

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Friday 18 September 2009**

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**A REAL MANIFESTO FOR CHANGE: COUNSEL AND CARE DELIVERS MESSAGES FROM *VOTINGAGE : AN OLDER PEOPLE'S MANIFESTO* AT THE PARTY CONFERENCES**

This autumn Counsel and Care, the national charity working with older people, their families and carers to get the best care and support, will be reminding politicians of the messages from *VotingAge*, an older people's manifesto, published in May this year. The manifesto includes forewords from the leaders of all three main political parties.

*VotingAge* was a consultation run by Counsel and Care - together with a leadership group made up mostly of older people - to identify the issues that affect older people's lives, and seek pledges from all three parties that the particular needs of older people will be in their general election manifestos.

Older people who attended the events and who responded to the *VotingAge* consultation paper expressed their concerns around key issues such as poverty, age discrimination, a breakdown between the generations, and the lack of involvement and inclusion of older people.

Solutions were identified by participants as actions to improve their lives, for example:

- Improve pensions by ring-fencing tax monies

- Allow those receiving the State Pension to also receive Carer's Allowance.
- A Minister/Commissioner for older people
- An Ombudsman for age related complaints
- Intergenerational pilots to improve relationships between older and younger people.

Caroline Bernard, *VotingAge* project manager and Counsel and Care's Policy and Communications Manager, said:

"We are pleased that older people's issues are rising to the top of the political agenda of this government with the current Big Care Debate, and the consultation on a strategy for an ageing society. However, we wish to ensure that the wider concerns that affect the whole lives of older people will be addressed in the manifestos of all the parties and by the next government.

"The *VotingAge* manifesto could not have been written without the enthusiasm and energy of the older people that attended the regional events and responded to the written consultation. These are their words, in their voices.

"We look forward to discussing these findings with all of the political parties at their conferences, and to seeing the issues affecting older people today – and tomorrow – addressed in all three general election party manifestos."

-ENDS-

## NOTES TO EDITORS

1. *VotingAge: an older people's manifesto* can be downloaded from our website at [www.counselandcare.org.uk/influence/campaigning](http://www.counselandcare.org.uk/influence/campaigning). Hard copies can be obtained by contacting our order line on 020 7241 8522.
2. *VotingAge: an older people's manifesto* includes forewords from all three

party leaders:

**Rt Hon Gordon Brown, MP, the Prime Minister**

Over the next 50 years, the UK will make an extraordinary demographic transition. There are now more people in the UK aged over 65 than children under the age of 16. Older people are already living healthier, more active and longer lives than their parents or grandparents.

We need to do more across society so that everybody can make the most of the opportunities created by demographic change. Significant public service reforms are being introduced, including pensions reform, the extension of age discrimination legislation and increased provision of healthcare services that help people to maintain independence and well-being as they age. We are currently looking at how we can develop our policies further and will publish a renewed strategy for our ageing society later this year.

We have taken many actions to support pensioners. From a situation when one in four pensioners was living in relative low income in 1997, the number has fallen by 900,000 since 1998. The Pension Credit now helps over three million pensioners alongside a winter fuel payment and a £60 supplement payment in early 2009, and help with central heating and insulation.

To build a society for all ages, we all need to take our part. I commend this manifesto for helping to raise awareness of the issues we collectively face and for stimulating public debate.

**Rt Hon David Cameron MP, Leader of the Opposition:**

“Our aim is that people have dignity and security in old age. That means three things. First, we would increase the basic state pension in line with earnings, not prices, in order to stop the spread of the means test – an insult to dignity.

Second, we want to see more older people allowed to realise their potential in the workplace. And third, we need to change completely the way we think about the services people receive – with more personalisation in healthcare; health and social services working more closely together; and a better partnership between government and individuals on social care, including giving people more control over their care”.

**Rt Hon Nick Clegg, Leader of the Liberal Democrats:**

“In Britain today, more and more elderly people are left struggling to make ends meet. Too many are expected to get by without the help they need, like guaranteed health care or local services. Scandalously, millions of older people can only afford to heat a single room in their homes. This has to stop. The Liberal Democrats would link the basic state pension to average earnings immediately, and our proposals for a much higher Citizen’s Pension would end Labour’s demeaning mass means testing. We also believe that older people must have a much greater say over decisions which affect them. If Government wants to improve older people’s lives, it needs to listen to what they have to say – which is exactly why the *VotingAge* campaign is so important.”

3. The manifesto includes many quotes from older people themselves:

*“Too often government policy makers seem to think that life stops at retirement for most purposes – that people are happy just not going to work and can sleep and watch TV all the time with an occasional visit from the family.*

*This is not true. Older people recognise that their future may be short term but [they] still want to enjoy life, to make choices of how they live (and die)*

*and not be dictated to and treated as 'old children' for whom others know best".<sup>1</sup>*

4. The *VotingAge* project was funded by Comic Relief.
5. Counsel and Care is a national charity working with older people, their families and carers to get the best care and support. Advice on issues affecting older people can be obtained by calling 0845 300 7585 or emailing [advice@counselandcare.org.uk](mailto:advice@counselandcare.org.uk).
6. Counsel and Care's Advice Service opening hours are 10am-4pm Monday-Friday except Wednesday afternoons.
7. More information about Counsel and Care can be obtained from [www.counselandcare.org.uk](http://www.counselandcare.org.uk).

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<sup>1</sup> Written response to *VotingAge* consultation paper, August 2008