

June 17th, 2007

62 % in survey believe that Ireland is 'not an age friendly society'

Sixty two per cent of respondents to a 'vox pop' survey organised as part of this year's "Say No to Ageism" Week believe that Ireland is not an age friendly society, while 43 % of respondents thought that people get less respect as they get older.

"Say No To Ageism" Week 2007 is being launched today at the offices Equality Authority. A joint initiative of the National Council on Ageing and Older People, the Health Service Executive and the Equality Authority, the week seeks to raise awareness of ageism and its impact on older people and to support practical initiatives within organisations to develop age friendly service provision.

Speaking at the launch **Dr Ciarán Donegan**, Chairperson of the National Council on Ageing and Older People, said:

"Ageism is pervasive in Ireland and it poses a major barrier to the development of an age friendly society in Ireland in the years ahead. The elimination of ageism from Irish life will not take place overnight and concerted long-term efforts will be required to create an age friendly society – one in which older people are no longer marginalised by ageist attitudes, regulations and practices that limit their expectations or their capacity to live in dignity and independence."

Dr Donegan cited a recent Council research study ***Perceptions of Ageism in Health and Social Services in Ireland*** which revealed disturbing evidence of prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory practices experienced by older people or witnessed by health and social care providers.

The 'vox pop' survey, using postcards and a computer viral campaign, suggest that ageism is an issue for older people and young people. The age groups where the highest level of consensus prevailed that Ireland is not an age friendly society were the group over 80 years (63%) and the group under 20 years old (81 %).

Other findings include:

- 57 % of respondents thought that society treats older people worse than young people
- 38 % of respondents thought that saying older people are 'set in their ways and ideas' is fair
- 43 % of respondents thought that as you get older you get less respect
- 62 % of respondents thought that Ireland is not an age friendly society

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Say No to Ageism Week 2/...

Jane Carolan, Assistant National Director for Older People in the Health Service Executive, speaking at the launch said: " The HSE is not only concerned with ill-health, but also with promoting the health and well-being of everyone. Ageism can affect people's health and well-being, particularly older people. When illness does occur, the aim of the HSE is to ensure that everyone, regardless of age, has equal access to services that are needed and that the delivery of these services is such that people's dignity and autonomy are maintained".

"Say No To Ageism" Week 2007 involves a range of initiatives:

- the vox pop survey to explore ageism, the results of which are published on www.questionageism.com
- a public awareness campaign using billboards, national and local radio, transport carriers and beer-mats to promote debate on the survey findings
- the launch of a report on an action plan in the Health Service Executive to enhance age friendly service provision
- the launch of a report on an action plan in Bus Éireann, Dublin Bus, Iarnród Éireann, Rural Transport Programme and Veolia Transport to enhance age friendly service provision
- the launch of *Healthy Ageing – a Challenge for Europe* by the National Council on Ageing and Older People.

Niall Crowley, of the Equality Authority, speaking at the launch said "Ageism contributes to a context of discrimination for older people and young people. The age ground is the highest area of current Equality Authority casefiles under the Employment Equality Acts. These casefiles involve allegations of discrimination by older people in relation to access to employment, promotion, the use of mandatory retirement age limits and voluntary redundancy packages. The age ground is the third highest area in the current casefiles of the Equality Authority. These casefiles involve allegations of discrimination by older people and young people in access to insurance, banking and financial services and public sector services."

In this context age friendly organisations are urgently required where such discrimination does not happen, where older people are enabled to participate in decision making and where full equality in practice is achieved for older people as employees and as customers.

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