

CONSUMERS GIVE THEIR VIEWS ON 'OUR FINANCIAL FUTURE'

One of the reasons behind the decision to publish the 'Our Financial Future' review was to stimulate discussion and debate about the key issue that the project has identified, namely that it is critical that consumers understand that they should be less dependent on the State and employers, and should act now to take more personal responsibility for their financial wellbeing.

Participation from consumer organisations within The Savings & Investments Policy project is essential and we are therefore delighted that Age UK has joined the Money Advice Service, the Financial Inclusion Centre, Financial Services Consumer Panel and the Pensions Advisory Service as a member of the project group.

Our work with consumer organisations and the financial services trade bodies who are also involved in the project will help to deliver this key message. But there is nothing better than hearing directly from the consumer and it has been particularly encouraging to see the number of comments posted online following the press coverage of the publication of the review.

Of course not all were complimentary with some readers choosing to blame either the government or business in general for creating the saving crisis that we now face. The decision to keep interest rates on saving accounts low was cited as a major cause of concern.

A lack of trust was a common theme with perceived business practices and what many saw as the undermining of pensions to blame. We have already acknowledged that there is much to do in order to build up the level of trust in the sector and the project is already developing proposals in this respect.

Several comments drew attention to the plight of the low paid who struggle to make ends meet each month and have little or no capacity to save. The high cost of housing facing younger buyers was also raised.

There were supportive comments on the need to change the culture from one where people borrow and spend, to one where saving and living within your means are the norm. The broader benefits to the UK economy from a savings culture were also highlighted. Some respondents called on individuals to take more personal responsibility for their financial wellbeing rather than rely on others.

All comments – positive and negative – are being fed into the working group discussions as we develop the strategic proposals that will form the next stage in the project. As part of this process we are holding a seminar on Tuesday 20th May based on the key findings of the review.

Speakers include Sharon Chapman of the Building Societies Association; Rob Fisher of Fidelity; Jackie Oatway from the Money Advice Service; Adrian Boulding of Legal & General; Tony Stenning of BlackRock and Charles Roxburgh from HMTreasury.

Topics to be discussed will focus on housing – particularly from the younger persons perspective; financial wellbeing; the real cost of living; funding retirement, the Treasury viewpoint and an update on the project itself. We do hope that you can join us, further details are available at: http://www.tisa.uk.com/other_event.html?event_id=308

If you want to add your own comment or observation, please email us at engagement@tisa.uk.com.

Kim Holloway, Director of Engagement at TISA