From the Director

Welcome to the seventh edition of NDA News, the newsletter of the New Dynamics of Ageing (NDA) Research Programme. The NDA Programme is the largest research programme on ageing ever mounted in the UK and the first one to bring together five Research Councils (AHRC, BBSRC, EPSRC, ESRC and MRC) spanning all relevant research disciplines from the arts to biological sciences. This unique research venture is dedicated to the production of new knowledge about the ageing process, multidisciplinary collaboration and making an impact on the worlds of policy, practice and product development so that scientific inputs can be translated into real benefits for people as they age.

This issue of NDA News focuses on involving older people in research from both the perspective of researchers and of older people themselves. The main features are a report on a recent Early Career Workshop held in London, a focus on the NDA Older People's Reference Group and their experiences and commentaries from senior academics in the field of ageing research. This report is augmented by a piece by Anthea Tinker, Deputy Chair of the NDA Advisory committee, on the involvement of older people.

Also in this issue there is a short report on the NDA's ESRC Festival of Social Science Event which brought children and older people together to look at attitudes to ageing. The event 'Act your Age' was held in a Sheffield Primary School with a group of 30 Year 6 pupils and 12 older people.

The Programme has a further 2 years to run and we want to ensure that it does indeed have a lasting beneficial impact on older people's lives. Any suggestions you might have to help the Programme achieve its full potential would be received very gratefully.

Other News in Brief:

The NDA Programme meeting held on 1st November 2011 focused on science of ageing and knowledge transfer. NDA projects also discussed collaborative co-writing. The Older People’s Reference Group was invited to join the morning session.

The NDA and Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Institute of Aging (CIHR-IA) had a joint meeting on collaborative research funding in Canadian High Commission in 24th November 2011. On the 25th, the Young Foundation held a joint symposium on innovations for our ageing populations, aiming to exchange ideas on knowledge transfer.

Alan Walker
Professor of Social Policy and Social Gerontology
The University of Sheffield

NDA programme meeting in London 1st November 2011

NDA/CIHR-IA meeting in Canadian High Commission London, 24th November 2011
This was the latest in the NDA Programme’s workshop series for early career researchers and it focused on involving older people in research. The aims of the event were:

• To explore the principles, practice and ethical issues of involving older people in research and the issues it raises
• To discuss the impact and challenges associated with involving older people in research
• To allow researchers to engage with one another and share knowledge and experiences

The participants came from the NDA, Lifelong Health and Well-being (LLHW) and the British Society of Gerontology (BSG) Early Career Researchers. The workshop looked at key principles and good practice for involvement of older people from the perspective of researchers and also looked at user involvement from the perspective of the older person. The afternoon focussed on practical issues such as travel, meeting locations and times and also discussed ethical issues related to involvement.

Keynote Speaker Commentaries

Friederike Ziegler, Research Fellow, University of York
Involving Older People in Research – Practice

Why should we involve older people in research?

Improving research

Involving older people in framing research questions from the very beginning can give insights into how meaningful or beneficial the research would be in improving the lives of older people. We are thus able to develop relevant and meaningful research for those who are directly affected by its outcomes and who have to live with the consequences of its implementation for instance through policy. In conversations with ‘ordinary’ older citizens academics have an opportunity to leave their ‘ivory towers’ at universities, giving them a ‘reality-check’ as to what the real problems are facing this and coming generations. Older people themselves are also often more sensitive to the wider impact of research, for example in terms of reproducing ageist stereotyping and exclusionary discourses.

Enhancing researchers’ skills

In terms of professional and personal development of researchers, involving older people can also enhance an academic’s communication skills and teach flexibility and patience in adapting research methods and in collaboration with lay researchers.

Types of Involvement

Recruitment

When recruiting older people to become involved in research it is important to consider the individual’s capabilities in contributing, but also to be aware of whom or what group is represented by a certain individual. Are there any hidden agendas? Researchers should be aware that those who volunteer for involvement are often the ‘usual suspects’. In order to recruit new groups or individuals creative measures may need to be employed, potentially with the help of voluntary organisations or community groups who may be able to engage those ‘hard to reach’ people who need extra support to become involved in research.
Stages
Older people should ideally be involved from the beginning at the ideas stage. They can assist with the proposal, from shaping how the project may proceed to looking at outcomes and dissemination. Their involvement throughout the project at various stages is crucial if you plan to be fully inclusive. The participants will feel ownership of the project if they have helped generate ideas in the initial stages. Involvement should be viewed as a two-way learning process. The feedback and reflections on the process at team discussions, project meetings or focus groups is essential for evaluating and formulating new goals and action plans.

Enabling contributions
It is important to be mindful about what type of contribution older people are able or willing to make to your project. People will have other priorities in their lives and may at times have to withdraw from their involvement. This may be temporary or permanent. A return to participating in the research project should be welcomed at any stage if possible.

You need to consider what type of environmental, structural and procedural conditions need to be in place within your organisation to enable contributions. These conditions might include: transport; scheduled time of the meetings and locations; need for support from a carer / support person; accessible venues for meetings with good comfortable surroundings; acoustics, lighting; provision of catering and a welcoming atmosphere.

You need to consider what barriers they may have to overcome to be able to contribute constructively to the project. This may require time and training to ensure you get the most out of the time spent together.

What is it like to be old?
Context
It is important for ageing researchers to gain a good understanding of the everyday lives of older people, of their concerns and worries, joys and pleasures. To be able to empathise with your research subject or to put yourself in their shoes. For example what are the circumstances in which older people in different areas live? What is their local community like? Why not visit the area, familiarise yourself with the locality where you will be researching. Listen to older people’s views and opinions observe their daily routines, you will gain their trust and mutual respect if you show you have understood their daily lives.

Suggestions for successful meetings
Here are some practical suggestions for successful meetings involving older people. A project meeting should involve a flexible agenda with opportunity for discussion, reflection and feedback. Hearing or visual impairments may require particular considerations in terms of face-to-face versus virtual communication, seating arrangements or lighting. Regular toilet breaks and the provision of tea/coffee and snacks should be considered as well as the overall length of the meeting.

Impact
Involving older people in research can improve its impact. Desired impact can be built into the research process through the involvement of people at various levels both locally and nationally. Dissemination through your participants to their groups and communities will increase the scope of the research impact.

Smiles all around: A communal effort
At the end of a project mark it with an event, recognise the older people’s investment into the project and most of all keep in touch.

In Conclusion
Participant involvement in research requires thought and planning. In addition it needs a substantial amount of financial and time resources which should be built into funding proposals. Involving older people in research is very much a two-way learning process. It can make a real difference to individuals and groups and can be extremely rewarding for all parties involved.
Mary Sinfield, Chair of NDA Older People’s Reference Group

Involving Older People in Research – Older People’s Reference Group Experiences

Mary’s Background
I am a retired civil servant, with pensions sufficient to allow me to pay my way without recourse to project budgets. This makes me probably unique and certainly very popular! Every birthday is my 55th, and I have 4 a year! (You need only know I am female and over retirement age). I act as chair at Older People’s Reference Group (OPRG) meetings.

This commentary is based on the projects I have been involved with – my experiences involvement overall. I will look at lessons learned and then conclude and summarise. I am involved in a total of 7 NDA projects: 5 as an OPRG representative and 2 as a volunteer.

What Involvement Means
• A conduit and advocate for older people’s views
• Advisory, both with researchers & steering group meetings (Design, Kitchens, Stairs)
• Training sessions (Design)
• A ‘solo research subject’/researcher (Design – Munich, Covent Garden, Croydon)
• An audio transcriber (Covent Garden recordings)
• A volunteer in workshops (Incontinence, Music, Design)
• A representative at conferences (Pain Diagnosis software, OP&Media, SoMND, AGE UK, BSA
• A Speaker to London Older People’s community groups, giving illustrated presentations on UK age-related research.

Experiences Overall
As Volunteer Subject
• Experiences usually enjoyable (especially the Music project)
• Only one voice, but heartened that others echo my thoughts and comments
• Very much appreciate subsequent information

Conferences
• Too few independent older people, especially at AGE UK conferences
• Professionals smug about their being “older people”, and often dismissive of comments of the retired.
• Am not convinced of effectiveness of poster presentations.

Lessons learned
• Volunteers must be continually pro-active.
• Major researcher failings
  • Project management skills [Universities should provide this necessary training for ALL researchers.]
  • Budget for volunteers [lacking or insufficient; training provision also apparently overlooked in budget development.]
  • Unrepresentative range of Older People [Disabled, BMEG’s]
  • Poor inter-relationships with Older People volunteers. [Training required here also.]
  • Business and industry support only the few areas where they might see profit.
Conclusion

• There is a need for older people
• As sceptics on panels assessing research programmes and projects
• As volunteers from less well-off and less-active backgrounds, disabled and ethnic minority groups.

REMINDER – One doesn’t know what it’s like being older person until one is “there”!

• ‘Hawthorn Effect’ on me – increased cynicism; Interest in ageing research seemingly driven by three factors only
  • Political expediency – elections, finance
  • Organisations’ self-interest – publicity and funding for charitable organisations, University departments ‘empire’-building and -maintenance, researchers’ career development
  • Commercial Profit

Summary

• Engagement since 2007 exhilarating, frustrating, socially enjoyable, time-consuming, boring, self-satisfying, and at times, really annoying.

• Commitment to projects affected by
  • having to make initial contact, or chase up progress report, or for promised information;
  • ‘remote control’ – emails, not phone calls; papers in ‘soft’ copy;
  • Little advance notice and no choice of meeting dates (My time NOT at project’s disposal; opportunity costs of cancelling other engagements);
  • Long delays providing a meeting’s minutes
  • Few requests to ‘de-academic jargon’ papers for general readership.

[Most projects have taken some or all of the above points on board as time went by, and the one researcher who takes time and trouble to phone me with progress reports is much appreciated.]

• The Issue of funding for the involvement of older people in research remains an unresolved one.

• Hope I have met the OPRG evaluation criteria
  1. Significantly raised awareness within the Programme about the major issues of concern to older people.
  2. Provided constructive advice and comments on the difference perspectives of older people should be reflected.
  3. Engaged constructively with project and encouraged awareness of the specific needs of older people.
  4. Acted independently, flexibly and proactively to help to ensure that this Project achieves its objectives.
Mary Brown, NDA Older People’s Reference Group

Involving Older People in Research – Older People’s Reference Group Experiences

Like the past the future is a ‘foreign country’ – we do things differently…

I am intrigued as to why young people should want to involve themselves in research into old age and old people. You are not yet old, you are exploring a foreign country, where we do things differently.

What would you think of feminist research almost exclusively done by men? Or research into racism by white people? Research into disability by the able bodied? Unfortunately old people tend, frequently against their will, to be retired and little research into ageing comes from the standpoint of old age.

When I registered to do a doctorate in education, on learning in later life, with the OU I was given a feminist as supervisor, which I found immensely helpful. Much of what feminist writers say about the position of women applies to the position of old people. For example Dorothy Smith in 1992, said that ‘sociology from women’s experience’ said that feminist research must come from the ‘standpoint of women’. Patty Lather – wrote of ‘committed research’ and Barbara Du Bois – of ‘passionate scholarship’. There seems an absence of passion and commitment in research into old people.

Unless you have been a victim of ageism I think it is difficult to be passionate about it. I once asked an oncologist why older people were not called for breast screening, although cancer is more prevalent among old people. He said ‘past that age you are not worth saving.’ I think he meant it as a joke, a Jeremy Clarkson joke? I did not laugh; this is how it often feels.

When you are ill you are treated differently if you are old. We have all heard horror stories of how old people are treated in hospital, but if you have been a victim of the patronisation and much worse that goes on you have a deeper perspective on it.

Why should older people be involved in research into ageing? As an old person, I’m not sure why anyone should ask that question. Perhaps The OPRG is the next best thing to having research actually done by old people.

For me, challenging ageism is the paramount reason for being involved. Ageism is rampant in our society: it is taken for granted, legal – the old are the only group against whom it is legal to discriminate.

Some time ago the Radio 4 Programme ‘I’m Sorry I haven’t a clue’ had the audience roaring with laughter at jokes about Stanna stair lifts, zimmer frames and incontinency which were seen as depicting old age. I wrote a letter of complaint to the BBC, saying that it was offensive. Their defence was that some members of the team were old (over 60) so they were laughing at themselves. They were also laughing, and encouraging people to laugh, at me.

I prefer the term ‘old’ to ‘older’, which seems to assume that there is something wrong with being old. I feel that to challenge ageism we must reclaim the word old, as black people reclaimed the word black, and women prefer not to be called ladies. Language is powerful, seeing ‘old’ as negative implies seeing old age as a negative experience.

In my research I found many old people who were ageist – they accepted their position as natural, assuming they had declined as they aged. This is a process I call ‘oldering’ from the Foucauldian concept of ‘othering’, whereby individuals are made into subjects, and accept their inferior status as natural.

‘Age related cognitive decline’ is assumed by very many, including some researching old age. In one NDA research that I have been involved in, at a meeting with the researchers, there was a cognitive psychologist. I’m not sure why, as the research was not psychological. He said that there was evidence of ‘cognitive decline’ with ageing, when I said I thought this was poor evidence, based on bad research, he obviously was not listening. But there is some very bad research around, where old people’s scores are compared with those of university students. But the old people mostly did not go to university, so there is no attempt to compare like with like. Longitudinal research shows much less decline.

I was made to feel very much a token old person, a subject to be investigated. I was only involved because I had to be, but my involvement was limited, and I was told that there was danger that I might ‘contaminate the data’ – that is other old people. Old people are not data: we are people.
With another piece of research I was treated very differently: I was invited to talk about the OPRG at a weekend. There in meals I was talked to as an equal and felt that I was being listened to, as if I was someone with something to say. I was made to feel that my involvement mattered. But even so my involvement was limited. I was not part of the research.

In another project a member of the research team mentioned that older people’s involvement in drama changes as they age, as they find it hard to remember lines, so take on back stage, or front of house roles. Having recently seen Vanessa Redgrave in ‘a year of magical thinking’, and knowing that research shows that short term memory declines in old age much less than is generally believed, I questioned that. I was told that it came from the interview data. I did not feel able to ask to see the data. Did the old person really say that they were less able to remember? Was it in the way the question was framed, or the intonation? Was the actor in question oldered, by the culture of our society which tells us all the time that old people’s minds decline?

I suggest that much research into ageing is contaminated by ageism, dare I say it even some NDA research?

I feel that the model of OPRG as currently in the NDA Programme only goes so far. I would like to see it involved

- right at the start when research questions are framed
- in selecting and preparing methods
- analysis of the data
- writing conclusions

I know that some members of the OPRG have said that they do not have the scientific background to comment on some of the more technical and medical projects. They have no choice but to be ‘tokens’. But there are retired doctors and scientists out there who could be recruited to an OPRG.

The idea that any old person can comment on anything relating to age is another example of ageism. We are seen as old, what else we are is secondary. But I suspect that for most of us our age is not the most important part of our identity.

I would like to end by saying that to grow old is a privilege; often it is only possible because of modern medicine. But to young people I would say, getting old is fine – you’ll get there one day if you are lucky.
Practical Impact of Involvement

Tracey Williamson draws on her experiences co-ordinating the public involvement aspects in two research projects: a New Dynamics of Ageing funded study of the integration of technology into technical walking clothing for older people (Design for Ageing Well) and a study to develop an electronic walking aid for people with a condition called ‘foot drop’ after a stroke, funded by the National Institute for Health i4i Programme.

Evidence of the impact of involvement of the public in research can be difficult to identify yet publications of such impact in the health and social care fields have been usefully collated (Staley 2009). In these fields there are a number of drivers for public involvement in research including government policy; public expectation; recognition of potential improved quality of research and its products e.g. devices; moral reasons; requirements of research commissioners; and a concern for development of health technologies that are fit for purpose.

Both of Dr Williamson’s studies engaged the public in a project advisory group role. These permitted enduring relationships with the public over the lifetime of the studies which ranged between 30 and 36 months. Each study prepared and supported 10-12 people recruited for their experiences of the topic under study and brought them together for between 6 and 8 meetings. Formative and summative evaluation data aided identification of the impact of the public’s involvement from the perspective of the public themselves and the research team.

In the first study (Design for Ageing Well), the public substantively informed the original application for NDA funding. Throughout a series of co-design workshops they helped inform the research team as to the needs and preferences of older people who walked as a means of maintaining health and independence. Their input was invaluable in determining the design of prototype garments and the integration of appropriate technology into those garments leading to products that they would both wear and would ultimately purchase should they go to market at an appropriate price. A strong sense of personal development and enjoyment was gained by the public during their involvement whilst the research team found their ideas and challenges invaluable in informing their decision making. Furthermore they helped one of the project’s PhD students design her own study and enabled the testing out of data gathering equipment and co-design processes for that study. The public will be attending and contributing to the end of project conference in London in March 2012.

In the second study, the public advised on device components and functions and the design and conduct of a clinical trial. The latter was made to be more conducive to being recruited to (shorter duration, avoidance of summer holiday period and less travel requirement for participants). The public themselves reported feeling a sense of personal recognition for their contribution in enhancing the research study conduct and resulting device design. They made useful suggestions for the construction of the device and its controls (e.g. knobs versus buttons, audible versus visual alarms), where to position it on the body and how to attach it. Initially the research team had been concerned the public would have unrealistic expectations about what could be achieved particularly in relation to housing electronic components in a small control box, but this was not borne out. The end result was a device that was a World first which was also very acceptable to potential users.

Overall, public involvement in these studies enabled achievement of prototypes that were indeed fit for purpose and likely to meet the needs of potential users. All too often in the past there has been a perceived ‘technology push’ rather than technology being ‘needs led’. Involving the public at the late or end stages of these studies only would have been unhelpful and the research teams believe the technologies developed would have been quite different without public involvement. Both teams would now consider public involvement at the start of most studies they do in the future. Separate detailed reports of both of the involvement approaches of these two studies will be available during 2012 – Design for Ageing Well from July whilst the orthotic devices for stroke study is being published online also from April by contacting T.Williamson@salford.ac.uk Tel 0161 295 6424.

Ethical Issues in Older People’s Involvement in Ageing Research

This is a summary of Anthea’s presentation given by Dr Karen Lowton, Senior Lecturer in Ageing and Health and Intercalated and Postgraduate Taught Programmes Director, Institute of Gerontology, King’s College, London

General principles

The Social Research Association emphasises 3 C’s as a guide for researchers:

1. Consent - useful guidance can be found at: www.doh.gov.uk
   
   For example, for a person’s consent to be valid, the person must be:
   
   • capable of taking that particular decision (“competent”)
   • acting voluntarily (not under pressure or duress from anyone)
   • provided with enough information to enable them to make the decision.

2. Confidentiality

3. Conduct

The purpose of research

When conducting research, the purpose should be defined at the outset. Why are we doing this research, what do we hope to achieve? Key purposes might be:

• To advance knowledge
• To produce future benefits
• To check current practice

Some reasons for the increased interest in ethical issues

• Problems and scandals
• Greater awareness of rights
• A more litigious society
• Greater involvement of service users
• Concern by funders (especially Research Councils)

Increased interest in ethical issues

• Concern about the involvement of older people in longitudinal studies (drop-out rates)
• Concern about social care and the social sciences
• Proliferation of small research
• An increase in sales and marketing disguised as research
• Falling response rates
The main types of research in the NDA programme

- Invasive (e.g. taking blood)
- Administration of a product (e.g. alcohol, food)
- Physical activity (e.g. cycling, ct scans)
- Non invasive samples (e.g. saliva, urine)
- Human tissue samples
- Interviews/questionnaires/focus groups/observation (e.g. abortion, smoking, professional practice)

Research on older people

- There should be no automatic assumption that older or disabled group are not able to take part in research
- Disabled people have been to the forefront in insisting that research involves them at all stages (including what is researched)
- Department of Health (DH) say that ‘it should never be assumed that people are not capable of making their own decisions, simply because of age and frailty’
- The scandal of age bias and lack of research on older people (e.g. over drugs)
- Department of Health (DH) (2004) Seeking consent; Working with older people

Ethical issues in the involvement of older people in the research process

a) The process including ownership

There are key questions raised around the issue of ownership and intellectual property rights of research and the findings. Who owns these? Views from some disability groups state that research always needs to start from them in an upwards movement. What about ideas for the research, where does ownership lie if the ideas come from one source or a number of sources? When ideas for research topics are widely discussed will other unscrupulous researchers steal them?

b) Deciding the methodology

It is very sensible to discuss methodology but if it is changed during the process what will the views of the funder be?

c) Who should be involved? The role of advisors

In the NDA programme there is a national reference group and in some studies they have been allocated to individual projects. Should the members be ‘the usual suspects’? How can they be chosen? Researchers need to be clear about where the members come from and think about wider collaboration.

d) How much time and remuneration should be given?

Some projects can be very demanding in terms of time and financial elements i.e. travel to meetings. There needs to be clarity at the outset about the commitment that will be needed by members and who this will be remunerated if at all.

The age old question of whether members should be paid for attendance as well as travel? What are the pros and cons of this approach? Would this attract individuals motivated by money and not the outcome, for example?

e) Older people as researchers

Some older people have been trained to interview other older people. There can be pros and cons to this also, so researchers need to think about the outcome, the nature of interviews, the information required and how best to achieve that.

In one case (not the NDA programme) they then formed a company and undertook research.
f) Older people who are PIs

Using the Government definition of an older person (50+) many PIs are, in fact, older people themselves now. This can give another dimension to the research but most funders fund on the merit of the proposal rather than age.

g) Dissemination

Dissemination and the role of older people in this process is often not always considered. However older people can often hold the key to this process when time is short and the research team have moved on to other things.

Suggested reading

Clough, R, Leamy, M and Miller, V Homing in on Housing: a study of housing decisions made by people aged over 60, Eskrigg Social Research

Final thoughts of the day:

The Important issues are:

- Early Involvement
- Value Older People
- Create a Collaborative approach
- Avoid ‘talking down’ to older people
- Create a positive environment

Barriers to involvement are:

- Lack of motivation to include older people
- The challenges that involving older people brings
- Getting away from asking the ‘usual suspects’
- Age discrimination

The final closing comment came from Charlotte Overton-Hart, a PhD researcher who describes herself as a champion for active ageing.

‘We live in such a fundamentally ageist society that it affects the way we think and speak about the ageing process. Wrinkles are seen as something to delay and minimise rather than to regard as an index of experience, and tabloids promote diets with promises of ‘dropping a decade’ and ‘turning back the clock’ rather than embracing growing older.

With such negative emphasis placed on ageing, it’s easy to miss out on the privilege of having older people as part of our society. Wisdom and life experience are two such qualities which younger generations could benefit from. Sadly, very often inter-generational interactions see older people primarily as the recipients of care, and a kindness granted by younger people, who are seen to give up, rather than invest their time in the company of elders.

Sometimes a simple change in word order can turn a perspective on its head. Instead of “help the aged” we could equally say “the aged help.” I spend a lot of time with my 91 year old gran. I sometimes ask her for advice, and she often dispenses pearls of wisdom without me asking. We don’t always agree with one another, but without fail she adds a new perspective to my situation. Not an old perspective, a new one.’
Involving older people in the research process – Reflections on the research for the New Dynamics of Ageing

Anthea Tinker

Anthea Tinker is Professor of Social Gerontology, King's College London and a member of the NDA Advisory Committee. She observed the day when PIs presented their findings and older people commented on their involvement. Her role was to summarise and draw lessons from the day.

The involvement of older people in the research process is one of the most challenging issues to emerge from this research programme. As an issue it is becoming more important in the requirements of funders of research but also because it is inherently the right thing to do. There is a long way to go before older people are as forceful in putting their viewpoints compared with disabled people. This involvement needs to take place at the start of research and funding should be built into the programme then.

Having listened to the excellent presentation about four specific projects and the responses by older people to their involvement in each one there are five issues I wish to highlight:

- The process.
- Who should be involved.
- How much time and remuneration should there be.
- Older people as researchers.
- Principal Investigators who are themselves older people.

The process

Many disabled people hold that the ideas for research should come from them and not from those who are not disabled. How far should older people create the proposals? In one project individual researchers held meeting with 10 older people each. In another a network was created where ideas for research were fed in to the researchers. However, issues of ownership arise. Whose ideas are they? Are there issues of intellectual property? And what about ideas being discussed so openly that other, less scrupulous, researchers may take these ideas for themselves. And a practical issue was raised by one PI who said that he would have welcomed the chance to involve older people right at the start but the timescale was so short that it was impossible.

Moving on in the research process there is the matter of the design of the project to consider. One particular project described the way the older people had objected to the methodology feeling that it would not work and then changing the age range of the sample quite dramatically. While this undoubtedly led to a better project what will funders think if the project is not the design that they funded?

Discussion about the role of the older people’s reference group was a key feature of the day. Different ways of running this group were outlined and the case for face to face communication forcibly made. How far the group should always meet with the researchers was not agreed and the case was made for some separate scientific meetings as well as joint ones. Good examples of meetings were given including one where the project was literally mapped with all the stages laid out visually. The case was also made for involving the older people with other users of the research. The majority of involvement seemed to take place over the dissemination for the research. The importance of providing findings in a simple way and lay summaries was stressed.

Who should be involved

A key issue is how older people are to be chosen for the projects. Are they to come from recognised organisations? Or, as one participant called them, ‘the usual suspects’ and another ‘the same old faces’. The possible over use of some people who seemed to spend most of their time on reference groups was highlighted by some participants. In some cases projects had ‘been allocated’ older people from the Older People’s Reference Group of the whole NDA programme. The fact that membership of a reference groups was very demanding seemed to point to limiting the number that older people were on. The need for different skills and cultural differences were other points made. Another was the value of seeking out individuals in the area in which the research takes place so that travelling is limited.
How much remuneration and time should be given

There is a tension over payment to people who take part in advisory committees. On the one hand there is a strong desire among some to give something freely but on the other some resentment that professionals are paid and therefore possibly more highly regarded. Most Advisory Committees in the NDA programme give expenses for travel and some a gratitude token. The latter is similar to the small amounts often given to participants in research. At the PI / OPRG workshop one of the most praised parts of this was prompt payment of expenses.

On how much time should be given by members of advisory committees this spanned the range from very little (almost a token amount which did not engage members) to very large amounts. The latter included very frequent meetings and long papers to read. The key seems to be to ensure that members know what is involved before agreeing to take part. Some of the older people at the workshop were on more than one committee but this seemed to be from choice.

Older people as researchers

Whether older people should themselves undertake the research was an issue raised. It was felt that, for example, older people interviewing other older people would be acceptable. However, this could not be undertaken without training and there could be a conflict of roles. The research study in Lancaster, not part of the NDA programme, where older people were trained as interviewers was cited by me as an example (Clough et al, 2003). This group subsequently went on to form their own research company.

Principal Investigators who are themselves older people.

One PI said that many of the PIs were themselves older people and this was accepted as giving another dimension to the research.

Reference

ESRC Festival of Science

Representing Self, Representing Ageing Project, University of Sheffield
www.representing-ageing.com/
Background

The ESRC organises an annual Festival of Social Science with two key aims: promoting and increasing awareness of ESRC and social science and its impact on UK society and increasing public awareness, understanding of, and engagement with, social science amongst the UK population, in particular the public and young people.

Having looked at the previous years’ evaluation and events organised, there appeared to be a lack of events for the young. This generated some thinking about intergenerational relationships and Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) in schools.

PSHE Guidelines

The Current PSHE guidelines talk about developing confidence, playing an active role as citizens, developing a healthy, safer lifestyle and developing good relationships and respecting the differences between people. Delving deeper into each section it was apparent that age was not mentioned at all. The NDA team felt that age could be included successfully in two of the areas:

Preparing to play an active role as citizens

Pupils should be taught:

- to reflect on spiritual, moral, social, and cultural issues, using imagination to understand other people’s experiences
- to explore how the media present information.
Developing good relationships and respecting the differences between people

Pupils should be taught:

• to think about the lives of people living in other places and times, and people with different values and customs
• to recognise and challenge stereotypes
• that differences and similarities between people arise from a number of factors, including cultural, ethnic, racial and religious diversity, gender and disability

The School

Sheffield City Council’s PSHE department were contacted to ask for advice on contacting schools in Sheffield that might be interested to take part in a workshop looking at age and stereotyping, particularly in the media. Two schools came forward initially and one was chosen to take part. The teacher was engaged from the beginning of the process and worked closely with the NDA Team

NDA Project Links

An obvious link became apparent very early on in the process of applying for funding for this event. One of the NDA Projects – Representing Self - Representing Ageing (also known as Look at Me!) was ideal to be involved in this event. The project based at Sheffield University is a unique one which challenged the current perceptions of older women in our society. The Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002 recognised a need to challenge stereotyped images of ageing, particularly in relation to older women. The use of visual methods as a means of allowing older women to tell us their experiences of ageing is one way of doing this but, to date, ‘ordinary’ older women have not had the opportunity to either comment on, or create, their own images of ageing. This project aimed to do precisely that. They invited older women in Sheffield to join their creative workshops exploring images of ageing. The women were given the opportunity to create their own images of the ageing process, which were subsequently exhibited at various public venues nationally throughout 2011.
The workshop

Over two afternoons, members of the NDA team and the PI from the Look at Me Project went into Prince Edward Primary School in Sheffield and ran workshops with one year 6 class. The class was split into 2 groups of 15 on each day and 13 older people attended from the NDA OPRG and project members from the Look at Me project.

The session started by looking at stereotypes and exploring what these are and what types of stereotypes exist for both young and old. The children and older people suggested positive and negative words for both ages which were then revisited at the end of the session. Examples include: grey, wrinkled, rude, kind, smell nice, tell stories, smart, energetic and curious. Then followed a short getting to know you game where by the children and older people asked each other questions and also explored similarities and differences.

The children had been asked to bring in photographs of an older person in their life which some of the children showed to the group and discussed why this person was important to them. The older people also brought in photographs and a ‘guess who’ game was played, trying to work out who was who. The children really enjoyed this and they got an insight as to what the older people looked like when they were their age.

Volunteers were selected to participate in a dressing up session with props that the team had sourced. Two young and two older people were asked to dress up and act as an older or younger person. The idea being to show the stereotypes in action and to show how the outside world, quite often, perceive older and younger people.

The group then looked at how the media portray older people, often in a negative way. The children watched a clip from the BBC TV show ‘outnumbered’ which showed the family talking about why the granddad could not be trusted to babysit. The group then explored why this had been portrayed in this way and how it made them feel, what kind of stereotypes they saw and heard, whether they agreed with the opinions shown and discussed where these stereotypes come from.

The next part of the afternoon was devoted to the Look at Me! project. The PI, Lorna Warren, University of Sheffield, led the session by using 5 of the images created by her project and asking the whole group to look at the images, discuss with their groups and use one word to describe them. The group used sticky notes and attached them to each picture which was a really powerful way of looking at what they all thought.

The group were then asked to choose their favourite, which varied on both afternoons.

To conclude the workshop, the words discussed at the beginning looking at ‘young’ and ‘old’ were revisited to see if perceptions had changed and if new words could be added. This was an excellent exercise and demonstrated the power behind inter-generational experiences. One of the children said: “I have learnt that you need to look at each person individually as older people are really the same as us, just a bit older. They are still fun and have lots to say.”
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