broad-ranging and multi-faceted concept and is strongly related to quality of life. Social exclusion occurs when people are pushed to the margins of society and cannot participate in a full and active way in the normal activities of that society due to factors such as age, income, health, gender, etc” (Age Action, unpublished). The broad purpose of social inclusion is to prevent exclusion happening in the first place and re-integrate those that have experienced exclusion (Luhman, 1990).

The concept of social inclusion originated in French social policy in the 1970’s however, it remained outside of the political agenda until the 1990’s (Age Action, unpublished). Luhman (1990) clarified the concept stating it “means the encompassing of the entire population in the performances of the

individual function systems. On the one hand, this concerns access to these benefits and on the other, dependence of individual modes of living on them. To the extent that inclusion is achieved, groups disappear that do not or only marginally participate in social living.” Much of the past research in the area of participatory policy development involves indigenous peoples (Farmers Changing National Policy, 2008). For example, farmers have been quite active in this form of policy development on a global level (Farmers Changing National Policy, 2008).

In response to the inadequacy of representative democracy<sup>1</sup> in meeting the needs of those who are on the margins of society, participatory policy programmes are developing globally. From indigenous farmers, to communities, to targeted age groups, participation is increasingly becoming a way for the people to create the change they need. Participatory policy development has historically been known as a grassroots, bottoms-up approach to involving socially excluded peoples in the policy development processes (Ilcan & Phillips, 2008).

Traditionally, policy making is made by a single decision maker in a top-down process (Guesrts & Joldersma, 2001). Unfortunately, this type of policy making ignores many perspectives thereby creating a solution that is very limited in scope. The participatory style for policy making has a long and much debated history. In the public and private sector, participation reached a temporary peak in the late 1960's and early 1970's as part of an overall movement in Western societies towards democratization. However, after the mid-1970's, participation as a means for democratization became increasingly less popular. Private organizations then reanimated participation in reaction to the downfall of strategic planning. In the public sector public officials also became increasingly interested in interactive policy development in order to be able to deal with ineffective governmental policies. Here, it was argued that governmental policies were ineffective because of the underlying traditional governance concept (Guests and Joldersma, 2001). A growing number of agencies and programmes worldwide include citizens in policy decision making efforts. These agencies include AGE – the European older people's platform, Pobal whose main aim is to encourage social inclusion in Ireland, and Age Concern in the UK.

Representative democracy is in many ways becoming inadequate for representing the true voice of the

---

<sup>1</sup> This is when representatives are voted into office to make decisions for society.

people. People's needs are becoming more diverse and complex, and they increasingly need to be involved in decisions that affect them personally. There is also an individual component to this in regards to the way people think about their government. The following comes from an article on citizen participation in public health (1998) and states: We (the people) must think of ourselves as citizens, not just taxpayers. The citizen says: "It's my responsibility to do something." The tax-payer says: "I pay someone else to deal with it." It is basically the right and responsibility of all people to participate and contribute to society. Further, the article states that there are recognized obstacles within the mindset of the people, such as:

- Apathy: "I don't want to be bothered"?
- Practical constraints, such as time;
- A belief that standing government presents structural barriers that prevent real reform;
- Despair at the size of the problems, the overwhelming complexity of the information.

On a global level, networks that aim to mobilize knowledge for development through gathering information from participatory programmes, often give priority to participatory relationship-building as a crucial part of research, policy-making and service provision (see Degnbol-martinussen, 2002; Martens, 2004; Scarf and Hutchinson, 2003). Historically, as a foundation for social and economic change, participatory development efforts foster the view of development as planned interventions. According to Barnes (2005): "These interventions often rely on the production, collection and dissemination of particular forms of knowledge; the mobilization of certain kinds of agents of change; and the establishment of networks of professionals, technicians, politicians and public servants." Further, the interconnectedness of social problems has resulted in an increasing community involvement in creating solutions (Barnes, 2005).

The theory that most implicitly informs participation is that of deliberative democracy. Where participation is even more 'representative' than representative democracy and it aims to develop a citizen's capacity to take part in public debate by providing opportunity to engage in critical reflection (Barnes, 2005). This process has been shown to effectively empower people and thus to bring about change (Thursz, Nusberg & Prather, 1995). The theory of empowerment can be defined as giving people a voice in a decision making capacity, and helping them to feel confident about bringing positive change to their lives through their own voice (Thursz, et al 1995). This background of

participation helps to inform the development efforts specifically with older people.

Bass & Caro (1995) identify a number of key issues to successfully involve older people in participatory groups and research. The first is older people do well as active members in making policy decisions for themselves, especially when given a good amount of background research information from which to make their decision. The process of informing people can lead them to feel more empowered and thus better able to actively engage in change efforts ([www.cpa.ie](http://www.cpa.ie)). They also found it to be helpful to have older people volunteers involved in recruitment processes so as to have someone who felt more accessible to the older person. Finally, if the meeting was seen as a social gathering, people were more likely to attend and stay involved (Bass & Caro, 1995).

There can be some difficulties with mobilizing older peoples due to the fact that they can feel ‘over-researched’, can lack the motivation for involvement, or can have physical disabilities or frailness that prevents them from participating (Seymour, Bellamy, Gott, Ahmedzai & Clark, 2002). To surmount these obstacles one must make the distinction between ‘research’ and mobilization, offer incentives for involvement and make every effort possible to include those who would wish to participate, but cannot make it to meetings (even if this means visiting the person in their home).

## **2.2 Models and Methods**

Community development underpins many of the models and approach to participatory methods. The following models of participation with older peoples are discussed by Carter & Beresford (2000) where they explored the successes and drawbacks of numerous models. The first is the advocacy and information model. In the past advocacy has meant that someone else speaks on the person’s behalf. However, recent movements have begun to suggest that self-advocacy is an empowering and effective form of creating change. The benefits of this type of model are that they are essential for effective and broad-based involvement. Self-advocacy further creates a valuable stepping stone for learning to get more involved. The drawback to this is that self-advocacy sometimes leads to just speaking for oneself, rather than acting for oneself. Both of these must happen in conjunction with each other for meaningful change to occur.

The second model is the forum approach. A forum if done well, can offer older people an effective

focus for collective action. A forum is similar to the advocacy model in that the forum can also help older peoples obtain an increasingly prominent profile. However, this can be less so than direct advocacy and funding and resources remain the largest problem for this approach.

The final model considered here (other models that are not being considered at this time include: user-led services, networks and panels), is that of campaigning and direct action. Campaigning and direct action can be very effective in bringing about change, especially when linked with media and other forms of activity. They can generate feelings of strength and solidarity amongst all members involved. Some personalities however are unhappy with the type of conflict and confrontation that is sometimes involved in this work. These models can be further developed to assist in capacity building amongst older people.

Finally, along with making political gatherings a social time for older people, it is important to allow people an outlet to tell their stories. It has been found that storytelling both within a small group and one to one with a facilitator are attractive ways for inviting older people to share their concerns and ideas. This idea of storytelling with questions borrowed from a project called story corps and a format suggested by the following outline it is expected that older people who were formally isolated from political gatherings will begin to have a voice (Barnes, 2005).

A number of methods can be used in the group process to elicit people's views. These include storytelling/vignette methodology (Schoenberg & Ravdal, 2000), structured interviews, and focus groups (Carter and Beresford, 2000). Storytelling is a way of actively involving older people and assists in keeping them engaged. It gives the participants control, as it is recognized that it can also be intimidating for older people to share their 'stories' in a group that may be mostly unfamiliar to them. Therefore, the vignette methodology is a way of encouraging older people's participation in the creation of a story that is removed from them, and allows them to interact with this story in such a way as to assist the researcher in drawing out the information he/she needs through structured questions attached to the vignette (Schoenberg & Ravdal, 2000). Focus groups can further provide a high level of interaction amongst members and create an environment conducive to new ideas. Focus groups also require skilled facilitation so as to keep group members on task and direct the group's overall discussion (Carter & Beresford, 2000). Structured interviews can further streamline this process, but

can easily build up barriers between the facilitator/researcher and the participant (Carter & Beresford, 2000).

### **3. Methodology**

During this ten-week pilot project, three discussion groups with older people were held. Two were based in Dublin; one comprised people living in their own homes in the community and the other included people living in sheltered accommodation. A third group was held in Kilkenny. Before the groups were held a workshop was organized with Age Action staff members to discuss some of the benefits and challenges of carrying out the project. As a result a number of interesting methods for recruitment and possible sites for recruitment were identified (see below sections for details).

The following section describes the model or approach used in carrying out the pilot, as well as describing the recruitment methods and the tools/materials used to encourage discussion during the groups. Some background information about participation is also presented, this is tied into the discussion on participation to provide context.

#### **3.1 Model and Method Used**

Through the process of researching the models the facilitator decided to run the first 'dry run' group in an informal discussion group and to introduce the vignette methodology. The level of structure was not adequate and the group's direction quickly led in a more open-forum direction. The following two groups thus were given structured surveys for recruitment (Appendix A) both to gather information for the facilitator and to provide participants with a higher level of knowledge about the project. The pilot groups were thus based around a semi-structured focus group method, within the community development framework, and the vignette methodology was used to help spawn discussion. The group members in the pilots were welcomed with tea and biscuits, and then followed a formal introduction to the meetings, consent, and an introductory ice-breaker, followed by discussions around the vignettes which were developed according to recommendations based in Schoenberg and Ravdal (2000) in an effort to keep the issues discussed down to earth and also to create questions that would encourage insight amongst the group members (please see Appendix B).

### **3.1 Ethical Considerations**

The following ethical considerations also played a role in the development of the methodology. The first ethical consideration was: ‘do older people want to be involved in this way?’ It is possible that older people in these communities want others to advocate for them. It is possible that they have no desire to participate in any way. It could be thought of as the responsibility of the younger generation to look after them. Also, if these groups are going to be used for a broader research process it is important to obtain meaningful informed consent from all members (see Appendix C). Finally, although the vignettes are developed to be shared from a third party perspective and thus remove participants from any harmful emotions, it is possible that some stories may still hit close to home for some older people and sensitivity when discussing such matters is to be kept in mind at all times.

### **3.2 Recruitment**

The population for the pilot groups were recruited using a number of different methods. The first group was recruited using convenience sampling, where older people and their friends who had previously participated in other Age Action services were contacted to take part. This group became the ‘dry-run’ to test approaches and materials to be used in subsequent groups. All participants were very engaged within their local communities. The second group comprised of older people who were all taking part in a digital technology class with Age Action’s South East Development Officer. Group members were asked to fill out a specially developed survey asking them would they be interested in joining a policy discussion group (see Appendix A). Over 90% of participants replied that they were interested and they were subsequently contacted by telephone. The final group was recruited from a near-by sheltered accommodation housing units. Age Action’s ICT Project Officer acted as a gatekeeper to gain access to this recruitment site. Due to the short time frame of the pilot utilizing internal networks and contacts within Age Action worked very well. Each possible participant was given an information sheet either before the groups met or at the very beginning of the group discussion (see Appendix F). It proved more successful for participants to be given the information sheet prior to the group meeting so they had time to read it and consider their participation.

### **3.3 The Sample**

The population for the first group was made up of seven women and one man – all aged 60 years and over. The second group, in Kilkenny yielded also seven women and one man, all over age 65. The final group began with two women, midway through the group a man joined. Interestingly the three men that took part in the groups spoke about the potential for recruiting men rested on our ability to engage them in other activities around the policy discussion, for example organized card games. As mentioned already all participants were resident in the community. Participants in the final group lived in a sheltered accommodation unit.

### **3.4 Consent**

The issue of consent was raised due to the fact that data and information gathered in the groups might tie into future research. The consent forms had been developed and used before in research with vulnerable older people. Design in a way that was accessible e.g. easy to read; large print and accessible language (see Appendix C). The consent process was used with the group in Kilkenny, and was dropped because it was apparent that it was creating barriers to the process by making participants wary of what the group meeting was about. It was determined that for the purpose of more casual research, verbal assent was all that was needed. All participants gave verbal consent.

### **3.5 Agenda**

The agenda (Appendix D) was developed for the first group, but was not shared with the group. This seemed to create confusion amongst group members, and also failed to create group cohesion amongst members in that it did not focus them towards a shared goal. The agenda was then honed and shared with the second and third groups and provided structure to the meetings. Flexibility is available to the agenda structure in terms of model followed, topics discussed and allowing for group discussions to follow the direction the participants need them to follow.

### **3.6 Challenges**

There were many benefits to carrying out this pilot study, but this did not come without addressing a number of challenges. For instance, we were only able to recruit socially engaged older people who

were either already involved with Age Action or other groups in their community. Some participants had been involved in other advocacy efforts. The reason for this was that due to the time frame of the project and the length of time it took to recruit participants already existing networks had to be used to recruit participants. Also we realized that it was important that methods were finely honed before using them with more excluded and possibly vulnerable older people. It was also difficult to recruit outside existing groups; the highest level of participation came from recruiting within Age Action. Despite advertising the group in the sheltered accommodation unit through fliers and surveys this did not yield many responses. Another challenge was that it proved difficult to find recommendations for recruitment and contacting social excluded people in the literature.

The model, methods and materials discussed above will now lead into a discussion on the functioning of these methodologies and will then inform further recommendations for the future of this project.

## **4. Findings**

The following section will provide an outline of the findings from the methodology, recruitment efforts, themes, facilitation process, and outside factors that effected the outcomes of each group.

### **4.1 Method**

The methodology of the pilot groups evolved throughout the three group processes. The first group of Dubliners was run along the lines of a loosely structured focus group. This method occurred due to the fact that these members were the least informed of what we were trying to accomplish, were not given an agenda, and happily wanted to talk about issues but resisted moving in the direction of brainstorming. As a result of this first pilot, the methodology for the second group was a more semi-structured focus group, centred on a vignette approach. This method revealed many issues that older people are facing, but was less intrusive than direct story telling (Schoenberg & Ravdal, 2000). Finally, as a further development to the process the final group was fully informed of the group's meeting purpose, and was able to talk about and prioritize issues and discuss possible solutions, all within the framework of a discussion-based focus group. In this way, the methods used evolved over-time and finer-tuned methodology has developed for future implementation in participatory policy development with older people.

The first group went on for two hours, and the second group lasted the proposed one hour, although without time for the broader summary of the meeting or prioritization of issues. The final group lasted precisely the one hour and also accomplished the three main goals of discussion and prioritizing issues and discussing solutions. It was thus found that providing structure to the group within a general framework or agenda for the day and making sure the group fully understands where the process is going is essential to forming group cohesion. Within this framework the group is then able to proceed along discussion of important issues and brainstorming solutions within a focus group methodology, using vignette methods where needed.

Older people are also fairly intimidated by the 'policy' process. Therefore, the efforts of the facilitator to de-mystify this process (i.e. describe policy in down-to earth language, using concrete examples that apply readily to older people's lives) can help to break this barrier of fear. Once the older people see that there is nothing involved for them other than expressing their views and that their views can feed into the process the relaxed atmosphere then becomes conducive to the discussion. Many participants spoke initially about not being confident in discussing policy but following a description of how policy affects their lives they felt then that they could discuss the issues. This implies that the language and understanding of macro-level policy is alien and disconnected from older people in the community.

## **4.2 Recruitment**

Recruitment worked well through surveys and fliers (Appendix E), but it was easiest to gain members through already formed groups. Recruitment using the information sheet (see Appendix F) was helpful in orienting group members to the goals of the day's meeting.

## **4.3 Themes**

The themes that emerged within the first group were more centred on personal issues. For example the need for a senior community centre and the need for better home help. Broader issues will be discussed at their second meeting which has not yet been held, as it was decided at the end of their first meeting that subsequent discussions would centre on the mini-budget and how it affects older people.

The Kilkenny group was mainly focused on talking about issues within the context of the vignettes. Interestingly, the facilitators pre-conceived ideas of how discussions would go were incorrect in

relation to participant's feedback on these vignettes. For instance, one of the vignettes focused on an older man's desire to return to work and the potential that this would be difficult. Participants however did not feel that ageism would be a barrier to this professional older man seeking employment. The vignette on elder abuse spawned discussion around how financial abuse is a major issue in rural Ireland. This vignette also engaged people in discussion on the costs of nursing care. The main themes around finding employment and social support centred on what the individual could do, and in the case of elder abuse the group discussed obtaining a solicitor.

The final group openly discussed how health (matters of waiting for appointments and medical cards were an issue), fixed incomes, fuel poverty, nursing care, and home help were all issues facing older people and participant's prioritized them in that order. The outcomes of this discussion centred on how Age Action should take on these issues, but how they could also be backed by older people in the community in general to advocate for change. Community supports were also discussed (e.g. more able neighbours helping out each other).

Importantly, to the continued sustained effort of this project, it was found that older people do indeed have a desire to speak out concerning their issues, and would fully enjoy being involved in capacity building efforts around them.

## **4.4 Facilitation**

The facilitation process was also a work in progress and it was found that a social and discussion type of format worked best for these types of groups. As the facilitator learned structure with built-in flexibility was a must, as was making clear that personal issues were to be left outside the group. The group members were respectful of each other, unless political discussions came up, so respecting views may have to be stated in some group meetings. Group members also need to be reminded to turn off cell phones, and occasionally brought back to focus when talking off task (this can be done through changes in facilitator position, acknowledging the issue and asking if it can be addressed outside the group, or trying to tie the issue back into the more broad discussion). The facilitator also needs to be physically "with" the group. This means that if the facilitator is sitting with the group members rather than sitting or standing apart from them, this creates the more informal, comfortable setting that is conducive to gathering information on issues.

## **5. Factors Influencing Outcomes**

The main factors that affected the outcomes were being able to network with staff from Age Action and others from AgeOptions staff in Chicago, to researchers at Trinity College and the Dominican University, Chicago. The venue at Age Action's main Office in Dublin city centre was not conducive to having these meetings as there was not a lot of space, the venue was upstairs, and it was not central to the members. In the future these meetings will be held at a more accessible Community Centre. The venue used with the Kilkenny group was more suitable due to the larger space, privacy offered; it was open and light and had adequate parking and supplies for tea. The third group met at their community centre and this venue was also open, with tables to sit around and supplies for tea, but the venue is shared, so the group process can be interrupted by people coming in and out. Finally, group dynamics also affected final outcomes. For example, if people knew each other or were friends discussion tended to be more open as a rapport already existed between them. An outcome of this is that it can prove more difficult if some group members are very familiar with each other while others are not as it can cause a disconnect within the group.

The social discussion method worked well as it helped participants to feel comfortable and included. The use of an agenda also worked well to structure the groups. The facilitation process of being a part of the group was beneficial to all involved. The open-door policy, where anyone could take part if they expressed an interest had positive outcomes as many different perspectives were involved, but it is still unclear how the view of people who were participating may differ from view of people who did not participate (i.e. more socially excluded peoples).

## **6. Summary of Outcomes**

This section describes materials and personal outcomes following the pilot.

**Material Outcomes:** A number of materials were developed for use in this project. Some have been discussed above (e.g. Survey, consent form, vignettes and information sheets) and others include extra materials that could be used for future groups (Appendix G). All of these were developed with older people in mind, specifically older people who might have different needs around disability. It can be concluded that they worked well and proved successfully. Although the consent form was too formal an approach under the focus/discussion group method.

Personal Outcomes: For the older people involved there have been a number of outcomes that have been mentioned including: enjoying being out, enjoying the methods and discussion, enjoying the food and social interaction and enjoying being involved in this process. Student learning outcomes were also positive including honing research skills, development of group methods and materials and working on group facilitation skills (see student reflections at end of report).

## **7. Recommendations**

As this pilot project concludes a number of recommendations for future and further development of the initiative can be drawn from the experience. Recommendations for future recruitment are to continue to stay informed from other Age Action staff and other organizations involving already formed groups of older people who may be willing to assist with recruitment. Other sheltered accommodation sites and meal sites have also been offered as possible recruitment places. Church bulletins and radio announcements are further ways to conduct recruitment. Two of the three men involved in the groups said to pull in more men the 'talks' should be involved around some activity, such as card games. Any of these methods could reveal access to more socially excluded groups in the future as well.

For the group process it is important to allow the group to choose the topics they wish to discuss so as to maintain their interest and involvement at all time. The group can also be allowed relatively free reign in the discussion, with questions posed by the facilitator to keep discussion moving or to keep discussion on track. Continue to bridge policy to people's every day lives and continue to de-mystify this process for them by encouraging older people to see how their actions affect the policy process.

The main thing is to keep in mind in future group processes that change is slow (and most processes are slow) the group members will need much encouragement to keep them involved in the process, and this may include using new methods or furthering capacity building to allow the older people to become involved in self-advocacy, which in itself could be very motivating and build confidence within groups of older people to initiate change.

## Bibliography

Barnes, M. (2005) The Same Old Process? Older people, participation and deliberation. Ageing and Society 25(2): 245-259.

Bass, S. and Caro, F. (1995) Older People as Researchers: Benefits to research and the Community. Educational Gerontology 21: 467-478.

Brennan, J. (2008) From Community Care to Residential Care: personal social services and older people' In P. Kennedy and S. Quinn (ed) Ageing and Social Policy in Ireland. Dublin: UCD Press.

Brody, S. (1968) Maximum Participation of the Poor: Another Holy Grail? Social Work, 2: 68-75.

Carter, T. and Beresford, P. (2000) Age and Change: Models of involvement for Older People. York: York Publishing Services.

Citizen participation in public health (1998) retrieved from <http://www.islandcounty.net/health/CHAB/challenge.htm>

Curry, L. and Jackson, J. (2003) The Science of including older ethnic and racial group participants in health-related research. The Gerontologist 43: 15-17.

Dewar, B. J. (2005) Beyond tokenistic involvement of older people in research – a framework for future development and understanding. Edinburgh: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Farmers changing national policy: the bottom-up approach Retrieved from: <http://www.iicd.org/articles/farmers-changing-national-policy-the-bottom-up-approach-29-January-2009>.

Geurts, J. and Joldersma, C. (2001) Methodology for participatory policy analysis. European Journal for Operational Research 128: 300-310.

Icebreakers for adults, Retrieved from: [http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/269639/fun\\_icebreakers\\_for\\_adult\\_groups.html?cat=11](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/269639/fun_icebreakers_for_adult_groups.html?cat=11)

Ilcan, S. and Phillips, L. (2008) Governing Through Global Networks: Knowledge mobilities and participatory development. Current Sociologies 56: 25.

Levkoff, Levy, and Weitzmann, (2000) The Matching Model of Recruitment. Journal of Mental Health and Aging 6(1): 29-39.

Luhman, N. (1990) Political Theory in the Welfare State. New York: Walter De Gruyter.

Lynch, B. (2005) Age and Change: A Community development approach to working with older People. Dublin: Area Development Management Ltd. (Pobal).

Schoenberg, N. and Ravidal, H. (2000) Using vignettes in awareness and attitudinal Research. Social

Research Methodology 3: 63-74.

Seymour, J, Bellamy, G, Gott, M, Ahmedzai, S. and Clark, D. (2002) Using focus Groups to Explore Older People's Attitudes to End of Life Care. Aging and Society, 22: 517-525.

Thursz, D, Nusberg, C. and Prather, J. (1995) Empowering older people: An International Approach. London: British Library.

## Appendix A



### Ghlór Survey

Age Action Ireland is a charity organisation working to improve the quality of life of all older people and their carers. We are trying to better represent older people in Ireland by challenging and developing better policies to serve older people's needs. To do this we are setting up small groups to discuss issues that effect older people (e.g. health care policies, housing, transportation, etc). We would like your feedback on the survey below so that we can gauge people's interest in this idea. We will be back on \_\_\_\_\_ if you would be available to chat we would love to hear your views!

1. Would you be interested in joining us in these discussion groups?  
 Yes  No
  
2. If yes, what are reasons you would participate in helping us change policies affecting older people? Tick all those that apply:
  - a. I believe it would benefit me
  - b. I believe it would benefit society
  - c. I would like to do something meaningful
  - d. I would like to meet people
  - e. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**3.** If no, what are the reasons you would not participate in these meetings? Again, please tick all that apply:

**a.** I do not think it would benefit me

**b.** I do not think my efforts would do any good

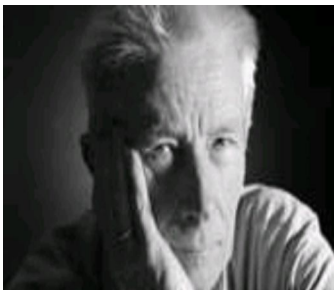
**c.** It would take too much of my time

**d.** I have difficulty getting around

**e.** Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**4.** Please take a moment to tell us a bit about a social issue that is impacting you at the moment (i.e. issues in health care, transportation, etc):

## Appendix B: Vignettes



Mr Murphy is 69 years old. He was married to Margaret for nearly thirty-five years. Since she died last year he has noticed that he does not meet with their friends as much as he had when she was alive. He is very active and enjoys walking and going to his local pub a few times a week.

Recently he has thought about returning to work. He was a skilled trade's person and although he is not as confident as he was before Margaret died he thinks he has a lot to offer. The extra income would also supplement his Contributory State Pension.

### Questions:

- i) What do you think his experience will be finding a job?
- ii) What are the factors which have prompted him to look for work?
- iii) What would the benefits be for him to go back to paid employment?
- iv) What are his options?



Ms O'Sullivan lives in a suburb of Dublin. She is 79 years and lives alone. She never married and has no children but is close to her 6 nieces and nephews who visit regularly. Her brother and sister both live outside Dublin, about 45 minutes away. She is in regular contact with them but does not visit them that often as she does not drive.

Recently Mrs O'Sullivan has had a number of falls. She does not feel confident to go out by herself anymore. She has not told any of her family as she doesn't want to worry them. She has been to her GP and is waiting on an appointment with a Geriatrician in the Hospital.

### Questions:

- i) What are the main issues for Ms O'Sullivan?
- ii) What do you think could improve her quality of life?



Mrs Beglan has just moved into a nursing home, following a stroke. She is 82 years old and has lived very well at home up until now. She has four children, all of whom she sees often. She does not believe she will ever return home and wants to make sure that all her affairs are in order.

Her eldest son recently visited her to talk to her about her finances. She wants to make sure that her estate (comprising of a small pension and a modest house) are shared equally between her children. Her son asked her to sign some documentation, she is not sure what it was for and he refused to talk to her about what it contained. She suspects that he has made her sign her house over to him.

**Questions:**

- i) What are the main issues Mrs Beglan faces?
- ii) What are her options in resolving these issues?

## Appendix C



### Consent Form for the Ghlór Project

**Please Circle One for Each Question:**

1. I have read and understand the information sheet: **YES** **NO**
2. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the information sheet: **YES** **NO**
3. I have had my questions answered about the information sheet: **YES** **NO**
4. I understand that my participation in this project is voluntary and that I can cease participation at any time: **YES** **NO**
5. I understand that my participation in this project will **NOT** have **ANY** effect on any services I may be receiving: **YES** **NO**
6. I understand that the information I provide in this meeting may be used in the future but that my name will not be associated with this information in any way: **YES** **NO**
7. I **DO/DO NOT** give consent for this meeting to be tape recorded: **DO** **DO NOT**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D



### Agenda for Ghlór Project Pilot

25 March 2009

1. Introduction of Project – Goals and Expectations (10 minutes)
2. Group Introductions (10 minutes)
3. Outline Agenda (10 minutes)
4. Small group discussion about vignettes (20 minutes)
5. Large group discussion – prioritization of issues and planning of next meeting (10 minutes)

## Appendix E

Flyer



**Please Join US!**

The Ghlór Project is looking for older people from all walks of life to join us in a brief discussion group!

**Why?**

Age Action Ireland seeks to better understand issues facing older people and to gain knowledge from their experiences to inform future policies.

**When?**

**Where?**

# Appendix F

## Leaflet



### Who Are We?

Age Action Ireland is the country's leading charity working to improve the quality of life of all older people and their carer's. Members include people of all ages; including older people, carers, professionals and voluntary groups. Age Action believes that older people should have the same rights as any other age group and should not be judged by their age. We promote positive and empowering ageing experiences.

### Project

We are trying to learn more about the older people we represent. To do this, we would like to form discussion groups that are both fun and informative to find out about the issues that are facing older people today. The discussion groups also serve to gain the older person's perspective on how we could best go about solving the problems of older people, both as an agency and as a community.

### Goals

The goals of the current project include:

- 1) Find out what issues are facing older people today so as to better represent them
- 2) Discover what methods help us to find out about social issues facing older people
- 3) Investigate how older people would like these social issues solved and how they would like to be involved in these efforts

### Contact Information

Sarah Schwarting or Emer Begley by phone: 01- 498-4746

Sarah's email: [sschwarting@ageaction.ie](mailto:sschwarting@ageaction.ie)

Emer's email: [socialinclusion@ageaction.ie](mailto:socialinclusion@ageaction.ie)

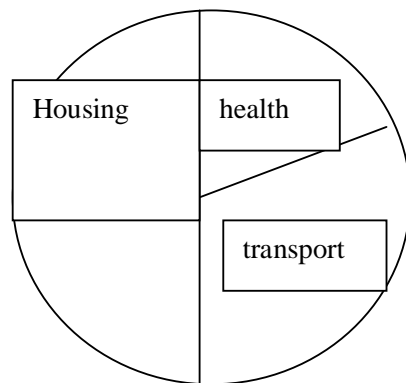
Age Action website: [www.ageaction.ie](http://www.ageaction.ie)

## Appendix G

### Chart Materials

Pie Chart on flipchart/poster board – index cards?

1. List issues on flip chart.
2. Give each person a marker and an index card and show how they would organize resources to each issue (e.g.:



3. This would also work if we divided up ideas in terms of how to ‘solve’ the problem and then had the ideas broken into pie charts in terms of how much the group endorses each idea tossed around in the first half
4. If unable to draw/write an alternative would be to have people come up or assist facilitator in drawing several on the board and then see if a group consensus can be reached.

Line graph on flip chart:

1. Draw a line with good/bad, or yes/no at ends (with neutral and maybe as mid-anchors)
2. Give people coloured stickers to place along the lines to show how much they think each thing is an issue and how much they endorse each idea to fix the issue.