In Due Season

A programm for post-primary schools
about being young and growing old.
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★ some preparation is necessary
In Due Season has been created by Anne Dempsey, writer and trainer, and Jenny Dempsey, designer, for The National Council for the Elderly, Corrigan House, Fenian Street, Dublin 2.
Dear Students and Teachers,

1993, the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations is, I believe, an important initiative in increasing awareness and understanding between the younger and older generations of our society.

Older and younger people have a lot to learn and share with one another and this year provides an ideal opportunity for both young and old to discover and explore the many challenges facing them as citizens of our community.

I congratulate the National Council for the Elderly for publishing this excellent In Due Season programme. Its purpose is to promote positive attitudes to ageing and to older people in a real and practical way, through the classroom. I am sure that it will achieve its aim and assist the younger and older generations deepen their mutual respect and sense of solidarity.

Misunderstandings based on lack of knowledge can sometimes create barriers between generations. I believe that the In Due Season programme will encourage young people to appreciate the contribution which the oldest generation has made and continues to make to our society.

I wish the programme every success.

Niamh Bhreathnach TD
Minister for Education.
Preface

*In Due Season* is a programme of experiential learning specifically designed for use by teachers of 15-18 year olds in post-primary school. It aims to promote solidarity between young and old, by facilitating an exploration on how young people feel about their own ageing and about older people, and by offering information of an accurate and reflective nature on the world of the over-sixties. A similar programme *Bearing Fruit* is also available for primary schools.

The programme is an initiative of the National Council for the Elderly taken during 1993 European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations. It has been financially supported by the Irish Co-ordinating Committee of the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations and by the Commission of the European Communities. Implicit in the pack is the promotion of the themes of the Year - the positive contribution of older people, all ages together and meeting the challenge of older age - which are lasting themes and go beyond the Year itself.

The programme consists of ten units. It is designed to run chronologically over a number of weeks, or within one school term. But, bearing in mind the realities of school life, each unit is complete in itself, thereby allowing teachers to use it flexibly, according to their needs. Working through each unit would take approximately 45 minutes to one hour, and a key exercise(s) has been identified in each unit which would take approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete.
Programme materials include handouts which need to be photocopied. Working the programme will create class-generated materials which could be displayed around the classroom. This material could also form the basis of a school exhibition when the programme is complete.

The programme provides a variety of learning methods - debates, small discussion groups, quizzes, role play, games - and more. Learning is most effective when it is challenging, interactive and fun. The aim in all units is to be participative. The programme seeks to build on the student’s own knowledge of and attitudes to older people and ageing, to challenge negative attitudes, and to affirm and develop those that are positive.

In preparing and writing the programme the National Council for the Elderly wishes to acknowledge the help and support given by Catherine Rose, National Co-ordinator of The European Year, Michael Gorman, of the Irish Association of Older People, Father Brian Power, former Council member and social researcher, and Siobháin Cluskey, educationalist. The poem in Unit 10 is reprinted by kind permission of its author. Finally the Council wishes to thank its Secretary, Bob Carroll and Projects Officer, Trish Whelan for their contributions to the establishment, production and publication of the programme.

Michael White
Chairman
National Council for the Elderly
ABOUT THIS UNIT:

THIS UNIT INTRODUCES THE SUBJECT OF AGE AND AGEING. IT HAS TWO SECTIONS. SECTION 1 EXAMINES THE PLUSSSES AND MINUSES OF DIFFERENT LIFE STAGES. SECTION 2 LOOKS AT ENTITLEMENTS AT DIFFERENT LIFE STAGES.

BOTH SECTION 1 AND SECTION 2 ARE KEY EXERCISES IN THIS UNIT.
AIMS:
- Provide a stimulating and open atmosphere in which students look at life as a whole.
- Reflect on plusses and minuses at different life stages.
- Discover common links between young and old people.

RESOURCES:
Class resources needed are blackboard/flipchart, 4 large sheets of paper and marker pens. To complete section 2, the handout 'The Age of Entitlement - Questions and Answers' printed on pages 12 and 13 needs to be photocopied for each student.
key exercise

1

BRAINSTORM
(group exercise, 5 minutes)

Write '15' (or '16/17' depending on average student age) on board/chart and ask for words or responses associated with this age.

Possible responses are: young, old, free, fed up, silly, teenage, adolescent, idealistic, student, penniless, son, daughter, friend... Record responses on board/chart.

Now write '65' and ask for words or responses associated with this age.

Possible responses are: old, weak, old-fashioned, wise, lonely, widow, widower, grandparent, sad, retired, kind... Record responses on board/chart and spend a few minutes discussing them.

YOUNG & OLD
(group exercise, 25 minutes)

Divide class into four groups. Ask group 1 to list and discuss 5 positive things about being young. Ask group 2 to list and discuss 5 negative things about being young. Group 3 is to list and discuss 5 positive things about being old (65 or over) and group 4 is to list and discuss 5 negative things about being old (65 or over).

Appoint a leader and a note taker in each group. The leader's role is to ensure everyone gets a chance to speak and sticks to the point. The note taker is to record the comments of the group. Distribute paper and marker pen to each group.

Possible responses from groups:

Being young:
Positive: We are healthy and strong, life is ahead of us. We have choices, opportunities. We are still learning, discovering, idealistic, full of potential.

Negative: We are still under some adult control. We have little power. We may be lonely, have few friends, worry about the future, about passing exams, getting a job, our looks, making mistakes. We are often bored.

Being old:
Positive: They are retired, can please themselves, can travel, live life at their own pace. They have experience and knowledge. They get a pension. They may still be well and healthy. They are less afraid of making mistakes.

Negative: They are retired, not needed any more. They may be ill, weak, feeble. They may be poor, lonely. They are moving near the end of their lives, may have few friends, worry about the future.

If some of the above points are not forthcoming, suggest them, and note responses. Allow some time for feedback.

Some questions worth asking:

• What are the positive factors common to each group?
• What are the negative factors common to each group?
• What factors are considered age specific?

Respond with the following 'In Fact' information about the reality of life for old people in Ireland today.
key exercise

THE AGE OF ENTITLEMENT
(individual exercise; 15 minutes)

Photocopy and distribute handout 'The Age of Entitlement - Questions' (printed overleaf) and allow each student 5 minutes to complete it.

Alternatively, call out questions and ask students to write the answer, taking care to number their answers.

Take answers from group. Use the exercise to clarify legal rights, but spend most time discussing the more philosophical questions. You may like to have photocopied 'The Age of Entitlement - Answers' and distribute this to facilitate the discussion. Give group time to read it and ask for comments.

Alternatively, call out answers and ask for responses, particularly to the reflective questions. Note important points on board/chart.

Conclusion:
Allow some discussion on these points. Be comfortable with an open-ended agenda, rather than seeking to tie everything down.

In Fact:

• We are all living longer. In 1925 the average life expectancy for a man was 57, a woman 61. Today life expectancy at birth is 71 years for a man, 77 years for a woman.
• Many more people are living into their 80s and 90s.
• So when people retire at 65 they may still have almost a third of their life ahead of them.
• 1 in 9 of all people in Ireland is over 65.
• 11 out of every 12 people over 65 live at home, and 1 in 5 lives alone.
• Living alone is not necessarily a problem, and most older people are independent and managing.
• Research indicates that 4 out of 5 over 60s are in touch with their family at least once a week.
• Some old people are lonely. Many would appreciate and enjoy visits from family, friends and neighbours of all ages.
• Only 1 in every 22 old people is in a geriatric hospital or in a nursing home.
• At any given time a further 1 in every 29 is in hospital temporarily through physical or mental illness.

Give the group some time to respond to these facts, ask questions, make comments.
The Age of Entitlement - Questions

At what age are you legally entitled to:
- a. vote?
- b. leave school?
- c. start working?
- d. drive a car?

At what age are you responsible enough to care for others?

At what age are you entitled to respect?

At what age are you mature enough to take total charge of your life?

At what age do you cease being of value to the community?

At what age are you legally entitled to:
- a. drink alcohol in a pub?
- b. get married?
- c. become a blood donor?
- d. become a member of Dáil Éireann?
You are legally entitled to:

(a) vote at 18 (b) leave school at 15 (c) start working at 15 (d) drive a car at 18 (provisional licence 17)

You are entitled to respect from your earliest years for all of your life.

Acquiring the maturity needed to take charge of your life is a gradual process, which begins in childhood and continues right through life. Many 16-18 year olds make many of their own decisions. By 25, many people regard themselves as fully adult.

The Age of Entitlement - Answers
What's new about old

About this unit:

This unit examines ageism. It has two sections. In section 1 the group offer views on the elderly population in Ireland. Section 2 introduces and explores the subject of ageism.

Section 2 is the key exercise in this unit.
AIMS:

- Provide an experience in which the group defines and explores ageism in a way that involves and challenges them.
- Receive facts about the elderly population.
- Discuss why ageism exists and if it serves us.
- Look at the values which underpin ageism and decide if these are values we wish to promote.

RESOURCES:

Class resources needed are blackboard/flipchart and marker pens.
EXPLORING THE ISSUE
(group exercise, 15 minutes)

Begin with trigger questions to explore the subject of old age and ageing.

- When does old age begin?
- What kind of lives do old people have?
- In what ways do old people differ from young people?
- When are you old in society’s eyes?
- What does that mean - for an older person? for society?

Some possible responses:
To this age group anyone over 40 may be seen as old. There may be little idea of what life is like today for the over 60s and insofar as it has been thought of at all, the general view may be that this sector has a passive, sedentary, relatively dependent lifestyle.

Some points worth making:
1. We are all growing older all the time -
   - our bodies are constantly ageing and developing
   - our minds are constantly maturing and developing
   - our ideas and attitudes are constantly forming, reforming and developing
   - as we move from childhood to adolescence to adulthood to middle age and to old age.

2. Society has decided that people move into old age once they hit their mid-60s.

3. But maturing, learning and developing do not stop just because we reach a certain date on the calendar.

You may like to add more points from the following ‘In Fact’ information.

In Fact:

- The whole life span may be viewed as a time in which different tasks have to be fulfilled at different stages.
- The reality of many old people’s lives shows that they are fully aware of the potential of their stage.
- Many in their 60s and some in their 70s are still in the workforce.
- Many aged 60-90 are having a good time - appreciating their leisure, learning new hobbies, new sports, travelling, enjoying grandchildren, taking time to stop and stare.
- Many aged 60-90 are working voluntarily - in parish, literacy schemes, caring for children and people older than themselves, advising industry, passing on skills.
- Many find the 60s and beyond a time of creative fulfilment. Writers, authors, painters, actors, musicians are often in full bloom at this time.
- Many find the 60s and beyond a time of spiritual and psychological exploration and insight.
- People in their 60s and over are falling in love.
- A minority of over 60s do need care in varying degrees - but their lives still retain value, worth, enjoyment and meaning.
- Years ago, being old meant being poor for many. Today most old people get a government pension and an increasing number of the workforce is now covered by an occupational pension scheme.
- People vary in their life history, so the longer a person’s life and experience, the more diverse and individual they become.
INTRODUCING AGEISM
(group exercise, 30 minutes)

Ask the following question or write it on board/chart: "If being old is so good why are there so many negative feelings about it?" Take feedback from group and note some responses.

Suggest that part of the reason old age is associated with negativity is due to ageism. Write the word on board/chart and ask for definitions of its meaning. Record these.

Respond with the following definition: "Ageism is a form of discrimination against people because they are old". The group may decide to accept this definition, or retain definition(s) they have already offered, or combine the two. Write the agreed definition on board/chart.

Ask for examples of ageism - such as ageist language, attitudes, behaviour, laws and exclusions. Divide the group into five small groups to identify and list examples of ageism under these headings. Allow time for small group discussion, then take feedback. Record these and respond with the following examples.

Ageist language:
Statements like, "Battling Gran beats off raiders" or "Let's pray for the old and the lonely". Referring to older people as 'wrinklies', 'cruelies', 'burdens', 'victims', 'social problems' or 'pensioners'.

Ageist attitudes:
Regarding all old people as physically helpless and intellectually diminished; patronising old people; believing old people have nothing worth saying; viewing a lower standard of living for older people as acceptable; deciding that once someone is retired she/he becomes marginalised and irrelevant; regarding income-generated work as the work of most value; equating beauty solely with youth, and not seeing the physical attractiveness of many old people.

Ageist behaviour:
Talking down to old people; treating them with less respect; according less weight to their opinions, needs and beliefs; treating their health needs less seriously because they are old.

Ageist laws:
Compulsory retirement for categories of workers from late 50s to early 60s.

Ageist exclusions:
An under-representation of older people in some areas of the public arena which tends to render them silent and invisible; a tendency to overlook old people as spokespersons on topics or issues; a youth culture which militates against old people.

What other examples can the group now come up with? Note these on chart. Why does society hold ageist views? Record responses.

Some points worth making:
- Negative attitudes to ageing may be increasing because older people are living longer, there are more older people who may be seen as a burden.
- Anything termed 'old' may be regarded negatively due to modern technological advances this century.
- Growth in mass education and literacy has meant less perceived need for the knowledge old people can pass on. This has contributed to lack of respect.
- The breaking down of the extended family and the creation of the nuclear family in western society has meant a less involved role in families for older people.

Discuss these points.

Conclude by asking what values an ageist society holds. Record these on board/chart.

Some points worth making:
In an ageist society:
- Might is right.
- Beauty is skin deep.
- People are judged on what they do rather than who they are.
- Little value is put on wisdom, maturity and insight gained from the experience of living.
- Attributes such as kindness and justice begin to be less important than productivity and profit.
- The physically weak may be vulnerable, marginalised, exploited, forgotten and ignored.

Discuss.
About this unit:

This unit examines the kind of images young people receive of older people through media. It has two sections. Section 1 looks at how attitudes are formed. Section 2 considers how older people are portrayed in public media, and the implications of the findings. Section 2 is the key exercise in this unit.
Aims: • Provide a forum to explore a pupil’s eye view of older people as presented by mass media. • Discuss implications of findings. • Look at how attitudes are formed.

Resources:
Class resources needed are blackboard/flipchart and marker pens. To complete section 2, the handout ‘Through the Lens’ on pages 22 and 23 needs to be photocopied for each student.
**key exercise**

1. **HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU KNOW?**
   (group exercise, 15 minutes)

   Begin by writing the above question on board/chart. Ask students to respond individually by quickly writing all the sources and channels of both knowledge and attitudes they can think of. Allow a few minutes for this, then ask for some responses, and note these on board/chart.

   Respond with a definitive list which includes:
   - parents
   - brothers/sisters
   - friends
   - extended family
   - teachers
   - school
   - neighbourhood
   - grandparents
   - television
   - radio
   - films
   - newspapers
   - books
   - magazines
   - schooltexts
   - church
   - religion
   - advertising.

   Allow some discussion on these headings. The group may like to number them in order of importance. Who thinks television is the most important opinion maker? Who thinks she/he is most influenced by friends? Who believes they get basic values from their family? Take a show of hands.

2. **THROUGH THE LENS**
   (individual exercise, 30 minutes)

   Photocopy and distribute questionnaire (printed overleaf) which examines how old people are portrayed in public media - television, newspapers, advertising, music, books, films, magazines - as perceived by the group.

   Allow 5 minutes for individuals to complete questionnaire. (Students should write responses on a separate sheet of paper). Then ask for responses from a number. Note these on board/chart.

   At the end of the feedback there will ideally be a cast of older people identified for discussion. These will include some fictitious characters from television, film, books, magazines, as well as real life people aged 60 and over from politics, entertainment, music, stage, news, advertising.

   Allow the group time to discuss this list of people, then ask the following questions.
Some questions worth asking:

1. Image

- What range of characteristics do the fictitious characters in TV drama / soaps / books / films share?
- In what roles are they predominantly depicted?
- Does the portrayal tend to show older people in a positive or negative light?
- In what role(s) do older people most often appear in real life events - victim? spokesperson? expert?
- What is the older person most likely to be commenting upon - an issue of general interest, or one of interest to an older age group only?
- How does advertising tend to depict older people?
- Generally speaking, are older people fairly and accurately represented in media as a whole? If not, why not?

Record group comments on board/chart.

Some questions worth asking:

2. Visibility

- Does the group feel that older people are excluded from some sections of the media?
- Why, for example, are there so few news readers, reporters and presenters on our screens who are 65 and over?
- Is it ethically questionable or just good marketing for some radio stations to define their market within age boundaries? (e.g. cut off point, age 29)
- Are older people relatively absent as spokespersons because credibility is dented due to age?
- Are older people absent from young people's magazines because youth culture has little in common with older people? (Name areas where there would be common ground).
- Is the music older people create taken from their own emotional perspective and, therefore, irrelevant to younger people?

Discuss. Note on board/chart any new points made or any strongly held views.

Finally ask:
If older people are relatively absent from public media, does it matter?
If so, why so? If not, why not? Record responses.
1
Name fictitious characters aged 60 and over that you see:
A. in your favourite television programme
B. in programme(s) you watch regularly
C. in television soap operas (e.g. Brookside, Coronation Street, others).
What best describes them? (Circle what fits)
• hero
• heroine
• helpful
• helpless
• boring
• frightened
• busy
• interfering
• bossy
• sad
• caring
• other (specify)

2
Name the radio station(s) you listen to most.
Name anyone aged 60 and over featured as:
• DJ presenter
• reporter
• performer
• spokesperson

3
Name people aged 60 and over that you:
A. read about in the papers recently
B. saw on the news recently.
What was the occasion in A?
What was the occasion in B?
What did you think of what they had to say? (Circle what fits)
• interesting
• boring
• don't know
4
Name a film(s) you saw recently in cinema/on video which featured actors aged 60 or over. Was their role:
(Circle what fits)
helpless person hero heroine
wise person friend grandparent
villain leader romantic lead
other (specify)

5
Name any magazine(s) you read. Name any characters featured, aged 60 or over.

6
Name any living music composer/performer aged 60 or over that you listen to.

7
Name any fictitious characters aged 60 or over from 3 books that you have read. Did you: (circle what fits)
not care about them
dislike them
like them

8
Think of any advertisements for products or services featuring people aged 60 or over. Are the people shown as:
(Circle what fits)
cheerful positive in control
need help patient unhealthy
being looked after stupid
clever fit giving help
being amusing

Some preparation is necessary

About this unit:

This unit is about attitudes. It has two sections. Section 1 explores mutual and differing attitudes between the generations. Section 2 is an attitudinal quiz followed by a group discussion.

Section 2 is the key exercise in this unit.
Aims:

- Provide a stimulating and open atmosphere in which pupils can look at personal attitudes to ageing.
- Reflect on feelings about being young and being old.
- Hear what the generations think of each other.
- Realise that my present self has strong links with my older self.
- Learn that young people and old people have much in common.

Resources:

Class resources needed are blackboard/flipchart, three large sheets of paper or cardboard, and marker pens. To prepare for game ‘Where Do I Stand?’ in section 2, assemble the paper or cardboard. On the first sheet, print in large letters the word AGREE, on the second, DISAGREE, and on the third, the words DON’T KNOW. Some physical space is needed for this key exercise.
**The Generation Game**
*(group exercise, 30 minutes)*

**Before:**
Divide the group into two teams, The Jumping Beans and The Has Beans, representing the teenage and the over 60 population respectively. Ask The Jumping Beans to complete five statements beginning with the words “Old people are...” and ask The Has Beans to complete five statements beginning with the words “Young people are...”.

Choose a leader for each team. Her/his role is to confer with team to agree on statements.

**During:**
Have teams face each other. Begin by asking The Has Beans to make a statement about The Jumping Beans. Ask The Jumping Beans to respond with a statement of their own, and so on. Write all statements on board/chart.

**After:**
Spend some time discussing statements.

**Some questions worth asking:**
- What view has each generation of the other?
- Are the views broadly positive, or negative?
- Do the statements accurately reflect what this group feels about older people?
- And what they believe older people feel about them?
- In what way are the views expressed affected by ageism?

Respond with the following ‘In Fact’ information.
In Fact:

- A study on attitudes of teenagers to older people showed that over half had a predominantly negative image of older people.
- 1 in 2 described old people as 'cranky'; and a further 1 in 2 thought old people were 'difficult to please'.
- 2 out of 3 said there was no one aged 65 or over outside the family whom they would regard as a friend.
- But 5 out of 8 had a generally friendly attitude to older people.
- 2 out of 3 thought old people in Ireland were treated well, and 1 out of 3 thought they were treated badly.
- 2 out of 5 felt they had a special responsibility for the welfare of older people, generally.
- 3 out of 5 thought the age of retirement should depend on the nature of the job.
- 7 out of 12 said they would like to live to be 75 or older.
- 2 out of 3 girls, and 1 out of 2 boys, felt some fear or anxiety about growing old.
- A survey of older people showed that some approve of the young people of today.
- Young people were described as 'helpful', 'thoughtful'.
- Young people, it was felt, had a hard time looking for a job today.
- The survey also showed that many old people disapproved of young people's behaviour and moral standards.

Some questions worth asking:

- To what extent is your view towards older people influenced by personal experience, or how much by general perceptions?
- If you agree that 'older people are cranky', are most older people you know like that?
- If asked for positive descriptions of older people you know, what adjectives would you use? (note responses on board/chart)
- If you agree you have a responsibility towards older people, how should this responsibility be demonstrated? Visiting, being neighbourly, doing chores for them, joining an organisation involved in their care, speaking up for them, other? (note responses on board/chart)
- Are you surprised that older people think well of you?
- What aspects of your behaviour might they disapprove of? Are they justified?
So Where Do

(group exercise, statements: 1. Older people need special care. 2. Older people get a raw deal in the 1990s. 3. Life can be hard when you are young. 4. Looking old and wrinkled is awful. 5. Life is no fun when you are old. 6. I usually try to get my own way. 7. Some older people are lonely. 8. Sometimes I feel nobody understands me. 9. When you are old you are afraid a lot of the time. 10. Being kind is more important than looking good. 11. Sometimes I need special care. 12. Older people always want their own way. 13. Sometimes I feel afraid. 14. Irish society respects older people.

After: Either have pupils sit around in a group in the space provided or restore the room quickly to its usual formation. Look at some of the issues raised in the quiz.

Key exercise

Before:
Move tables and chairs to the walls to leave as much central space as possible. Place the AGREE sign on the floor at one end of the room, DON'T KNOW in the middle of the room, and DISAGREE at the other end. Stand on one side of the room with the group opposite you on the other side.

Explain how the game works. You will read out a statement. Each person will consider it, then go and stand at the sign AGREE, DISAGREE, or DON'T KNOW depending on how they feel. The aim for each group is to win converts to their side by reason of their arguments.

During:
You may need to read out some statements a few times. When everyone has taken up their chosen spot, turn to the minority group and ask them why they feel as they do. Allow people give reasons for their stance. Next, turn to the majority group and invite them to convince the others to change their minds. See how the DON'T KNOWs feel. Give people time to win others over by their arguments before moving on to the next statement.

Sometimes talk to the majority group first. Insist on just one voice at a time so that people can hear. You may decide to use only some of the statements on the list, and spend more time on each.
Some questions worth asking:

- In what ways would a group of 65 year olds in this room differ from you?
- In what ways might they feel similar to you?
- In what ways might you be similar to your 65 year old selves?
- In what ways might you be different?

Discuss.

If possible agree some points of similarity and difference between old and young now, and between our present selves and our future selves.

Write or make the following statement: “We do not suddenly become old. We are growing older slowly, gradually day by day, and the choices we make each day affect the kind of person we will be tomorrow”.

Discuss.
BRIDGING THE GAP

Some preparation is necessary

About this unit:

This unit features an intergenerational debate between students and older people. It has two sections. Section 1 prepares for the debate and in section 2 the debate takes place.

Section 2 is the key exercise in this unit.
AIMS:

- Provide a forum where young and old can meet, listen and learn from each other.
- Learn about the issues debated.
- Practise speaking, listening and debating skills.
- Have fun.

RESOURCES:

Class resources needed are blackboard/flipchart and marker pens. To facilitate the running of section 2, there is a handout 'Resource List for Debaters' on pages 34 and 35 which can be photocopied for each debater (both older and younger people).
PREPARING TO DEBATE

THE MOTION:

About two weeks before the projected debate date, decide on the motion within the group. The debate can be on an issue of particular mutual interest to old and young, and upon which they may have opposing viewpoints, or on an issue of general interest, which lends itself to proposal and opposition. Invite suggestions from group. Note these on board/chart. Remind group of the kind of issues already explored in other units—would one of these make a debating topic? How about one of the statements in "Where Do I stand?", or one of the completed statements "Old People are...", in the 'Generation Game', both in unit 4?

THE TEAMS:

Choose the student team of 4 people. These could be the proposers or the opposers depending on the motion. Decide how long the debate should last, based on the time allotted to each team member. Plus summing up time for each leader.

Alternatively the group could decide that mixing old and young on each team would be more interesting, so 2 students proposing and 2 opposing will be joined by 2 older people on each team.

In the absence of knowing 4 suitable older people to make up the visiting team, helpful local contacts would include:

- local active retirement association
  (see Federation below)
- local residents' association
- local parish office
- local sport club
- local bridge club
- local Irish Countrywomen's Association Guild

Helpful national organisations would include:

- Federation of Active Retirement Association,
  59/61 Dame Street, Dublin 2. Tel: 01-6792142.
  Age Link, initiated by the Federation, actively promotes contact between young and old people through school debates, joint exhibitions, sporting events, local history projects, discussions and talks.
  All active retirement associations in the Federation know about Age Link, and many actively participate. Age Link also has suggestions for debate motions.
  The Federation will have name and address of contact for local retirement associations.
THE BRIEFING:

1. Discuss topic. Pay particular attention to the wording. It may be helpful to get a dictionary definition of key words, so as to be clear and targeted on the motion.
2. Draw up a strategy. Divide attack (or defence) into its component parts. Assign team roles.
3. The leader introduces the topic, defines its boundaries, gives an overview and makes 2-3 key points. Team members debate 2-3 relevant points each, and may refute points made by the opposition. Each leader gets a chance to sum up and refute arguments. It is important to work as a team, to stick to the point, and not to duplicate each other.
4. The 'Resource List for Debaters' on pages 34 and 35 may be useful for collecting facts on the topic.

DEBATING THE ISSUE
(group exercise, up to 45 minutes)

Before:

Arrange the room with the two teams facing each other, and the group sitting alongside. Appoint a timekeeper. Explain the rules and format of the debate. Brief the group. They are the adjudicators. The task is to listen to the arguments and counter-arguments intently and vote at the end by a show of hands on whether the motion should be carried or defeated.

Before the debate begins, it could be interesting to take a show of hands for or against the motion. Begin the debate and ask individuals to note if their point of view changes as they listen.

During:

The debate begins with the leader of the proposing team proposing the motion, followed by the leader of the opposition opposing it. See that the timekeeper carries out his/her role. Ensure silence so that speakers can be heard.

After:

Vote on the motion. Then, if there is time available, invite participation from the whole group, making a point of welcoming contributions from the visitors. Did anyone learn anything new? Did anyone’s opinion change? Did the generations see the issues differently?

Conclude the session by thanking all concerned.
RESOURCE LIST FOR DEBATERS

Supporting opinion with fact is important. The following individuals/organisations may be able to offer relevant facts, depending on subject chosen.

Personal/social contacts:

Family, neighbours and friends of all generations - for information, memories, experiences (as well as attitudes and opinions).
(Point for both teams: Do not assume you know what old/young people feel about the issues under debate. Ask them. You may be surprised at the response.)

Local library - for information on local organisations representing young/old people, reference books and leaflets, rights and entitlements, local history and information on times past.

Local historians, elderly local people who may have particular experiences or memories.

Local active retirement association.

National Organisations:

Age & Opportunity

Carmichael House, North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7. Tel: 01-8723311. Promotes positive attitudes towards older people through public information campaigns, seminars, workshops. Organises Age & Opportunity Week each year. Works regularly with schools.

Age Action Ireland

114 Pearse Street, Dublin 2. Tel: 01-6779892. A network for service providers which has a comprehensive reference library of books and journals on old age and ageing.

Cospóir

Federation of Active Retirement Association

59/61 Dame Street, Dublin 2. Tel: 01-6792142. Age Link, initiated by the Federation, actively promotes contact between young and old people through school debates, joint exhibitions, sporting events, local history projects, discussions and talks.

Health Promotion Unit

Department of Health, Hawkins House, Hawkins Street, Dublin 2. Tel: 01-6714711. Promotes health education and information through school programmes and public campaigns. Has booklets and leaflets available on aspects of health and well-being relating to older people.

National Council for the Elderly

Corrigan House, Fenian Street, Dublin 2. Tel: 01-6766484. An advisory body to the Minister for Health, the Council conducts research into social policy aspects of ageing. Although it does not provide a public information service, the Council has produced a fact sheet on 'Aging in Ireland: Basic Facts', and a range of publications. To receive a fact sheet or list of publications, please send an A4 sized stamped addressed envelope.

National Social Services Board

71 Leeson Street, Dublin 2. Tel: 01-6616422. Promotes information on entitlements to social welfare, pensions, age-related rights, through a network of Citizen Information Centres round the country. There may be one in your area which has leaflets to help you.

Retirement Planning Council of Ireland

27 Pembroke Street Lower, Dublin 2. Tel: 01-6613139. Organises retirement preparation courses, publishes a regular newsletter and magazine, has leaflets available on aspects of retirement.

Pension Service Office

Department of Social Welfare, College Road, Sligo. Tel: 01-7043142. Publishes leaflets and booklets on entitlements relating to pensions, has up-to-date rates on all benefits.
challenging the

About this unit:
This unit examines stereotyping and how to counter it. It has two sections. Section 1 defines stereotyping and explores why it exists.

Aims:

- To create a situation in which the group examines how stereotypes affect us all.
- Learn how and why stereotypes are created.
- Examine if the kind of ageist labels applied to older people are valid.
- Look at some ways in which negative images can be countered.
In section 2, small group discussions are used to examine if the practice benefits us, or otherwise.

Section 2 is the key exercise in this unit.

Resources:

Class resources needed are blackboard/flipchart and marker pens. To complete section 2, the handout ‘Is This You?, Is This Them?’ on pages 40 and 41 needs to be photocopied for each student.
IS THIS YOU?
IS THIS THEM?
(group exercise, 30 minutes)

Photocopy and distribute handout (printed overleaf) and allow students a few minutes to study it and to choose the expressions they feel are appropriate.

Take feedback from group. Having noted some words on board/chart, ask if each collection of expressions fully describes the states of being young and old. If not, what kinds of words are missing? Note some of these.

Suggest that in each case what is offered is a stereotypical view of youth and age. Ask for definitions of the word stereotype and respond with the following definition:

“A stereotype is a categorisation or generalisation about a group of people, giving them characteristics which are simplistic and unrepresentative. Stereotypes are often used to justify discrimination”.

Give the group time to discuss this definition and see if they accept it. What other examples of stereotyping are there?

Suggestions:
All young people are promiscuous.
All politicians are crooked.
All unemployed people are lazy.
All travelling people are dirty.
All women are feather-brained.
All men are insensitive.

Make the point that stereotypes are often used to promote sexism and racism, as well as ageism.

To conclude, ask the question “Why do we stereotype older people negatively?” Take feedback from group and respond with the following “In Fact” information.

In Fact:

- Research would indicate that we stereotype older people because we fear old age.
- We fear loss of physical and mental ability, attractiveness, earning power, status, independence.
- This fear plays on our unconscious and reinforces negative stereotyping.
- Accepting the reality of our own age means facing our vulnerability and mortality.
- We avoid this reality by segregating older people.
- Portraying older people as different, marginalised, helps to distance us from what we unconsciously fear is our future too.
- It is a case of ‘them’ and ‘us’, and the wider the age gap the longer we hope it will take us to move from being ‘us’ to being ‘them’.

Read out these statements slowly to the group. Or better still, have the statements written in advance on board/chart so that group can see them as you read them. These may be new, challenging, perhaps unwelcome ideas. Give people time to absorb them, comment, question, discuss.
2
IS STEREOTYPING HELPFUL?
(group exercise, 30 minutes)

Divide the group into three groups. Group A represents older people, group B represents the public at large and group C members represent themselves. The questions for discussion are:
1. Is stereotyping of older people helpful to us?
2. If so, in what ways?
3. If not, in what ways?

Appoint a leader and note taker in each group. Allow time for group discussion. Then take feedback. It is likely that each group will have decided that stereotyping is unhelpful. Amplify and reinforce their views as follows.

Some points worth making:
• Stereotypes influence public attitudes to specific groups and can communicate 'appropriate' (limiting) behavior to the stereotyped group.

Stereotyping damages older people
• By marginalising and dehumanising them and accepting less for them than for everyone else.
• By having them believe the stereotype themselves, conform to it and limit their potential (for example, an older person feeling tired and listless does not go to the doctor; but says "it’s my age").
• By imposing on them a pressure to conform so as to reinforce and maintain the stereotype.
• By viewing non-conformers (who are not grateful, not passive, not quiet) as difficult, rather than challenging the stereotype as inaccurate.
• By having older people who are assertive, coping, positive see themselves and their friends as exceptions, rather than as evidence that the stereotype is unrepresentative.

Stereotyping damages society
• By maintaining and reinforcing discrimination and prejudice towards part of itself.
• By allowing us evade and ignore responsibility for older people.

• By missing opportunities. Instead of accepting that ageing is part of life and facing this challenge, it blames old people for growing old.
• By depriving society of the benefit of the contribution of older people.

Stereotyping damages young people
• By allowing me deny the reality that one day I will grow old.
• By allowing me to patronise or to be condescending to older people.
• By creating a self-fulfilling prophecy - the kind of life I might fear when I am older will happen unless stereotypical attitudes are challenged now.

Some points worth making:
• Stereotypes are maintained through lack of accurate information about the stereotyped group.
• Anything that offers accurate information about the varied world of older people challenges the stereotype. For example:

Personal: Intergenerational family contact.
Local: Community activities or school events which bring young and old together.
Local/National: Publicity which portrays old people in an accurate and positive light. Exhibitions / forums / seminars which focus attention on the skills of older people and on issues relating to older people’s lives. Investigative stories which challenge injustices / inequalities experienced by older people. Opportunities which allow old people act as spokespersons on topics which are age-related or other.

See what final suggestions the group would have to add to this list. Discuss.
These are some of the words chosen to describe ‘youth’ and ‘age’ in a thesaurus (a book of alternative words and expressions).

**Youth** - freshness, inferiority, puppy fat, puppyhood, growing pains, younger generation, immaturity, minority, juvenile, budding, flowering, beardless, unripe, awkward, raw, unfledged, evergreen, unwrinkled.

**is this you?**
circle the words you feel are appropriate
Age - grey hairs, declining years, senility, dotage, decay, rheumy eyed, palsied, drivelling, doddering, foolish, with one foot in the grave, too old, venerable, past it.
The Greying

About this unit:

This unit is about mutual rights and needs in society.
It has two sections. Section 1 is a role play followed by a general
discussion. In section 2 students respond to a handout which
provides facts on the ageing population.

Section 1 is the key exercise in this unit.
Portfolio

Aims:

• Provide a forum in which the group can experience some of the difficulties involved in trying to balance competing needs in society.
• Reflect on the experience and identify issues raised.
• Learn that the world is ageing.
• Discuss the implications this has for social policy.

Resources:

Class resources needed are blackboard/flipchart and marker pen. To complete section 2, the handout ‘The Age Bulge’ on pages 46 and 47 needs to be photocopied for each student.
S I N G I N G F O R Y O U R S U P P E R
(group role play, 45 minutes)

The role play:
Business as usual at Leinster House, some deputies in the chamber, some at committee meetings, some working in their constituencies. Unexpectedly, it is announced that an extra £100m has become available and it will be allocated to one department only. It is decided that the minister who makes the best case for the money will get it for her/his department.

Six role players are needed:

The Minister for Children.
The Minister for Teenagers.
The Minister for Older People.
The Minister for Jobs.
The Minister for Arts and Music.
The Minister for Law and Order.

Before:
Begin by choosing the players who will play the roles of Government Ministers. Each player is free to choose a departmental secretary to brief her/him prior to the role play. Invite ministers and secretaries to sit in a small circle in the middle of the room. Make a rule that there should be one person speaking at a time, otherwise the points will not be heard.

Have the rest of the class sit in an outer circle around the players. Tell them that their task is to watch the role play, listen to the points made and how they are made. Read out the role play, slowly, and give the players a few moments to confer with their secretaries and to list some points to help their case.

During:
Start the role play by asking a minister to say why she/he should get the money. The other ministers then respond as they wish. Allow the role play to run for 10 minutes.

After:
After 10 minutes end it, irrespective of whether or not any clear contender has emerged. Go first to each player in turn and ask them how they felt in the role. Allow each a few minutes to respond. Next, ask some of the audience to comment on the interaction of the role play - not the outcome.

Some questions worth asking:
• Who listened?
• Who responded to points made?
• Who did not listen?
• Who merely repeated their own point of view?
• Who tried to bully?
• Who got heated?
• Who stayed calm?

Have the group resume their normal seats, and begin to look at the issues that came up.
Some questions worth asking:

- What did you think of each player's case?
- How realistic were the ideas/projects suggested?
- How would each sector represented benefit from the case presented?
- How would society as a whole benefit?
- Would benefits be long-term or just a flash in the pan?

Discuss the ideas presented in the role play in a way that gives players a chance to explain their thinking and have the group respond.

Some points worth making:

- In real life the sector represented by each player has legitimate rights and needs.
- Children need love, shelter, protection, stability and education.
- Young people (15-18) need love, protection, education, hope and a vision for the future.
- Older people need love, dignity, independence and relevant health and welfare services.
- Everyone who is fit and able to work is entitled to the dignity and challenge of a job.
- Life would be a duller, sadder and greyer place without drama, music, poetry, books, television, radio and paintings.
- Society needs laws and sanctions for general control and protection.
- Delivering on the rights outlined above involves, in many cases, a change of attitude.
- But providing many of the services needed to bring about a more just and caring society also costs money.
- The challenge for governments is to spend scarce resources in a way that encourages initiative and job creation, while protecting its more vulnerable citizens.

Discuss these points with the group.

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2

THE AGE BULGE

(group exercise, 15 minutes)

Photocopy and distribute 'The Age Bulge' (printed overleaf) to each student and allow them time to consider it.

Allow some time for discussion.

Some questions worth asking:

- What are the Irish implications of the age bulge?
- What are the implications for policies regarding: Health? Housing? Taxes? Crime? Other?

Note suggestions on board/chart.

Some points worth making:

- We have succeeded in adding years to life, but we are still unclear about adding life to years.
- Promoting policies which encourage older people to contribute economically would lessen their dependency on a shrinking workforce.
- A minority of old people will always need care and this should be available.

Discuss.
Ireland

- The population of Ireland in 1991 was 3,525,719.

- The over 65 age group numbered 402,924 (over 11.4% of the total population).

- Those over 75 years numbered 162,848 and those over 85 years numbered 29,465.

- The number and proportion of older people in the Irish population are expected to continue rising over the next 3 decades. Between 1991 and 2021 the number aged 65 to 74 will rise by 47% while the number aged 75 plus will rise by 30%.

The World

- The number of people aged 60 and over is the fastest growing section of the population in the world.

- While world population is expected to treble in the 75 years from 1950 to 2025, the United Nations predicts that the over 60s will show a five fold increase and the over 80s will increase to seven times their present number.

- This means that 1 person in every 7 will be over 60 years of age in 2025, compared with just 1 in every 12 in 1950.

- The ageing of nations is an inevitable consequence of development which has brought higher standards of living, better nutrition and improved health care.
• The immediate result is a decline in mortality from malnutrition and infectious diseases. So, few children die in infancy and more people survive into old age.

• People are growing older faster than children are being born. By 2025 there are expected to be only 35 children to every 100 working adults.

• The typical sequence of events is: an initial ‘greening’ of the population as more children grow up and have families, followed by a ‘greying’, as later generations produce fewer children and grow older.

• In the least developed countries, where mortality and fertility are still high, the relative numbers of old people are smaller, but catching up.

• In more developed countries the greying is already evident and the numbers of older people as a proportion of the total population continues to expand.

• Many over 60s in the developed world lead healthy, independent lives.

• But the majority of the above will be without a job by age 65, often because of compulsory retirement.

• These are the ‘young old’ sent to the margins by an arbitrary social policy.

• It is predicted that there will be 270 million economically inactive over 55s in industrialised countries by 2020. This means 38 older dependants for every 100 workers, twice as many as in 1950.

• Then there are the ‘old old’, the section of the population who are dependent on care to some extent by reason of age, disability or disease.

• This growing proportion of older people in the population poses new questions about rights, abilities, care and cost.
When care is

About this unit:

This unit looks at the kind of situations in which some old people need care. It has two sections. Section 1 opens up the subject. Section 2 examines three case histories and considers care options.

Section 2 is the key exercise in this unit.

Aims:

• Allow pupils to identify the situations in which some old people need care.
• Appreciate that the type, level and duration of care needed will vary from person to person.
• Learn about the services currently available to older people.
• Realise that, with proper community support, many people may be cared for in their own homes.
• Learn that community care is not a cheap option, but needs proper planning and resources to be effective.
Resources:

Class resources needed are blackboard/flipchart, 3 large sheets of paper and marker pens. To complete section 2, the handout 'True Stories' on pages 52 and 53 needs to be photocopied, enlarged and cut into 3 sections - one for each group.
1.

**BRAINSTORM**

(group exercise, 15 minutes)

Begin with some open-ended questions:

- In what situations might an older person need care?
- What type of care might be needed?
- Who would give the care?

Write responses on board/chart and after some general discussion, offer the following 'In Fact' information.

**In Fact:**

- Only 1 out of 6 people over 65 receives informal continuing care at home.
- But as people grow older they may need a little or a lot of help.
- 2 out of 5 people aged 75 and over receive informal continuing care at home.
- The carer is usually a relative who lives with the older person.
- 4 out of 5 carers are female and 1 in 4 is over 65 years.
- 1 in every 2 of in-household carers spends 4-7 hours per day caring, while 1 in 3 spends 8 or more hours.
- 9 out of 10 carers receive a low level or no formal support.
- Carers who have to do the job single-handedly can become tired, depressed, angry.
- Older people totally dependent on a carer can feel unwanted, unloved, even frightened. If a carer is angry or over-tired.

Allow some time for this information to be discussed.

**Some questions worth asking:**

- Why is it that most carers are female?
- Is this the way it should be?
- Could men equally care?
- What kind of support do carers need?
- Who should give it?
- In what situations might a carer be unable to cope?
- What would happen then?

Note responses on board/chart.

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2.

**TRUE STORIES**

(small group discussion, 45 minutes)

Before:

Divide students into three groups. Appoint a leader and note taker in each. Distribute large sheets of paper and marker to each note taker. Distribute one handout (printed overleaf) to each group leader. Each group should receive a different handout.

During:

Each leader should read a 'True Story' to their group. The note taker should record care options considered by the group.

After:

Pin handouts and record sheets around the room so that the whole group can look at suggestions offered in each case. Open up the general discussion.

**Some questions worth asking:**

- How feasible are your solutions?
- Should the older person be consulted?
- Should they be given what they want?
- Is your option affordable?
- What part will local community services play in the option?
- What part will family play?
- What kind of feelings could everyone concerned experience in these situations - guilt? loss? sadness? anger? hurt?
- What can be done about these feelings?

Spend some further time discussing these points, before reading out the following conclusions to the 'True Stories'.

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_ → key exercise_
1. Mollie

Martina finally contacted the Carers’ Association, set up to help people in her position looking after a relative at home. The Association suggested that Martina should contact her local public health nurse, who began to visit regularly. Slowly, gradually, Mollie agreed to;1ucnd a local day care centre on a trial basis. This centre is run by a mix of voluntary and professional workers, and is funded by the health board. It caters Monday to Friday, for a small number of old people who would otherwise be at home alone all day. It offers company, medical care, a hot meal, some mental stimulation. As a result of physiotherapy, Mollie is walking more easily. She now attends the centre every weekday from 9:30am to 4pm. She does not mix too much, but is in much better form. Martina is now worried about her while at work and the two women manage well at weekends. This year, Mollie agreed to spend a fortnight with another family member which also allowed Martina to have a holiday.

2. Jack

Jack’s family contacted the Alzheimer Society of Ireland which offers advice, help and respite (relief) care to families of sufferers. They joined a support group for families and sadly, gradually came to terms with the fact that Jack would not get better. As his condition worsened, they reluctantly placed him in a nursing home. The Society helped them choose a suitable place. The cost is shared by the family, with some help from the health board. The family continue to visit Jack who knows them less and less. Being part of the support group helps them come to terms with the feelings of grief and loss (and guilt at putting him into a nursing home). They bring him home occasionally and sometimes there are flashes of memory. Jack’s condition is terminal.

3. Lillian & Tom

Geraldine finally went to her GP to discuss the problem. She was very confused. Should she give up the job she needed, to look after her parents? Would that solve the problem of their loneliness for their former neighbourhood? The GP listened and made a suggestion. He knew of a proposed sheltered housing project in the old neighbourhood. A small block of flats was about to be built, with communal dining room, resident caretaker and doctor on call.

The idea was suggested to Lillian and Tom. They decided to apply for a flat and were successful. The rent was affordable with their savings and pension. They moved into the complex eight months ago. They say they are happier in their own area. They have independence, security and companionship. Geraldine visits frequently. Before the move there were some mutual feelings of hurt and resentment, but much of this is now being worked through.

Allow some time for group to respond to the decisions which were actually taken in each case. Note some points made, on board/chart, stressing the importance of consultation with older person where possible.
1. Mollie

Mollie is 86. Widowed with three children, she was a private and independent woman who is now quite dependent. Her sight and hearing are poor. She washes, dresses herself and eats with difficulty, and she cannot walk very well. She is forgetful. Her life now is very limited. She can no longer read, knit, or get meals for herself, and spends her time looking at television in which she has little interest. Visitors are few. Mollie made few close friends during her life, which makes life now all the more lonely.

Mollie lives with her daughter, Martina, aged 55. Martina is unmarried and works ten miles away from home. She looks after her mother as best she can but increasingly finds the caring a burden. Her brother and sister live over a hundred miles away. They do their bit, but the lion’s share falls on Martina. Mollie is determined not to go into a nursing home, nor will she agree to go to another family member for a holiday (which would also give Martina a break).

Relations between mother and daughter are now difficult. Mollie and Martina need help. How can they be helped?
2. Jack

Jack is 72. Husband to Joan and father of four children, he was a happy, outgoing man.

Two years ago Alzheimer’s Disease was diagnosed. This degenerative brain disease affects about 6 in every 100 people aged 65 and over. It causes the breakdown of the personality and necessitates constant care. Up to now Jack has been looked after by Joan with help from sons and daughters who visit regularly, but he is no longer able to be left alone. He has become incontinent, does not always know the family, and they cannot manage any more.

Jack, Joan and the family need help.

How can they be helped?

3. Lillian & Tom

Lillian and Tom are aged 82 and 86 respectively. They have a married daughter, Geraldine, in Ireland, the rest of the family lives abroad. Although healthy and independent, they no longer felt safe living on their own. Seven years ago, they sold the family home. Part of the proceeds were used to build an extension to Geraldine’s house 15 miles away, to which they have moved.

This arrangement worked successfully, with each family retaining a high degree of privacy and independence. Tom continued to be able to drive and the couple retained contact with their former neighbourhood which was important to them. Last spring Tom fell and broke his hip. He can no longer drive. Life has become much more confined. Geraldine’s household has changed, the children are grown up and are around less frequently. Also, Geraldine’s husband was made redundant and she has returned to work. Lillian is being treated for depression and feels she cannot care for herself and Tom on her own much longer.

They pine for their old neighbourhood. The situation is also putting a strain on Geraldine’s family life.

The two families now need help.

How can they be helped?
Resources:

Class resources needed for the game 'Stepping into My a description from the list of characters on handout 'You Can Make a Difference' on pages 58
About this unit:
This unit looks at present responses to future problems. It has three sections. Section 1 looks at facets of a future world. Section 2 identifies future problems which need to be remedied now, and section 3 explores what can be done now to make a future impact.

Section 3 is the key exercise in this unit.

Aims:
- Provide an opportunity to reflect again on some of the points raised in earlier units.
- Begin to look at the world of 2043 when today's 15 - 18 year olds will be in their 60s.
- Experience what it might be like to be discriminated against due to age, poverty or disability.
- Make connections between contemporary attitudes, present action (or inaction) and future reality.
- Look at personal action to help create a better future society.

are blackboard/flipchart, marker pen, paper and scissors. To prepare Future in section 2, prepare a piece of paper for each student with page 56, duplicating as necessary. To complete section 3, the and 59 needs to be photocopied for each student.
1

BRAVE NEW WORLD
(group exercise, 10 minutes)

Begin by writing the year 2043 on the chart. Ask students to project into the future and explore what life will be like in 2043 when they are in their 60s.

Some questions worth asking:

- What kind of houses will you live in?
- How will you dress?
- Will there be families as we know them today?
- What kind of new jobs might there be?
- What old jobs will endure?
- What will communications be like - in terms of travel, radio, television, telephone, shopping, global contact?
- What will the moral questions be in 2043?
- Will religions have survived?
- What will be the condition of our air, water, forests, climate?

Note some ideas on board/chart.

2

STEPPING INTO THE FUTURE
(group exercise, 30 minutes)

Before:
Prepare the room for this activity by pushing tables and chairs back to the walls to leave a central space. Give each individual a piece of paper with a description written on it from the list that follows. Duplicate as necessary. Ask each student to keep their character secret. Have players form a single line facing the same direction in the middle of the space. Explain that you are going to ask questions to which the answer might be 'yes', 'no' or 'don't know'. If players can answer 'yes' for their characters, they take a step forward. If 'no', they take a step backwards, if 'don't know', they stay where they are.

List of characters:
- 15 - 18 year old (designate according to group age).
- Retired worker, 67 (who has smoked 50 cigarettes a day for 50 years).
- Widow in her 70s living on £60 a week.
- Very wealthy 65 year old.
- Retired banker, physically fit.
- Able bodied, successful 35 year old.
- 6 year old child of wealthy parents.
- 80 year old, mentally alert, but deaf.
- 65 year old in wheelchair.
- 45 year old man suffering from depression.
- 6 year old child of poor parents.
- A 50 year old who is blind.
- 70 year old suffering from Alzheimer's Disease.
- Very wealthy 80 year old.
- 65 year old suffering badly from arthritis in hands.

During:
Ask the following questions:
Can you go out at night and feel safe?
Can you get the medical care you need, when you need it?
Can you make all your own decisions?
Would you like to be able to make more decisions for yourself?
Can you open a tin of cat food?
Can you climb the stairs without difficulty?
Is being discriminated against an unknown experience for you?
Can you go shopping easily on your own?
Can you enjoy radio, telephone, music?
Have you enough money for your basic needs?
Have you money for hobbies, enjoyment, extras?

After:
Stop the game. With each player standing in their final position, have them identify their character. Before they move transfer the living tableau as a simple graphic on the board/chart, showing the final position of each player relative to the starting line.

Either have class sit in the space facing the chart or return room quickly to its original formation. Ask what it felt like to take part in that exercise. Give people time to explain some of their decisions. Did anyone answer 'yes' to all the questions? How did it feel to be able to take all those steps forward? Who answered the most 'nos'. How did it feel taking so many steps backward?

Allow some time for this initial discussion.

Now identify the people who fell furthest behind. These are likely to be categories who are poor and disabled, and old age may have been a further difficulty for some.

Some questions worth asking:
- Which group seem to have most advantages?
- Which group seem to have most disadvantages?
- Can we say that all old people are disadvantaged?
- What factors cause particular problems in old age?

Some points worth making:
- Being old is not necessarily a problem in itself.
- Disease, disability, mental illness can cause problems at any stage in life.
- Economic difficulty will limit choice at any stage in life.
- For some older people a combination of poverty, ill-health and prejudice can severely limit their lifestyle.
- Experiencing this marginalisation is hurtful and upsetting.

Note some responses on chart.

→ key exercise

3
Present actions, future solutions
(group exercise, 20 minutes)

Ask the group the following questions:
1. What can I do today to create a better environment for tomorrow's world?
2. What can I do today to help change negative attitudes towards older people?
3. What opportunities can I take to learn from older people?
4. What can I do for older people who need help?

Allow five minutes for written answers, take feedback under each heading and note on board/chart. When all ideas are in, pin chart sheets round the room and examine them as a group.

Some questions worth asking:
- How realistic are the ideas put forward? (tick off realistic ideas)
- Are there any which are not feasible? If not, why not? (If agreed remove unrealistic ideas)

Study ideas and respond with the handout 'You Can Make a Difference' printed overleaf.
SOCIETY

Contacts:
Consider the idea of friendship across the generations. If contacts have been made with older people during this programme, keep them up.
Remember your own grandparents, older relations and family friends. They too have a story to tell.

Information:
Inform yourself of the reality of life for vulnerable older people today. For instance, many older people are still among the poorest in the country. Almost 120,000 plus dependants claimed the basic non-contributory old age pension in 1990.
A man and a woman qualify for an old age pension when they reach the age of 66. The 1993 non-contributory old age pension for a single person is £59.20. A married couple get £94.70.

Reflection:
Could you live independently on this and pay all your expenses - food, clothing, light, heat, rent, entertainment, transport?

Awareness:
Watch your own ageist language and attitudes. Remember today's grandchildren are tomorrow's grandparents. If you describe someone as a silly old fool, you are talking about your future self.

Activism:
Be a good neighbour to someone elderly living nearby who may need your help. Some old people are bullied and harassed by young people. You could keep an eye on a neighbour, drop in from time to time, mow their lawn, oblige with shopping.
Visit and get to know old people in local nursing home or hospital. Or contact your local St Vincent de Paul branch who visit people in hospital regularly.
Compile a list of ageist practices/policies you have recognised through this programme. Write to the Minister for Equality, your TD, newspaper editors, television and radio producers, and ask for their comments and responses.
ENVIRONMENT

Recycling:
Return plastic bags to shops for reuse, or use a shopping bag.
Avoid over-packaged goods and avoid plastic containers.
Recycle aluminium, glass, paper and cardboard.
Recycle used motor oil.

Transportation:
Use unleaded petrol.

Conservation:
Do not buy products made from tropical hardwoods.
Plant a native tree (oak, beech, ash) for each member of your family.

Energy:
Turn off lights when not in use.
Take a shower instead of a bath.
Turn off hot water system when not in use.
Ask if water heater and storage tank have an insulation jacket, cheap to buy, it pays for itself quickly.
Buy foods grown or produced locally.
Avoid over-processed foods.

Hazardous products:
Use biodegradable soaps and detergents.
Purchase CFC-free products (deodorants, foams, gels).
Use rechargeable batteries.

Activism:
Join an environmental group such as Earthwatch (branches countrywide).
Educate yourself and others on environmental issues.
Write letters to local councillors and TDs, supporting environmental action.
When I am old, I will wear purple.
About this unit:

This unit looks at the future quality of life for today's 15 - 18 year olds. It has two sections. Section 1 encourages each student to think about their choices in life. Section 2 uses a poem to discuss the potential of old age.

Section 1 is the key exercise in this unit.

Aims:

• Allow the group to reflect on their own ageing.
• Receive accurate information on some aspects of growing old.
• Discuss the links between present action and our future well being.
• Appreciate that life for our older selves has many possibilities.

Resources:

Class resources needed are blackboard/flipchart and marker pens. To complete section 1, handout ‘Choices’ on page 64 needs to be photocopied for each student. To complete section 2, handout ‘Warning’ on page 65 needs to be photocopied for each student.
1
CHOICES
(group exercise, 30 minutes)

“What will you be like in 2043?” Ask for student responses and note key words on board/chart.

Respond with the following ‘In Fact’ information.

In Fact:

• There is no such thing as a typical older person and you will all age at different rates.

• The rate is influenced by hereditary patterns. Baldness, thinning hair is a hereditary condition. If your grandfather has a fine mop of hair at 65, you probably will too.

• Some aspects of ageing affect everyone to some degree and are due to built-in body changes.

• Your hair goes grey because your pigment cells which deposit colour in the hair shaft, gradually slow down and stop doing so. The slowing down process usually begins in your late 30s.

• Your skin wrinkles with age because skin tissue called collagen loses its elasticity. It is less able to stretch and wrinkling results.

• It is commonly believed that men’s faces age more slowly than women’s faces.

• Your sight changes because, with age, the lenses in your eyes become less flexible so that they have difficulty in changing focus. The rate at which this happens varies from person to person, but many people find they need glasses in their late 40s, early 50s.

• As you age, changes may occur in the inner ear which lead to hearing loss.

Discuss.

Some questions worth asking:

• Does being 60 or over automatically mean being unhealthy, unfit, dependent?

• What can you do now to ensure as fulfilling an old age as possible?

Allow the group some time to answer these questions and note responses on board/chart. Photocopy and distribute the handout ‘Choices’ (printed on page 64). Allow time for the students to respond.
WHEN I AM OLD,
I WILL WEAR PURPLE

(group exercise, 15 minutes)

Photocopy and distribute the poem ‘Warning’ (printed on page 65). Give students a few minutes to read the poem themselves, then read it aloud to the group for maximum effect. Invite responses to it. Do they like it? Why? Dislike it? Why?

Some questions worth asking:

- What vision of old age does the poem convey?
- What are the poem’s characteristics?
- What atmosphere comes through from the poem?
- In what way does it counter the kind of stereotypes normally promoted about old people?
- What would you like to see yourself doing in old age that breaks the stereotype?

Allow some discussion on these questions.

Some final points worth making:

- There are choices at every stage in life - including old age.
- It could be said that old people can have a freedom from convention that younger people do not have.
- Old age can be a time of celebration of the uniqueness of the individual, just as other stages of life can.
- People do not change in old age, they are just their older selves - decent, silly, brave, selfish, spiritual, spiteful, witty - just the ordinary human mix.
- But as we go through life, there is the possibility of learning from experience, so old age can confer wisdom, acceptance, and peace.
- When I am old, I can wear purple - if I want to.
Choices

How you feel in old age is hugely influenced by the care you have taken of yourself during life.

Many of the ills associated with old age have less to do with a date on the calendar and more to do with lifestyle (though some people suffer ill-health through disease or disability which are not necessarily lifestyle-related).

It is in old age that the bad habits of life come home to roost. So, while you may be living unhealthily for years, it may be only in your 60s that the accumulated punishment you have given your body shows itself.

For example, if you do not continue to exercise regularly all during your life - your joints become stiff and muscles become weak. In old age you become less mobile, less able to get about on your own, to climb stairs and less able to carry weights such as shopping.

If you smoke, you are in danger of shortening your life.

If you drink alcohol to excess (consistently, over 21 units* a week, adult male, over 14 units* a week, adult female) you are in danger of becoming dependent on alcohol and contracting a variety of diseases, as well as perhaps creating unhappiness for yourself and your family.

*A unit is equal to half a pint of beer or a glass of wine.

If you expose yourself to the hot sun without sunblock you are in danger of contracting skin cancer.

A lifetime of eating too much fatty food could end abruptly in a heart attack.

Basic personalities do not change much as we grow older (unless affected by illness). So, a young person who makes friends and cares for others is likely to be an old person who has friends, who cares for others and for whom others care.

If you are in a position to plan ahead financially, and do so, you are on the way to achieving the old age you want, and you can look forward positively, rather than dreading the future.

Planning could include joining a firm with an occupational pension scheme for employees.

*And/or saving for your own retirement by taking out a personal pension plan. The younger you do so, the less it will cost you, and the more you will gain long-term.
Warning

When I am an old woman I shall wear purple
With a red hat which doesn’t go and doesn’t suit me
And I shall spend my pension on brandy and summer gloves
And satin sandals and say we’ve no money for butter.

I shall sit upon the pavement when I’m tired
And gobble up samples in shops and press alarm bells
And rub my stick along the public railings
And make up for the sobriety of my youth.
I shall go out in my slippers in the rain
And pick flowers in other people’s gardens
And learn to spit.

You can wear terrible shirts and grow more fat
And eat three pounds of sausages at a go
Or only bread and pickle for a week
And hoard pens and pencils and beermats and things in boxes.

But now we must have clothes that keep us dry
And pay our rent and not swear on the street
And set good example for the children.
We will have friends to dinner and read the papers.

But maybe I ought to practice a little now?
So people who know me are not too surprised
When suddenly I am old and start to wear purple.
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The programme is an initiative of the National Council for the Elderly taken during 1993 European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations. Implicit in the pack is the promotion of the themes of the Year, which are lasting themes and go beyond the Year itself.

EUROPEAN YEAR
OF OLDER PEOPLE AND SOLIDARITY BETWEEN GENERATIONS
1993