

Better Government for Older People

Background

The Older People's Advisory Group (OPAG) was proposed as a result of a 'ground breaking' conference (Politics, Participation and Older People) at Ruskin College - it was unanimously agreed that:

"At every level of the BGOP structure a significant number of people aged 50+ should be involved - enough to make a difference and that an Advisory Group of older people be set up".

In 1997, Martin Shreeve was appointed as Programme Director and a Steering Group was established, which was a partnership comprising of the Cabinet Office, Age Concern, Anchor Trust, Carnegie Third Age Programme, Help the Aged, the Beth Johnson Foundation, and Warwick University Local Authorities Research Consortium. 28 pilots were launched throughout the UK.

In 1999, the BGOP Programme's first year was celebrated at a special June conference which was marked with the publication of 'Making it Happen'. Following considerable interest from non-pilot local authorities [and others] a learning network, based on subscription membership, was launched.

The final evaluation of the Pilots was completed in 2000 by Warwick University, with the publication of the BGOP Steering Committee report '**All Our Futures**', the Older People's Advisory Group [OPAG] report '**Our Present for the Future**' and the evaluator's report '**Making a Difference**'. Following this, the Government then made a decision to continue support for BGOP beyond the Pilot Phase. Mervyn Eastman was appointed Director of the BGOP Learning Network, while the Older People's Advisory Group [OPAG] continued under Martin Shreeve.

During early 2002 the BGOP Board recognised the need to reinforce the links between the BGOP Network and OPAG and from July 2002 OPAG became hosted by the Beth Johnson Foundation [BJF]. 2003 saw the formal creation of a new Partnership Agreement that underpins the current governance arrangements of BGOP. A review in 2004 resulted in the move from BJF to the BGOP office, further securing OPAG as an integral part of BGOP.

BGOP today

Today, BGOP is a Partnership which incorporates:

- A highly influential Older Peoples Advisory Group [OPAG]
- A range of strong Strategic Alliances and Key Partners
- A range of subscribing organisations that include Government departments and agencies, older people's forums and groups, Local Authorities, Age Sector organisations, Local Strategic Partnerships, Health Trusts, Housing Associations, Police and Fire Services

BGOP's activities, interests and strategic direction are governed by the BGOP Partnership Board together with a strategic steer from the BGOP Advisory Committee. Both work to reflect the principles of partnership and engagement of older people in advancing the BGOP vision.

Mission statement

BGOP exists to challenge and change attitudes through assisting the public sector to promote and encourage older people's engagement and citizenship in all aspects of service delivery to improve the lives of all older people (50 plus).