

Embargo until 0001 Friday 30 September 2011

Coming together to improve the lives of older people

Boots UK is joining dozens of organisations from across the voluntary, private and public sectors who are coming together to celebrate the lives of older people and address the challenges of our ageing society.

The Age Action Alliance, launched today to coincide with Older People's Day celebrations, will work together to improve the lives of older people and help transform communities into a better place to grow older.

As the first national initiative of its kind, the Alliance aims to improve the lives of the most disadvantaged older people, prevent deprivation in later life and challenge age discrimination.

It will build on successful projects developed by the voluntary and private sectors and Government programmes and will champion innovative ways of working to deliver practical solutions.

Prime Minister David Cameron has welcomed the launch of the Age Action Alliance:

"People are now living longer, more active lives and we must do more to reach out to older generations, not only to help the most vulnerable but also to better understand their needs and recognise the important role they play in society.

"So many older people take an active role in their local community that puts many of us to shame. I want to encourage others to follow in their footsteps, through volunteering and being part of the Big Society so we can all benefit from their experience, knowledge and enthusiasm.

"The launch of the Age Action Alliance will unite those working in this sector in celebration of the role of older people in this country and ensure their voice is heard at the very heart of Government."

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Iain Duncan Smith said:

"Just as we recognise the real opportunities of an ageing society we need to be alive to its challenges. We have a huge number of organisations doing fantastic work to get older people engaged in their local communities – the Age Action Alliance is about getting them together, talking to one another, and sharing ideas about how social justice can be achieved for older people at a local level."

Michelle Mitchell, Charity Director of Age UK said:

"We celebrate the fact that not only is life expectancy increasing, but that also society's view of retirement is changing. But there are still too many people not able to enjoy later life as much as they could, because they live on the edges of communities, often with little human contact. We want to see older people brought back into the heart of society and this is what the Age Action Alliance will work towards by bringing together the collective talents of the member organisations and the older people who help shape our work."

The vision of the Age Action Alliance is that it will be informed by older people themselves. It will tackle several issues relevant to older people, including public health and active lifestyles, safe warm homes, improving the lives of excluded groups, combating loneliness and isolation, working on age-friendly neighbourhoods, promoting digital inclusion and new attitudes to ageing.

Notes to Editors:

1. Over the last century, average life expectancy has increased by thirty years and will continue to increase. Fifty years ago one child in ten could expect to live to be 100, today it is one in four. In the UK there are now more people over State Pension age than children under 16.
2. The Alliance welcomes new members and believes its success will in part depend on a broad and diverse membership. For information on how to join the Alliance: www.ageactionalliance.org
3. Older People's Day wants to change attitudes about ageing and older people and celebrate the valuable contribution that older people make. In its 5th edition, the theme for this year is "getting and staying active in later life". The celebrations will include a range of events to showcase the talents of the over-60s, including dance and fitness classes, singing lessons, 5-a-side football matches and cookery clubs. www.direct.gov.uk/fulloflife
4. October 1st marks an important milestone for people who wish to work longer, as this is the date when the Default Retirement Age (DRA) legislation which allowed employers to compulsorily retire employees when they reach 65 will be removed. Further information on removing DRA is available on DirectGov www.direct.gov.uk/workingpastpensionage