

# Foreword

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Too often older people are perceived as being a 'drain' on public services, and depicted as passive recipients of services designed and provided by others. The work of the O4O: Older People for Older People project seeks to counteract these popular misconceptions and postulates a model where older people are actively involved in the design and delivery of the services their generations receive. It recognises that older people have amassed a wide range of skills and experiences which should be used positively, and proposes that a community social enterprise model, working in partnership with the public sector, is particularly suited to this type of service delivery. The delivery of public services in rural areas faces particular challenges that are compounded by demographic change as younger people leave for study and work and older people move in to enjoy a scenic and tranquil retirement. Many of these older people remain fit and active for decades and could potentially be the natural leaders of social enterprises offering services to others in their community. The O4O project examined service provision in rural areas in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Greenland, Sweden and Finland, and the factors which influence the success of this model of service delivery.

It gives me particular pleasure to write the foreword to this book as one of the partners in the O4O project was the Crichton Centre for Research in Health and Social Issues based on the University of Glasgow's campus in Dumfries. I look forward to its conclusions bringing positive benefits to older residents in rural Scotland and across Europe's Northern Periphery Regions.

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