



Society of St Vincent de Paul

Older People Experiences connected though Saint Vincent De Paul (SVP)

Dr. Kathy Walsh

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Background to the SVP

- ▶ Provides practical and befriending services and supports to people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.
- ▶ The Society in Ireland has over 9,500 members, organised into 1100 Conferences across the island
- ▶ Older people are one of the groups supported by SVP



Aims of the Study

- ▶ To explore the experiences of older people involved in different aspects of the work of SVP (including SVP members, people who access supports from the SVP, staff and volunteers)
- ▶ To identify the issues faced by older people
- ▶ To make recommendations as to how the Society could address some of the issues identified.
- ▶ Study was funded by Atlantic Philanthropies



Methodology

- ❑ Est. Commission of Older People to oversee and advise

- ❑ Consultations (< 567 older people in 43 locations).
 - One to one interviews
 - Formal focus group discussions
 - Informal group discussion

- ❑ Qualitative insights with a particular focus on the lower income group that use SVP services.



Findings

- ▶ **The Aging Process: Expectations of aging/transition to old age**
- ▶ **The Issues: Loneliness, faith & religion, crime & safety, pensions, income support, employment & unemployment, health, transport and health, accommodation, long-stay/homecare and transport,**
- ▶ **The Role of SVP services and supports**



Findings: Expectations of aging

- ▶ Gave no consideration as to being 'older'
- ▶ Older people consider themselves fortunate re:
 - ▶ Hardship of parents' generation
 - ▶ Apprehensions as to future of new generation
- ▶ Mixed views on degree to which young people respect, value older people. Notice aggression.
- ▶ A more comfortable, competent older generation than ever before (assuming you are healthy)



Loneliness

- ▶ We met many widows; never-married women
- ▶ Contact with families varied
 - ▶ Persistence of 'family' values strong
- ▶ Economic changes had reduced levels of contact
 - ▶ loss of small shops, post offices, robotic telephones
- ▶ New technologies
 - ▶ Majority had mobiles, for phoning/emergencies
 - ▶ Few used computers, e-mail rarer
 - ▶ Monitored alarms and 'friendly call' services valuable

Faith and Religion

- ▶ Faith had important role to play in peoples lives
- ▶ Shocked by recent revelations
- ▶ Many regular mass goers, (for prayer & structure)
- ▶ Gives 'a real sense of community and belonging'
- ▶ In rural areas they used the parish radio to tune in
- ▶ Members saw SVP work as faith in practice
- ▶ Disappointment in relation to not having been able to pass faith onto children and grandchildren



Findings: SVP Services

- ▶ **Day care/activity centres highly valued for**
 - ▶ Companionship, camaraderie, friendship, Food
 - ▶ Services – recreational, paramedical
- ▶ **Social housing projects highly valued for**
 - ▶ Safe Home, Rebuilding lives after homelessness
- ▶ **Visitor services highly valued by**
 - ▶ Long-stay patients with no visitors
 - ▶ Undocumented foreigners (Poland, Lithuania)
- ▶ **Holidays**

Some Conclusions

- ▶ Unique qualitative insights (with a particular focus on the lower income group that use SVP services)
- ▶ Older people are very rarely asked what they think
- ▶ Older people are not just a problem they are an asset (Carers, consumers, voters, social glue, advocates)
- ▶ Low tech, low cost high value solutions are important



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