

# Dignity - Who Cares?

**S**ince joining the Dignity in Care Campaign a year ago as National Dignity Ambassador Michael Parkinson or 'Parky' as many know him has been travelling the country, meeting staff who work in the health and care services and users of those services, and speaking at a series of Department of Health-sponsored events about why we should and how we can value and respect older people properly. One of these events was recently held in the Yorkshire and Humber region.

On 1st July at the Marriott Hotel, Leeds Sir Michael hosted a very successful "Question time" session at 'Dignity - Who Cares', an invitation only event for the region's leaders. Organised by the North West Joint Improvement Partnership and the Yorkshire and Humber Improvement Partnership the morning presentations were concluded by the questions and answers session. Panel members included Revd Dr Inderjit Bhogal, OBE, CEO of Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum, Phil Hope MP, Andrew Harrop, Policy Manager from Age Concern and Help the Aged and Karen Jenkins, Head of Health at UNISON.

Questions from the 250 strong audience included attitudes to age (suggestions from the panel include better training and education of lower-grade health and care staff and better leadership), the elderly in a

multi-cultural society (more understanding needed of languages other than English is urged), improving complaints procedures and provision of advocates for patients with dementia.

Sir Michael asked Inderjit Bhogal if he thought we'd gone too far down the road of neglecting our older people to turn the tide; his answer was met with much audience agreement.

Inderjit said "Attitudes towards and treatment of the elderly are declining, even in the Asian community. What we need is to encourage more interaction between generations, more understanding among young people about what it means to be older, and the reintroduction of the word 'honour.' Older people should be treated as guests of honour."

Inderjit also added "Dignity and respect for older people is a key value, respect is not given to their dignity. Losing sight of this is death by indifference. A person's faith remains with them throughout their life. Religious knowledge and our spirituality is hard-wired into our being. Even those with dementia retain some awareness of their religion; people react positively to the playing of hymns, prayers and the reading of scriptures. We should not forget that those who have dementia, have suffered strokes or have other illnesses which make it difficult for them to communicate still have spiritual needs."



Sir Michael Parkinson and Dr Inderjit Bhogal OBE

After the 'Question Time' session Sir Michael visited the event's market place where he met and congratulated the Dignity in Care award - regional winners. The Dignity Champions displayed the work they have done on the campaign.

Inspired by Sir Michael's lead, 7,000 people have joined him as dignity champions.



Karen Jenkins, Dr Inderjit Bhogal OBE, Phil Hope MP

For information about becoming a Dignity Champion call 0207 972 4007 or sign up online at [www.dignityincare.org.uk](http://www.dignityincare.org.uk)