



# AGEING IS *LIVING*

A guide to positive ageing



*Serving the needs of older people*

*Age Concern He Manaakitanga Kaumatua is a national organisation that works for the rights and well-being of older people, koroua and kuia. We inform and advocate, and provide services through a federation of Age Concern councils.*

*Age Concern New Zealand provides strategic leadership on issues affecting older people and supports the development of local councils.*

*Thirty-five councils, associates and branches provide support services and information direct to older people in their communities, in response to local needs.*

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# Contents

Ageing in New Zealand .....	4
The Ageing of the Baby Boomer Generations .....	5
What is Positive Ageing .....	6
<i>Quiz: What do you know about growing older?</i> .....	7
Myths and Realities .....	8
Cultural Diversity in Ageing .....	9
On Ageing Well – key factors for positive ageing.....	12
Having the attitude .....	12
Being adaptable .....	13
Autonomy and the freedom to choose .....	15
Being involved .....	16
Staying active .....	17
Thinking Ahead for Positive Ageing .....	18
<i>Questionnaire: Personal values and goals</i> .....	18
Preparing for older age.....	19
Planning for work and leisure .....	20
Meeting changing health needs .....	21
Shifts in relationships .....	22
Meeting needs for intimacy .....	23
Experiencing loss .....	24
Understanding depression .....	25
Protecting your future.....	26
Personal strategies for positive ageing .....	27
<i>A Plan of Action for Positive Ageing</i> .....	28
Promoting Positive Ageing in the Community.....	31
Answers to Quiz .....	32
Further information .....	33

## Ageing in New Zealand



Our older population is changing. People aged 65 years and over currently make up 12% of the total population. This is expected to increase to more than 25% by 2051. The greatest increase will be after 2011 as the baby boomers enter the older age groups.

As the population ages there will be more older people in good health, more older people with reasonable health, and more frail older people. Our ageing population has created concern about the possible burden this may place on the economy and on the health system. However, older people continue to contribute in many ways. The growing proportion of older people in our society presents opportunities as well as challenges.

Evidence shows that older people are ageing better, as well as longer, with less disability. Never has there been such a large group of active, skilled and experienced older people.

As individuals and as a society we need to plan ahead to ensure richness and fullness of life in our own older age. This booklet looks at the key factors for ageing well. It also looks at some of the challenges and changes that growing older may bring and offers ways to think and plan ahead for positive ageing.



Photo: Age Concern/Creatus Design Consultancy

## The Ageing of the Baby Boomer Generations

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ositive ageing is not just an issue for older people. Those who are currently aged in their 40s and 50s – the baby boomer generations – will benefit from planning ahead for the second half of their lives. Improvements in health and living conditions mean baby boomers can expect to live longer than earlier generations. They have the potential to be more active, more independent and more productive than older people before them.

However, some baby boomers are part of the “sandwich generation” – those caught between helping to support ageing parents and continuing to have responsibility for children. A trend to later child bearing, second-time-around families, and older children needing help for education or training, has meant parents are supporting dependants as they themselves grow older. Planning for older age in these circumstances can be difficult.

A significant number of baby boomers in New Zealand were affected by workplace restructuring and redundancy. Some have found it difficult to find work as “older age workers” in their 40s or 50s.

Most baby boomers are not good at saving for the future. As patterns of work and spending have changed and as income support in older age has become increasingly uncertain, many expect to continue working part-time beyond “retirement age”. Those who have multiple skills and who are adaptable are more likely to be able to do so.

Positive ageing is not just an issue for older people





Photo: Otago Daily Times

Residents from the Maran-Atha Home in Mosgiel enjoy the Super Masters Games at the Dunedin Stadium.

## What is Positive Ageing?

**E**ach period of a person's life will have challenges and opportunities that are unique to that age. Older age can be a positive growth phase of life like any other. Positive ageing is not about how to live longer. Nor is it about how to avoid growing old. It is about making the most of the benefits of being older.

There is no fixed time during life when you become "old". Old age can be a state of mind. You can be young at heart at 80, or old before your time at 40. Ageing positively is as much about attitude and a personal view of life as it is about what a person does. A positive view helps a person to live a life that is satisfying, even in the face of constraints.

Ageing positively includes physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. It is not necessary to be free of ill health to age positively, although it helps.

People age well when they continue to contribute and participate in society, as much as they wish to, with respect and support from their families and community.

# On Being Older

Each of us will have certain expectations about life as an older person. Our attitudes towards and knowledge of ageing can influence our desire and ability to plan ahead.

## Quiz: What do you know about growing older?

*Answer the following questions as true or false.*

1. The number of older people in the community is increasing.
2. Today families are less caring for older people than they were in the past.
3. Most older people get depressed.
4. All older people eventually become mentally confused.
5. Most older people are able to look after themselves.
6. As you age you get less intelligent.
7. There are more older women than older men.
8. On average, older people take more medicines than younger people.
9. Older people do not benefit from regular exercise as much as younger people.
10. All older people are alike.
11. As you get older you lose the desire to express and enjoy sexual love.
12. Osteoarthritis is inevitable as joints wear out.
13. Our arteries inevitably harden as age progresses.
14. Creativity and original thought peak in the late forties and decline thereafter.

*Turn to page 32 for answers.*

# Myths and Realities

Views of age and older people are influenced by myths and stereotypes. According to the common stereotypes, older people are seen as mostly frail, ill or disabled and likely to live in institutions. They may also be seen as conservative in their views and approach to life and considered unable to learn new skills or absorb information.

A prevailing myth is that older people are “past it”. Another is that of the “greedy oldies”, selfishly taking away resources or opportunities from younger people. These views of older people ignore the real contributions that older people make in our community.

## Realities

- Most older people in New Zealand live independently in the community, either alone or with a relative.
- The health of older people is improving. Healthy lifestyles and habits in younger and middle age will increase the likelihood of good health in older age.
- Currently, most older people in New Zealand live on an income of less than \$15,000 a year.
- Older people contribute through voluntary work – around 15% of unpaid work is carried out by older people.
- Older people contribute at home – studies in families show that older people give more support than they receive.
- A growing number of older people are doing paid work, either full or part time.
- Older people can and do learn new skills and absorb new information. Some skills improve with age.
- Older people are not all the same and diversity of opinions, knowledge and skills is highest in the older age group.

# Cultural Diversity in Ageing



Combining the young and the old – Maori weavers bring together contemporary and traditional designs at Waitomo's Ohaki Village.

Photo: *Waikato Times* – from “Older People” kit, Newspapers in Education

## Older Maori in New Zealand

At present there are many more younger Maori than older Maori, but the numbers of older Maori will almost treble within the next one and a half decades.

Far from being considered “past it”,

many older Maori find their responsibilities increase as they grow older. Older Maori who are kaumatua are called upon for their knowledge, leadership and responsibility for the wellbeing of their whanau, hapu and iwi.

Challenges older Maori face include higher rates of chronic ill health from diseases such as cancer and diabetes. Life expectancy for Maori is about eight and a half years less than non-Maori. A significant number of Maori families have been affected by redundancy, under-employment and lower wages. Planning for older age in these circumstances can be difficult.

Factors that may help older Maori of the future to age well include health gains in those communities with access to Maori health providers. More Maori are involved in tertiary education and the average household income and rates of self-employment among Maori are rising.

## Other Cultures in New Zealand



### Older Pacific Islands people

Although relatively few in number at present, the population of older Pacific Islands people in New Zealand will grow by more than five times by 2031. There are at least six different groups of Pacific Islands people resident in New Zealand, each with their own language, social structures and cultural practices. Common to each is a traditional respect for older people. Younger generations are taught to value their elders' knowledge of culture and custom.

Traditional customs can conflict with New Zealand culture and some feel there is a diminishing respect for elders and an increasing cultural and generation gap, particularly between Islands-born and New Zealand-born Pacific Islands people.

Major challenges for older Pacific Islands people in New Zealand include language barriers, the effects of changing diet, chronic or degenerative diseases, restricted income, and culturally inappropriate community and health services.



Bridging generations – and cultures

Photo: Age Concern/Creatus Design Consultancy

## Older Chinese in New Zealand

Chinese began migrating to New Zealand over 130 years ago and they are now the largest minority group after Maori and Pacific Islands people. Traditional family values continue to have a strong influence on relationships between the generations. Chinese children are taught to respect their elders, and adult children are expected to look after and honour their parents.

Generational barriers between Chinese elders and younger generations include language mis-match and conflicting expectations (for example, to marry within versus outside the Chinese community; to live with married children versus alone).

Most older Chinese in New Zealand experience cultural barriers when attempting to participate in the wider community and not many have cultivated “western” recreational hobbies or have access to a variety of activities. This may limit opportunities to stay active and involved.

# On Ageing Well – Key factors for positive ageing



Older people discussing positive ageing in New Zealand have identified some key factors for ageing well. Research on positive ageing supports their views. The following are key factors for positive ageing.

## 1. HAVING THE ATTITUDE

Attitude is an important part of positive ageing. Some of the attitudes older people have identified as being important include:

- optimism
- faith or believing
- confidence and courage
- maintaining a sense of adventure
- guts and determination
- a sense of humour
- learning to live within limitations, reinventing.

A positive attitude to ageing is often shown by the following characteristics:

- a sense of pride and determination in the face of adversity
- an interest in sustaining social relationships
- a tenacity of self in a changing world
- an acceptance of “give and take”
- an awareness of the need to make the most of one’s assets
- a desire to live a quality life.

## 2. BEING ADAPTABLE

**Older age** is a time of change which offers opportunity as well as challenge. Changes we may face as we grow older include:

- changes in work role and status
- a shift in our role in the family
- change in body image
- change to physical health and abilities
- a change in living arrangements
- reduced income
- change in social networks
- bereavement through the death of a spouse or partner, family, friends
- changes in technology and in society as a whole.

Change can bring with it a sense of loss. A person may grieve following a move away from the family home, for example, or after retirement from work. A change in physical strength or ability can also bring a sense of loss.

The impact of change on a person's life will depend on their attitudes about the change, the circumstances in which the change takes place, and the coping skills and support that they have. The extent or frequency of change is also important.

Not all changes are negative, and there are “many faces of ageing”. Older age is for many an opportunity for new experiences and new relationships. The desire to continue to learn and the ability to adapt to change are key ingredients for positive ageing.

## *Learning to adapt to life changes*

**T**here are many ways to develop adaptability. Depending on your interests and needs, activity in any of the following areas may be helpful:

- learning and self-education, such as learning a new skill, hobby or craft; completing workshops or night classes, or University of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Age courses
- personal development, such as exploring self-esteem, assertiveness training, career development or goal setting
- skills development, such as time management, conflict management, stress management, communication
- self expression, such as painting, writing, poetry, dance, craft, public speaking, photography, music, singing, oral history, sculpture, pottery, weaving, embroidery, carpentry, gardening
- relaxation and self awareness through visualisation, contemplation, dance, music, meditation, relaxation techniques, tai chi, yoga, physical activity.

Photo: Age Concern/Creatus Design Consultancy



Gain confidence, have fun, learn to relax, learn to swim...it's never too late.

### 3. AUTONOMY AND THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE



**Key factor** for positive ageing is the freedom to stay in charge of decisions on how to live. Our ability to do this can be influenced by our circumstances, our personality, and the attitudes of others.

Ageist attitudes that discriminate or judge can limit opportunities and choices. Attitudes may also lead to assumptions being made about older people's needs and behaviour. This can result in inappropriate care, lack of referral, or inadequate design of home, amenities or technology.

Sometimes it can be a family's or caregiver's desire to "do for" rather than "with" that threatens autonomy and choices. Staying in charge of decisions may be difficult.

The desire to remain independent and the wish to avoid being a burden to families and others is strong for many older people. Sometimes this can lead to a refusal to ask for help, even though receiving help might foster independence and autonomy rather than reducing it. Shyness or pride may also stop people from speaking out or asking for assistance.

Making decisions ahead of time can lower the risk that circumstances or other people might restrict our choices when we are older. Allocating power of attorney or making a living will are two examples of how this might be done.

#### 4. BEING INVOLVED

**H**aving satisfying friendships and relationships and a feeling of being involved and a part of the community is important for positive ageing. Older people with good support networks and positive family and social contact cope better with challenges such as loss, disability or increasing frailty.

It is not just having contact with others that is important, but also the nature of that contact. Relationships which have a degree of closeness and emotional warmth have a greater effect on our wellbeing than impersonal relationships based on tasks.

Poor social support, loneliness, social isolation and poor family contact have been shown to increase rates of anxiety and depression and reduce the ability to cope with stress.

Staying involved can include:

- keeping up with events, issues and current affairs, staying in touch by phone, letter or e-mail
- making the most of opportunities for new friendships, joining groups or social organisations
- starting a course or hobby
- working as a volunteer
- taking part in community recreational programmes.



Photo: Southland Times



Keeping involved,  
keeping active: Nan  
and grand-daughter  
“jump rope for heart”

## 5. STAYING ACTIVE

**Staying active** – physically, mentally and socially – improves health and wellbeing in older age.

Significant health benefits can be gained from as little as 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week, and this may be made up of short bouts of activity.

Increased physical activity can:

- lower stress levels and reduce depression
- improve mobility and physical strength and help to prevent injury
- reduce pain from arthritis or other physical disabilities
- prevent osteoporosis
- reduce the risk of developing high blood pressure, diabetes and colon cancer
- lessen the risk of premature death from heart disease or stroke.

Exercising the mind is also important. Mental stimulation and learning improve creativity, memory, alertness and sense of wellbeing, especially if done in combination with physical exercise and good nutrition.

Most older people want to be more active, but lack of money, energy and company are seen as the main barriers. Planning in advance and developing shared leisure activities are successful ways to stay involved and active. Ideally, regular exercise and physical activities are started early in life, so they become a part of a healthy lifestyle. However, it is never too late to start. Those who are currently the least active are likely to receive the most benefit from an increase in activity.

## Thinking ahead for positive ageing



Personal preparation for positive ageing includes looking at personal goals and identifying the key steps to achieving them. Older people who feel they have accomplished what they set out to do are likely to express greater satisfaction with their lives.

### Questionnaire: Personal values and goals

- Does the work I'm now doing express what I truly want to be doing? If not, how can I begin to take steps towards discovering and doing work that would be more personally fulfilling?
- Would I like to increase my education and training?
- Do I have any special talents or skills that I haven't fully developed or expressed?
- What values give my life the greatest meaning?  
Some examples of values are:

Happy family life

Intimacy

Friendship

Good health

Peace of mind

Serving others

Material success

Career achievement

Creative expression

Personal growth

Spiritual awareness

Dedication to a social cause

- What changes do I need to make – or what risks do I have to take – to more fully realise my most important values?
- What would I like to have accomplished in order to feel that my life has been productive and meaningful?

## Preparing for our older age



Advance planning needs to include not only financial preparation, though this is obviously important, but also how to meet changing needs in relation to health, lifestyle, roles and relationships.

### PLANNING MAY INCLUDE:

- Career and education decisions
- Work/retirement planning
- Decisions about finances and saving, superannuation plans, or investments
- Making provision for support of older and younger family members
- Planning for future home and garden maintenance
- Considering options such as rural or urban living, rental accommodation or retirement villages
- Considering rest home care or at-home care
- Making a will
- Preparing for possible frailty or disability
- Preparing for bereavement and loss

Age Concern has a range of information available to assist with planning, including fact sheets, resources, and a library of books, videos and information.

The following pages include information that may help you to anticipate and meet changing needs. More information on each of these topics is included in the companion *Ageing is Living* workbook, available from Age Concern New Zealand.



Many who retire become involved in passing on their skills and experience

Photo: Courtesy Michael Yoffe and Age Concern North Shore

## Planning for work and leisure

Increasingly older people are remaining in paid work. This may create a change in attitudes with greater recognition of older workers' experience and expertise. Some employers support their older workers by offering flexible work conditions. Many people have little desire to continue to work full-time

and prefer to reduce their work commitments as they grow older.

Flexible work conditions can also be helpful for older workers with caregiving responsibilities. Many older women in particular have a dual role as employee and carer of a parent or older relative, spouse or grandchild.

For others planning retirement, help may be available from employers or trainers offering pre-retirement courses. Planning will ease the transition from a work-centred to a leisure centred lifestyle. It includes financial planning as well as developing social networks and leisure activities outside work. It may also involve taking courses and gaining experience in a variety of roles to increase future options for part time or self employed work.

Retirement from paid work does not mean people cease to be involved, cease to learn or stop contributing to society. Many who retire become involved in volunteer work. Others are involved as mentors, advisers, sport coaches, board members, kohanga reo caregivers, adult students, artists or a variety of other roles.

## Meeting Changing Health Needs

**S**ome physical conditions are more likely to occur in older people, but illness and disability are not inevitable in old age. A lot depends on earlier habits and lifestyle. The healthier people are throughout their lives, the less likely they are to have ill health or disabling conditions.

Some older people do need support in older age and planning ahead for frailty or disability will make it easier to adapt as changes are needed. Planning may include practical measures such as modifications to the home or home support arrangements.

Adapting to increasing frailty or disability also means anticipating the emotional aspects of coping. This can include overcoming fear, regaining life skills, re-establishing community contacts and regenerating self-esteem.

Meeting changing health needs includes being aware of changes to our body and its ability to cope with medication, alcohol, infection or injury. Reducing the risk of injury from falls, adapting the home to accommodate limited mobility, vision, or loss of strength, and investigating and adapting to such things as hearing or mobility aids are all strategies that can be useful.

A number of government and community organisations and self help groups are available to assist those coping with disability or frailty. Support for caregivers is also available.

## **R** Shifts in relationships

Relationships take on a new and different importance as people get older. The shift in relationships as people age is particularly evident in families. There is often a time of adjustment when children have flown the nest. If the empty nest syndrome coincides with stopping or reducing work, this may be a time of major adjustment.

Change in older age may also mean adjustments in relationships with spouses or partners. Being adaptable and having open lines of communication are important. Planning how time is spent as a couple as well as two individuals will help to ease the transition to retirement.

As individuals age, they may find their own parents becoming more dependent on them and needing more of their time, especially if one parent is left on their own. Those who are considering having a parent live with them will need to anticipate the effect this may have on the whole household, as well as on the parent.

The birth of a grandchild brings new adjustments. Grandparents can hold a unique position in the life of their grandchildren and find satisfaction in this role as their support and skills are called upon. However, grandparents may need to find a balance in the extent to which their children call on them for help. Learning to say no to family can be difficult and there may be differing expectations among family members as to the role each can play.

For more on this topic see Age Concern's factsheet "The changing face of grandparenting" or contact Relationship Services.



Older years may leave more time for leisure, and for love...

## Meeting Needs for Intimacy

**T**here are many levels to intimacy. We all have a need to touch and be touched, both physically and emotionally. As we age we do not feel differently than we did when we were younger, though our physical and emotional reactions may be less immediate.

Some couples find intimacy improves as the pressures of work and family let up. There can be a need to adapt to the effects of hormonal changes, illness, or medication, and advice from a health professional may help.

Sometimes an expectation of a decline in sexual activity becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Negative feelings about our older bodies, or disapproval from family, culture, or religion can also have effects. There can also be fewer opportunities to express affection as family move away, when a partner dies, or when living in a residential care environment.

Being aware of opportunities to experience intimacy in all its forms is important. For more information see “Life-long Sexuality”, a pamphlet published by the Family Planning Association of New Zealand.



## Experiencing loss

We are likely to experience loss and bereavement as we age. Grief, as a reaction to loss, is a normal part of life and a way of coping and healing.

A person may grieve when they lose:

- people – through death or a relationship break-up or because a relationship changes
- health – through illness, accident or disability
- things we own – by accident or theft
- places – through moving house
- our place in the world – through losing a place on a team or a job, or because we ourselves have changed
- pets – through death or because of a move.

It takes time to adjust to loss and grief has its own shifting timeframes. Grief can include a wide range of feelings, from depression and anger to denial and anxiety, and perhaps ultimately a sense of renewal. Grief varies and our reaction to loss is a personal and individual experience. There is no “correct” way to grieve. Even the feeling that you are not grieving correctly, or of being separate from grief, is grief itself.

Each loss we experience is an opportunity for exploring grief and the way it can separate us from life. Experiencing loss can lead to a need to learn new activities. Following the pain of loss there can be growth. For more information on loss and grief in older age see “Riding the Storms” a booklet by Lois Tonkin produced by Age Concern Canterbury.

## Understanding depression

S

ometimes depression is mistakenly thought of as a natural part of growing old. Though depression can be an understandable reaction to some experiences, such as loss, it is not an inevitable part of life in older age.

There is a relatively low rate of depression among older people living in the community. However, it is not uncommon for depression to be unrecognised or to be misdiagnosed. Rates of depression are higher for older people in supervised care environments and among those who are unwell – about three to six times higher than the general older population.

Lesser degrees of depression are more common than severe depression. When severe depression does occur it can be life threatening. Of all suicides, 11.7% occur among those over the age of 65. Older men are particularly at risk.

Depression can be prevented and its effects minimised when recognised early and treated appropriately. Recovery from depression is the rule, not the exception.

It is not uncommon for older people to be reluctant to seek help. It may be friends or family who recognise that something is not right and who seek help. If you become concerned for a friend or family member encourage them to see their GP.

For more information on depression and older people see material available from The Mental Health Foundation or Age Concern.

## Protecting your future

**P**

rotecting your future might include savings plans and ways of managing finances, making a will, allocating power of attorney and making plans for your personal care and welfare.

Estimating your future income will assist with planning. New Zealand Superannuation offers a modest level of income. Many older people will also qualify for other forms of income support, such as domestic purposes benefit, transitional retirement benefit, war pensions or widow's benefit. Additional assistance in the form of accommodation supplements, funeral grants, training incentive allowance, or disability allowances may be available.

Management of finances and planning ahead for future needs can be quite complex and professional advice is recommended. Financial institutions such as banks, trustee companies, accountancy firms, stockbrokers and independent financial advisory services all offer advice on managing investments. The golden rule is don't put all your eggs in one basket, and spread the risk.

Learning about the Protection of Personal and Property Rights Act and enduring powers of attorney can be helpful for future security should you become unable to act on your own behalf through illness or incapacity. See Age Concern's pamphlet "Do you have an Enduring Power of Attorney?" or contact your local Age Concern Council for information. For free legal advice contact your nearest community law centre.

## Personal strategies for positive ageing

- Approaching older age with a vision of your needs and planning to meet them
- Taking responsibility for good health practice
- Staying active and having contact with family and friends
- Gaining satisfaction in the things you do and your relations with others
- Having choices and feeling in control of your life
- Giving yourself some time to adjust to change
- Being involved in a wide range of activities and interests
- Learning new skills and trying new things
- Feeling secure about yourself, your future, your achievements
- Feeling secure in life at home, in the community, and within relationships

Photo: Courtesy Age Concern Canterbury



## A plan of action for positive ageing



Getting something down on paper is a good way to start planning.

### STEP 1: NEEDS AND WANTS

*Start thinking about your present and future needs and wants. Jot down your thoughts and ideas. Don't think about the things that might stop you getting there at this stage – imagine you have a magic wand and could do whatever you wished.*

Getting something down on paper is a good way to start.

#### What do I want to get from life?

More of the following:

Less of the following:

Some new experiences I'd like:

#### What would I like to be doing in 10/20 years' time?

Where I'd like to be:

Who I'd like to be with:

What I'd like to know:

What I'd like to see:

What I'd like to have with me:

What I'd like to have achieved:

What I'd like to be doing:

## STEP 2: GOAL SETTING

*Review what you've written so far about your needs and wants. With these in mind, form some general goals that will take you along the direction you want to be going.*

**Health:** For my health I'd like to...

**Love and belonging:** To feel love and belonging I'd like to...

**Family:** With family I'd like to...

**Friends:** With friends I'd like to...

**Physical activity:** For physical activity I'd like to...

**Leisure and interests:** For leisure and interests I'd like to...

**Learning and creativity:** For learning and creativity I'd like to...

**Spirituality:** For my spiritual well being I'd like to...

**Community:** In my community I'd like to...

**Paid/unpaid work:** For work activity I'd like to...

**Finances:** For finances I'd like to...

**Environment:** To enjoy my environment I'd like to...

**House and home:** For my home I'd like to...

### STEP 3: IDENTIFYING KEY STEPS

*Choose three or four of the goals you've written down in Step 2. Start with some that are likely to be easier to achieve. This will give you motivation to try the others when you are ready.*

*Give yourself a time when you want to have it done by. Write down anything that might help you such as information, people, organisations.*

Goal

Key Steps:

By when:

Possible Barriers:

Resources:

# Promoting Positive Ageing in the Community

As **individuals** and as members of groups we can help to bring about change by influencing those who develop policy and make decisions. A society that enables us to age well will be one where:

- positive attitudes to ageing and older people are encouraged through education, health promotion and intergenerational activities
- the worth and activities of older people are acknowledged and valued
- older people are consulted and involved in planning and design of services, products, and facilities
- barriers to older people participating are identified and removed
- policies on health care, housing, employment and income are developed according to an integrated national plan that ensures all generations have the opportunity to age well.

Older people have noted the following as being needed:

- adequacy of income in older age for daily needs, future planning and participation in society
- increased opportunities to be involved in social, recreational, physical, educational and creative pursuits, including life long learning
- prompt access to health care, reduced waiting times for surgery and sufficient support and rehabilitation services to maintain independence
- improved door-to-door services and transport
- improved information on services and community support available
- research on the needs and experiences of older people
- education and health promotion strategies that encourage healthy lifestyle planning and early preparation for older age – socially as well as financially.

## Answers to “True/False” Questions from page 7

1. **True.** By the year 2021, 18% of the New Zealand population will be aged over 65.
2. **False.** There are a lot of pressures on the family today but family members are still the main caregivers when older people need support.
3. **False.** While depression at any age is more common than people think, it is not an inevitable part of growing old. Attitude, adaptability, activity and involvement are important protecting factors.
4. **False.** Even among those over 80 years old, only one in five will suffer any form of serious forgetfulness or confusion.
5. **True.** Around 94% of older New Zealanders live in their own accommodation and look after themselves.
6. **False.** Intelligence does not normally decline with age.
7. **True.** Women tend to outlive men in our society.
8. **True.** On average older people take about twice as many medicines as younger people.
9. **False.** Older people probably benefit more from regular physical activity than any other age group.
10. **False.** Every individual is different. Older people are as diverse as any other group in the community.
11. **False.** Older people can and do enjoy loving relationships beyond their 80s.
12. **False.** Joints that receive regular, sensible use maintain their efficiency.
13. **False.** This phenomenon is related more to lifestyle and diet throughout life than to age itself. It is like going grey. Some arteries harden more than others.
14. **False.** Creative people often are at their most original in their 70s and 80s. Countless vigorous intellects have declined in the mistaken belief that old age brings unavoidable mental loss.

## Further Information

For further information contact your local Age Concern or Age Concern New Zealand. All Age Concerns are listed in the telephone directory.

Age Concern New Zealand

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Photo: Courtesy Peter Jenkins and Age Concern North Shore

