

'We do clearly pick where we are going - we don't want grandmas picking (Metro) up.'

Steve Auckland, Managing Director Metro
freesheet Media Guardian, 13 March 2006

Billericay: Gran fights off mugger

'A battling granny was recovering today after beating off a mugger with the iron bar he tried to attack her with.'

Evening Echo, May 20, 2004. (The 'granny' was 62).

- Over-50s in paid work account for nearly a quarter of total national output (over £200 billion annually).
- Their work as carers is worth around £19 billion a year.
- As volunteers, they contribute work worth about £5 billion per year

(Information from 'The economic contribution of older people', by Pamela Meadows and Volterra Consulting, Age Concern, 2004.)

Boy Detectives Save Old Annie

'Sleuths aged 8 search bushes to find lost OAP'

Daily Record, 22 June 2006

Grandad heads for Kilimanjaro

'Plucky Anthony Maynard cannot wait to ... trek to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro. The 66-year-old father and grandfather...'

Ealing Times website, Wednesday 12th March 2003

Code of conduct

Language can be a powerful tool in shaping our views and reflecting public attitudes and perceptions – both of which can form barriers that prevent people of every age from integration and participation in society. The NUJ has always urged

- Refer to a 'gran' or 'granddad' only if the person's role as a grandparent is central to the piece.
- Use 'pensioner' (not 'OAP') only when you are referring to pensions.

Youth and age

The NUJ is aware that age discrimination also affects the young - e.g. by portraying them as frightening 'hoodies' who threaten the old.

- Provide balance when reporting intergenerational conflict: include views from older people who support the young, as well as those who complain about them.

Dealing with the specific issues affecting youth is beyond the scope of these guidelines, but for

relevant information, see: Children's Rights Alliance for England <http://www.crae.org.uk>
British Youth Council <http://www.byc.org.uk/>

'We want people to understand that these young people, these so-called "hoodies and layabouts" have hidden talents.'

Princes Trust spokesperson,
Guardian, 3 May 2006

journalists to avoid sensationalising issues in ways that cause offence or encourage discrimination.

See the NUJ's Code of Conduct.

www.nuj.org.uk

Be relevant

Clause 10 states that a person's age should be mentioned only if strictly relevant. Journalists should neither originate nor process material which encourages discrimination, ridicule, prejudice or hatred on these grounds.

Be accurate

Clause 3 urges journalists to strive to ensure that the information disseminated is fair and accurate, to avoid the expression of comment and conjecture as established fact and falsification by distortion, selection or misrepresentation.

Look beyond the stereotype

The NUJ calls on journalists to seek to achieve better-researched and more balanced coverage and to avoid stereotyping older people.



A fate worse than death?

What do you think about when you write about old people – or sub copy about them? Do you find yourself using stereotypes and clichés – portraying older people as silly, inept, dodderly – having succumbed to a fate that is, indeed, worse than death? Or do you see them as a diverse group encompassing wide interests?

'If we look hard enough, we can find positive media coverage about older people. But it is often at best patronising and, at worst, insulting. It's hardly surprising that 58 per cent of people think the media portray older people negatively.'

Age Concern report 'How Ageist is Britain?' 2000

Assumptions – the old are...

Incapable? 'Old' is loaded with assumptions of neediness and ineptness that terrify the young and undermine the old – robbing them of self-respect, damaging their health and welfare and even reducing their life expectancy.

'Despite ... evidence [that over-65s are the safest drivers], many European governments have enacted restrictive legislation ... Might a negative image of elderly drivers in the media be an important factor in shaping public and medical opinion?'

BMJ, 12 February 2005

'Advertisers who present older women as bigoted and incapable of understanding the instructions on a detergent packet know that they are on to a winner.' Germaine Greer in The Guardian, 14 September 2005

- **DON'T** portray old age as necessarily a time of dependency and limitation.
- **DO** avoid offensive and undermining stereotyping of older people.
- **DO** highlight poor treatment of vulnerable older people in health, social and community care settings.

Unattractive? Older women are reduced to invisibility, rarely addressed or portrayed, likely to be scorned when they are:

'Sophia Loren ... has the face of a 50-year-old [but] her hands are those of a great-great-great grandmother.' Amanda Platell in the Evening Standard, 28 September 2004

And it's often no better for men: 'One looks at the old chap [Sir Menzies Campbell] doddering along.' David Starkey on 'Any questions', BBC Radio 4, 9 June 2006

Asexual? As for older people sharing the same human needs as the young – in our sex-obsessed media, they are ridiculed, despised ('a dirty old man') or treated with incredulity.

Pensioners 'enjoy sex' 'There is a widely held theory that most older people are asexual. Researchers will say such attitudes

leave elderly people feeling marginalised.'

Report on The British Society of Gerontology's annual meeting, 12 September 2002

A burden? Britain's basic pension is worth only 16% of average male earnings compared with 60% in other European countries. One in five older people live below the poverty line, the majority of whom are women. Many older people are actively engaged in campaigning to change that situation. Yet some commentators only see the "financial burden".

'Living with Britain's population time bomb'

Observer, 25 Jan 2004

'30bn tax rise' for ageing population

Independent, 18 Jan 2005

Grans, granddads and 'OAPs'

Shorthand terms like 'granny' or 'pensioner' encourage negative stereotypes. Even 'positive' stories can suggest that it's remarkable for an older person not to be frail and passive.

How old is 'old'?

Age Concern ('How Ageist is Britain?') reports that on average, we think that youth ends at 49 and old age starts at 65. But perceptions vary – 16-25-year-olds think 55 is old, while the over-75s consider 58 is still young. Avoid terms such as 'elderly' for people in their 50s and 60s.

Sir, The picture with your report (Mar 14) is captioned: 'Ryan Johnson: charged with the

murder of his elderly parents'. ... the text reveals that Mr and Mrs Johnson were aged 54 and 53. FRANCES CUTLER, letter to the Times, 15 March 2006

He may be the other side of 50, but that doesn't stop him climbing mountains. From Cornwall Today, discussing Alan Titchmarsh, quoted in the Times column 'Not dead yet' 27 October 2004

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