



new dynamics of ageing  
a cross-council research programme



# nda news

Issue One

## From the Director...



Welcome to the first newsletter from the New Dynamics of Ageing (NDA) Research Programme. The NDA Programme is the largest research initiative on ageing ever mounted in the UK and, for the first time, brings together five Research Councils to fund it: the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), the Medical Research Council (MRC), and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). Therefore the NDA Programme covers all of the disciplines that conduct research on ageing and its consequences – from biology to the arts.

By establishing a programme of this scale (over £20 million) the Research Councils have signalled the importance to the UK of ageing as a research topic. They recognise that the ageing of the population, while being entirely positive, presents a new set of challenges to all levels of society, from families to policy makers. If the UK is to respond successfully to these challenges then research must play a central role in both explaining the basic processes of ageing, why we age, and in providing the evidence base for policy, practice and product development that will ensure that, as we age, our quality of life is maintained. Thus the NDA Programme aims to generate both new knowledge and new approaches to ageing.

The combination of five Research Councils also signals the importance of multi-disciplinary perspectives on ageing. Although each scientific discipline has its own research agenda on ageing, and will rightly continue to do so, no single discipline can claim a prerogative over this topic or provide the answers to all of the questions it poses. As far as the experience of ageing is concerned, it is a holistic process not one that occurs in disciplinary boxes. The NDA Programme, therefore, is about multi-disciplinary perspectives on ageing, it encourages them in its application processes.

While the NDA Programme was established in 2005 and launched formally in 2006 it is still in the process of commissioning projects. So this first newsletter provides a statement of the current complexion of the programme and an indication of its future trajectory. Subsequent newsletters will update readers on progress.

I do hope that you will find the contents of this newsletter interesting and informative and will want to keep in regular touch. On behalf of my Research Council colleagues and myself let me emphasise the high expectations that we share for this programme and its impact on the quality of older people's lives. If you have ideas about how we can ensure that older people benefit from this work please get in touch (contact details on back page).

Thank you for your attention.

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

# A Message from the Research Councils

The Research Councils are delighted to be invited to make some comments in this first issue of the NDA newsletter. A lot of time has been committed to the development and commissioning of research within the Programme and we are excited by the projects that have been funded so far. The Research Council representatives are enjoying working on this important initiative and we are always open to receiving questions or feedback about the Programme so please feel free to contact us.

As Alan says, the Programme is still commissioning research with further Collaborative Research Projects (CRPs) and Programme Grants to be awarded. The closing date for applications for this round of CRPs was 15th November. The Research Councils are also currently shortlisting applications for attendance at an Ideas Factory to be held in January which we hope will generate innovative multidisciplinary proposals in the area of the New Dynamics of Nutrition for Older People.

We look forward to meeting many of you and participating in NDA activities over the lifetime of the Programme. In the meantime we wish the Programme all the best with its critical contribution to ageing research and improving the quality of life of older people.

**Joy Todd**, *Research Development Leader, ESRC*

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## THE NDA'S research agenda

### The central objectives of the Programme are:

- to explore the ways in which individual ageing is subject to different influences over the life course;
- to understand the dynamic ways in which the meaning, understanding and experience of ageing are currently changing and becoming more diverse;
- to investigate the diverse ways in which ageing is/has been understood and represented at different times and in different cultures;
- to encourage and support the development of innovative multi-disciplinary research groups and methods;
- to provide a sound evidence base for policy and practice (including the development of prototype systems, procedures and devices) so that research contributes to well-being and quality of life.

### In achieving these objectives, the Programme will set out to:

- generate new knowledge on the ageing process and, particularly, the factors contributing to ageing well;
- deploy and develop new multi-disciplinary perspectives on ageing research;
- encourage comparative research, for instance on a regional, (inter)national, ethnic, cultural, historical or social basis, with a particular emphasis on the global north and south;
- help create a new generation of multi-disciplinary researchers;
- contribute to policy, practice and product development;

- provide new opportunities for UK science to link with those in the EU and North America; and
- identify opportunities for further research beyond the life of the Programme.

### Research Agenda

#### Ageing Well Across the Life Course

- Active Ageing
- Autonomy and Independence
- Later Life Transitions
- The Oldest Old

#### Ageing and its Environments

- Resources for Ageing
- Locality, Place and Participation
- The Built and Technological Environment
- The Global Dynamics of Ageing





## The NDA commissioning process

Because the NDA Programme is such a large and ambitious one it has a complex commissioning process to ensure that the best projects are supported. So far there have been three rounds:

### Collaborative Research Projects

In April 2006 two major collaborative research projects (CRPs) were funded:

Optimising Quality of Sleep Among Older People,  
*Sara Arber, University of Surrey*

Modelling Needs and Resources of Older People to 2030,  
*Mike Murphy, London School of Economics*

### Preparatory Networks

In September 2006, 11 networks were established to provide the bases for applications (in November 2007) for collaborative research projects:

Adapting Support to Sustain Autonomy: Understanding the Implications of Changing Capabilities for Older ICT users  
*Leela Damodaran, University of Loughborough*

Working Late: Strategies to Enhance Productive and Healthy Environments for the Older Workforce  
*Cheryl Haslam, University of Loughborough*

The Development of an Interdisciplinary Rural Ageing Research Agenda  
*Catherine Hennessy, University of Plymouth*

Seeking a New, Inter-disciplinary Methodology to Quantify the Benefits of Housing Interventions for Older People  
*Frances Heywood, University of Bristol*

A Life Course Approach to Healthy Ageing  
*Diana Kuh, University College London*

Self Management of Chronic Disease in Older People through Wireless Sensor Networks  
*Alison Marshall, University of Leeds*

Design Enabling Autonomy and Independence through Smart Clothes and Wearable Technology  
*Jane McCann, University of Wales, Newport*

Safety and Security for Older People  
*Rachel McCrindle, University of Reading*

Workplace Design for an Ageing Labour Force  
*Kerry Platman, University of Warwick*

Experiences and Uses of Technology in Older Age  
*Judith Sixsmith, Manchester Metropolitan University*

Cultural Perception and Adherence to Exercise and Nutritional Interventions in Older Individuals  
*Claire Stewart, Manchester Metropolitan University*

### Programme Grants

In June 2007, 12 programme grants were funded. These are stand-alone projects on a smaller scale to the CRPs.

Ageing, Well-being and Development. A Comparative Study of Brazil and South Africa  
*Armando Barrientos, University of Manchester*

Transitions, Choices and Health at Older Ages: Life Course Analyses of Longitudinal Data  
*David Blane, Imperial College London*

Psychometric Testing of the Multidimensional Older People's Quality of Life (OPQOL) Questionnaire and the Causal Model of QoL Under-pinning It  
*Ann Bowling, University College London*

Detecting and Preventing Financial Abuse of Older Adults: and Examination of Decision-making by Managers and Professionals  
*Mary Gilhooly, Brunel University*

Maintaining Dignity in Later Life: a Longitudinal Qualitative Study of Older People's Experiences of Supportive Care  
*Liz Lloyd, University of Bristol*

Innovation in Envisioning Dynamic Biomechanical Data to Inform Healthcare and Design Practice  
*Alastair Macdonald, Glasgow School of Arts*

New Metrics for Exploring the Relationship Between Mobility and Successful Ageing  
*Lynn McInnes, Northumbria University*

Promoting Independence and Social Engagement Among Older People in Disadvantaged Communities  
*Michael Murray, Keele University*

Older People's Use of Unfamiliar Space  
*Judith Phillips, University of Wales Swansea*

Ageing, Poverty and Neoliberalism in Urban South India  
*Penny Vera-Sanso, Birkbeck College, University of London*

Families and Caring in South Asian Communities  
*Christina Victor, University of Reading*

Landscapes of Cross-generational Engagement  
*Peter Wright, Sheffield Hallam University*

# SomnIA

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## Sleep in Ageing

### SomnIA – Optimising Quality of Sleep Among Older People in the Community and Care Homes: An Integrated Approach

SomnIA is a four year NDA Collaborative Research Project (CRP) which addresses practice and policy relevant issues arising from the nature, impact and management of the sleep-wake balance in later life. It will extend and 'join up' strategically targeted areas of sleep research relevant to understanding and improving autonomy, active ageing, and quality of later life.



The SomnIA interdisciplinary research team comprises partners from six disciplines and four institutions - sociology (Sara Arber/Robert Meadows, Surrey), psychology (Kevin Morgan, Loughborough), neuroendocrinology (Debra Skene/Benita Middleton, Surrey), engineering (Roger Orpwood, Bath), nursing (Ingrid Evers, Surrey) and medicine (David Armstrong, Kings College London), together with consultants in health economics (Heather Gage), medical statistics (David Lovell) and clinical psychology (Maureen Tomeny).

SomnIA is working closely with five project partners: Philips Lighting, North Nottinghamshire Healthcare Trust, DIPEX (University of Oxford), The Relatives and Residents Association, and Help the Aged. These project partners are providing detailed advice, access to research settings and products, and assisting the dissemination of results.

### Objectives

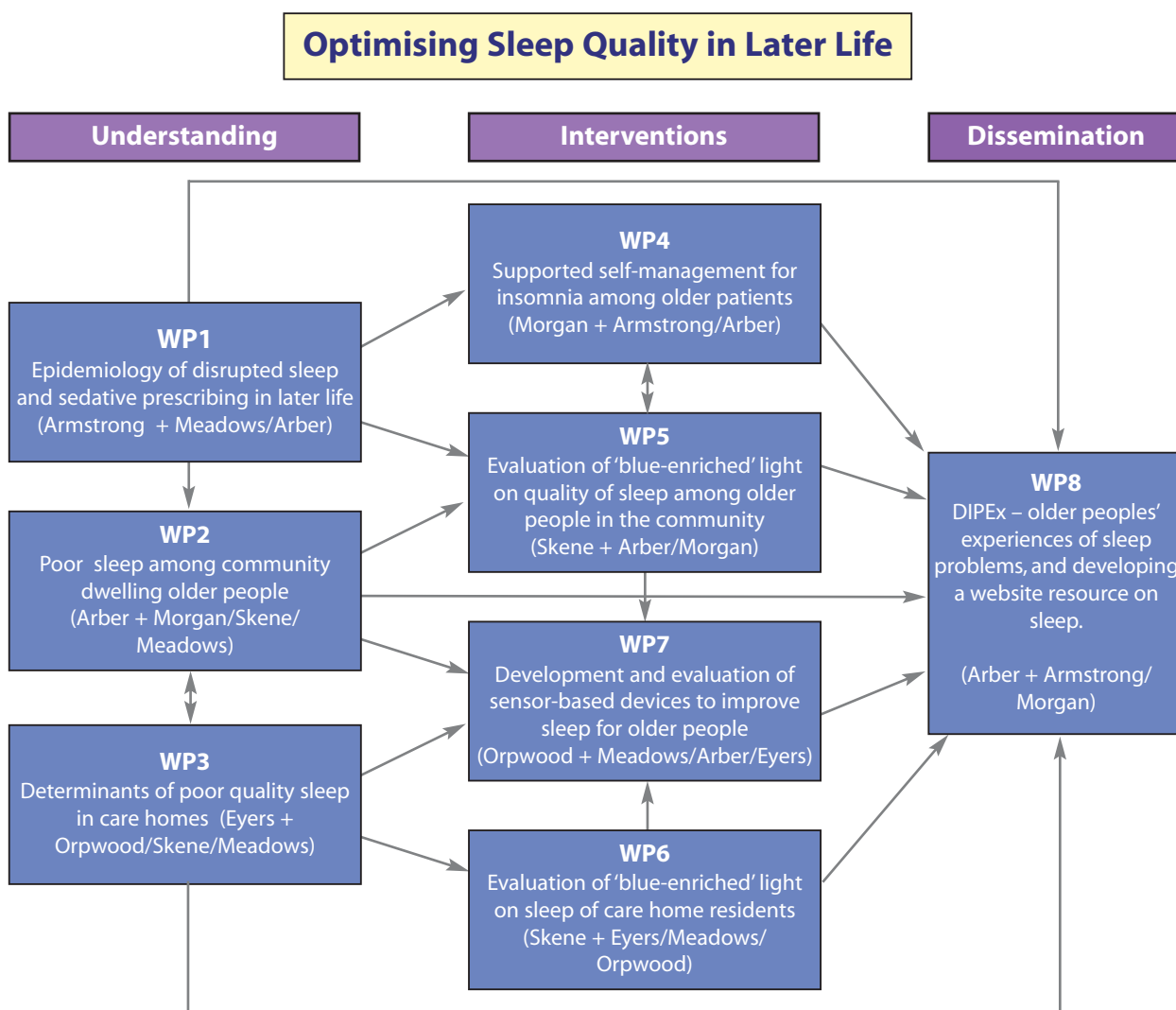
Good sleep in later life reduces the risk of falls and depression, is essential for maintaining activity and performance levels, and reduces challenging behaviour encountered in dementia sufferers. SomnIA aims to characterise and improve the sleep of older people both living in the community and in care homes, and thereby improve quality of life and functioning, and reduce use of sleep medication. This will be achieved through the following four sets of objectives to:

1. Understand the *meanings and determinants of poor quality sleep* among older people in community and residential settings (WP1, WP2, WP3).
2. Develop and evaluate Expert Patient supported *self-management* of older people with sleep problems in general practice (WP4).
3. Develop effective novel *non-pharmacological treatment options* for sleep problems. Evaluate 'blue-enriched' light in improving sleep of older people in the community and care homes (WP5, WP6), and develop and evaluate sensor-based products for use by frail older people at home and in care homes (WP7).
4. Develop a module on 'sleep problems' for the DIPEX website and a *user-friendly information website* for older people with sleep problems (WP8).

### Programme of Research – the Work Packages

These objectives will be achieved through 8 integrated Work Packages, each led by a co-investigator, with two to three co-investigators from other disciplines also involved. Figure 1 shows the Work Packages, their inter-linkages, and involvement of co-investigators.

**Figure 1: Work packages and their inter-linkages**



## Progress to date

SomnIA commenced in December 2006. Since then extensive progress has been made on Work Packages 2 and 3, as well as initial research undertaken on WP1 and WP4.

Sue Venn is the main researcher on WP2 which is examining factors influencing the quality of sleep of older people living in the community. Currently a survey is being completed by people aged 65+ (n=2400) to determine the prevalence of poor sleep among older people living in the community. In-depth qualitative interviews have recently commenced (n=60) which will provide an understanding of the meanings and experiences of poor sleep and the strategies older people use to improve their sleep.

Researching the sleep of care home residents raises particular challenges. Ingrid Evers is leading WP3, assisted by Emma Cope as the main researcher. Using multi-methods to fully capture the nature of this environment comprehensively, data are being collected in ten care homes. Sleep and activity diaries for two weeks (n=200), supported by day and night observational studies, provide insights into care home life and are linked to data from the residents' acti-watches and light sensors (n=200). Interviews are conducted with residents (n=40) and with staff (n=80) to evaluate their understanding of residents' sleep. Findings will identify determinants of poor sleep in care homes, and inform research in subsequent Work Packages.

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# Modelling Ageing Populations to 2030 (MAP2030)



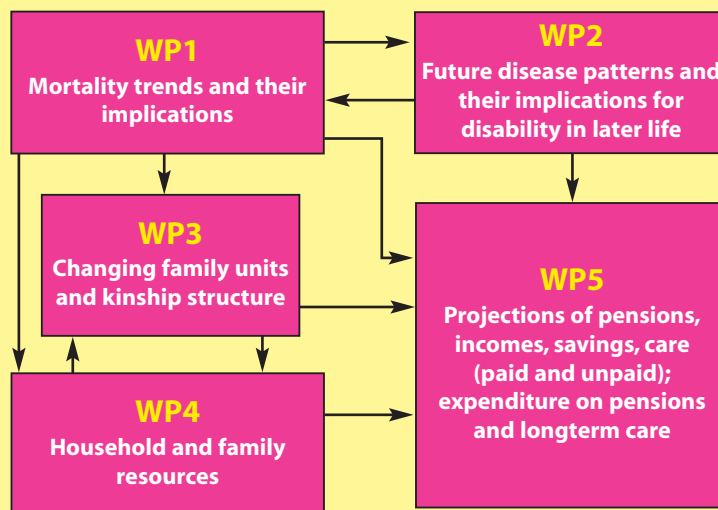
In the UK the number of people over the state pension age is projected to rise by almost 40% in the next 25 years. The number aged 80 and over, where care needs are greatest, will nearly double. The financial, family, social and health resources of the older population have substantial implications for the well-being of those concerned and for public policy, but consistent projections of their likely future circumstances are lacking. The MAP2030 Research Group, inter-disciplinary and inter-institutional (see below), is investigating the needs and resources of older people to 2030 in this 3-year project that started in January 2007. Key issues to be investigated include how trends in mortality and morbidity will evolve, and if the extra years of life will be lived in good health; the consequences of changes in family circumstances on the availability of informal sources of care and for older people's social participation; and older people's ability to meet care costs. Statistical analyses will increase our understanding of trends in the relationships between the determinants of needs and resources: mortality; disease and disability; household/family formation and kinship; family support and the availability and need for informal care; need for formal care services; accumulation and distribution of income and assets in later life, and how they differ between socio-economic and income groups.

The project will use simulation models to project up to 2030 the numbers, family circumstances, income, pensions, savings, disability and care needs (formal and informal), the key determinants of the resources and needs of older people. Special attention will be given to the inter-relationships between care needs (and their determinants) and economic resources in later life, and to the affordability, and distribution of costs and benefits. For the first time, long-term care and pensions policy reform options may be analysed together - including co-payments systems for long-

term care and proposals in the Government White Paper on pension reform.

The project builds upon models that have already been developed by members of the Research Team at their various institutions and brings them together to improve the range of outputs that each of the models can produce.

The MAP2030 Programme is composed of five linked Work Packages, as is shown by the diagram.



Collaboration between the Work Packages is being led by the aim of providing an integrated picture of the needs and resources of older people.

1. Mortality trends and their implications: to produce a range of alternative forecasts of mortality using a variety of approaches, both overall and specific by variables such as cause of death and marital status using overall and cause-specific mortality rate time series for a number of countries
2. Future disease patterns and their implications for disability in later life: to explore how changes in patterns of diseases (through treatment and prevention) will affect the burden of disability (and hence the need for care) and disability-free life expectancy to 2030 using the MRC Cognitive Function and Ageing Study (CFAS), a total population survey encompassing those within institutions and the only UK longitudinal dataset of sufficient size for less common diseases
3. Changing family units and kinship structure: to provide estimates of number of kin distinguishing important categories, such as partners and numbers of living children - the most important providers of informal care - by sex and marital status of both generations. This involves further development of methods to analyse such kinship networks. Data will include the use of constructed

long-run series of demographic rates and new analysis of surveys such as the General Household Survey (GHS) and the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA)

4. Household and family resources: to model demographic and other determinants of household type and household type transitions, and the associations between family resources, socio-economic circumstances and social participation. Analysis of transitions between different types of household uses the ONS Longitudinal Study and associations between marital status/history and number of children and both family interaction and other forms of social activity/participation uses ELSA and CFAS
5. Projections of pensions, incomes, savings, care (paid and unpaid); expenditure on pensions and long-term care - the key aims are: (1) a set of projections investigating the impact of alternative trends in mortality, disability, household type and the availability of informal care, based on the in-depth work carried out in the other Work Packages and related analyses and improvements to the models in this Work Package; (2) a set of projections under different policy options,

including a unified analysis of pension reforms and long-term care financing reforms, produced in a consistent, joined-up manner. This will show the trade-offs between public and private spending on pensions and long-term care under different policy options. We expect to be able to respond to the changing policy scene to provide analyses of options which may emerge during the course of the project, (3) outputs from the analyses of GHS and ELSA data, beyond those incorporated in the models, will add to the international literature on the relationship between socio-economic resources and receipt of informal care in the context of changing community care policies, facilitating new conceptual thinking about the relationships surrounding receipt of informal and formal care. These will involve development of current models, the Personal Social Services Research Unit's (PSSRU) macro-simulation projections model of long-term care, the dynamic micro-simulation model of care charges, CARESIM, and the Pensions Policy Institute's (PPI) models that investigate different aspects of current pension policy and alternative reform options.

**Website:** [www.lse.ac.uk/collections/MAP2030/](http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/MAP2030/)  
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## Quality of Life (QoL) in Older Age: Psychometric Testing of the Multidimensional Older People's Quality of Life (OPQOL) Questionnaire and the Causal Model of QoL Under-pinning It.



There is policy interest in improving older people's health, activity and participation in society ('active ageing') and, in effect, adding quality to life (QoL). Assessment of the effectiveness of this policy requires the use of relevant and valid measures, based on a conceptually sound model.

The main aims of this proposal are to i) test a new measure of older people's quality of life (OPQOL), and ii) the robustness of the causal model under-pinning it,

**Ann Bowling, University College London**

dynamically as people age. iii) In this process, we will provide detailed information on the dynamic links between influences on QoL, the process of active ageing and the outcome of self-assessed QoL. The model and measure of QoL to be tested were developed from our earlier QoL Survey, funded by the ESRC Growing Older (GO) Programme.

The research thus builds directly on the ESRC GO funded QoL survey. There is no other truly multidimensional measure of QoL, embedded firmly in the perspectives of older people, and integrated with theory, and which is pertinent to active ageing. The research will have the added value of being able to address how to maximise active ageing and thereby QoL in older age. It is intended that our research will develop conceptual knowledge and methodology, the OPQOL will be valid for the evaluation of multi-sector policy on ageing, and for descriptive research, aiming to improve QoL in older age.

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# Transitions, Choices and Health at Older Ages: Life Course Analyses of Longitudinal Data

**David Blane, Imperial College London**

The new dynamics of ageing are being shaped by recent biological and social changes. During the final three decades of the Twentieth Century male life expectancy at age 50 years increased by more than during the century's first seven decades; with similar, although less dramatic, increases for women. This biological shift has created a new phase of the life course, described sometimes as early old age and theorised by some as the Third Age. The social content that is evolving to fill this biological space is the subject of great social and policy interest. The research will investigate two options within this topic and their relationship to health; namely, continuing in paid employment; becoming an informal carer.

The project aims to address three cross-cutting themes: (1) Change over time in the dynamics of health and social position. (2) The emergence and health consequences of new combinations of social and health statuses. (3) The impact of the national policy context. The specific research questions are:

1. Has the relationship between labour force participation at ages over 50 years and health changed in the period 1971-2001? Does the extent of change vary with social position?
2. Do the social (1971-2001) and health (1991-2001) life trajectories of informal carers aged 50 years



and over in 2001 differ from those of non-carers? Do these groups differ in mortality and cancer registration during 2001-2004?

3. Are new combinations of health and social characteristics emerging during the years around the State Pension Age? What are the health consequences of such combinations?
4. Is the relationship between health and labour force participation at ages over 50 years stable internationally; or does it vary with time and welfare state regime?

These questions will be answered using primarily the Office for National Statistics Longitudinal Study, with supporting and complementary analyses of the Scottish Longitudinal Study, the Turin Longitudinal Study and the Finnish Longitudinal Study.

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## Ageing, Well-being and Development. A Comparative Study of Brazil and South Africa.

**Armando Barrientos, University of Manchester**

This research project will examine the dynamic effects of individual ageing on the well-being of older people and their households in Brazil and South Africa, with a view to informing appropriate policies to address the challenges of accelerated population ageing in developing countries. The main hypothesis organizing the research is that the contribution of older people to social and economic development is a primary factor determining the dynamics of their, and their households', well-being. A core feature of the research will be to undertake a longitudinal comparative study of well-being among older persons and their households in South Africa and Brazil, by re-visiting a sample of households with older people from these two countries which participated in a 2002 household survey. The longitudinal dataset combined with in depth interviews will enable the analysis of the dynamics of household income and livelihoods in the two countries, including intergenerational relations and care. Comparison of South Africa and Brazil, two countries with rich social policy environments and recent innovations, will help identify the impact of old age support and existing anti-poverty programmes on the well-being of older people and their households.

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# Detecting and Preventing Financial Abuse of Older Adults: An Examination of Decision-making by Managers and Professionals in Health, Social Care, Banking and Asset Management

Mary Gilhooly, Brunel University

With increasing numbers of cognitively impaired older people being cared for in the community, there are growing challenges associated with money handling. Financial abuse of vulnerable older people is of growing concern. It is equally important to protect professionals and carers from unfair allegations of financial abuse.

The aim of this project is to examine decision-making in relation to the detection of financial elder abuse. The methods and research questions are as follows:

**Phase I** - In-depth interviews, using critical incident methods, with health, social care and banking professionals.

1. What are the cues that trigger suspicions of financial abuse?
2. What 'rules of thumb' are used to deal with these matters?
3. What are the features that make decisions difficult, typical, rare, or unusual?

**Phase II** - Experiments aimed at testing hypotheses about decision-making using case scenarios:

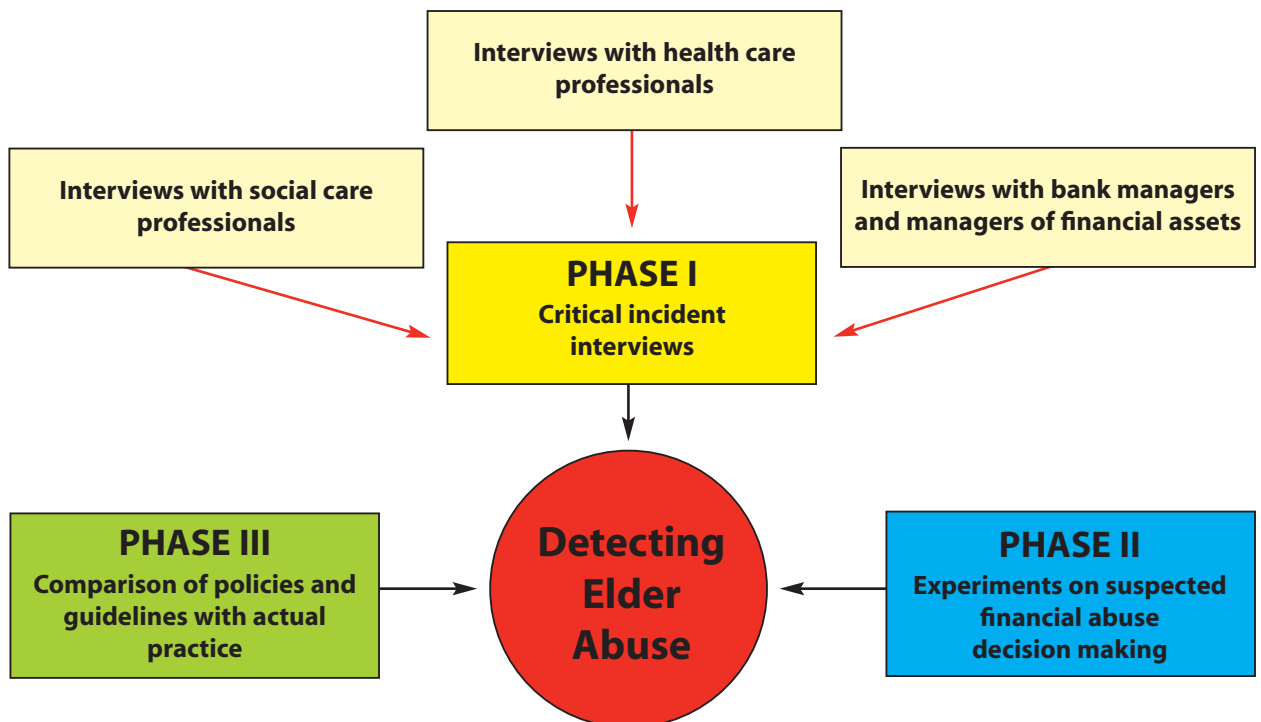
1. Which case features are the most salient in decision-making?
2. Is the decision-maker's gender, ethnicity, age or experience of relevance in decision making?

**Phase III** - Examination of policy documents and guidelines.

1. Are there commonalities in policies and guidelines as to what cues should raise suspicions of financial elder abuse and what should then happen in terms of intervention?
2. To what extent do current policies and guidelines on detecting and intervening in cases of suspected financial elder abuse match what actually happens in situations of real world decision making?

The prime outcome of this study will be guidelines for the detection of financial elder abuse for professionals involved in the provision of care and services. Hence, the ultimate beneficiaries are older people.

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## Maintaining Dignity in Later Life: a Longitudinal Qualitative Study of Older People's Experiences of Supportive Care

Liz Lloyd, University of Bristol

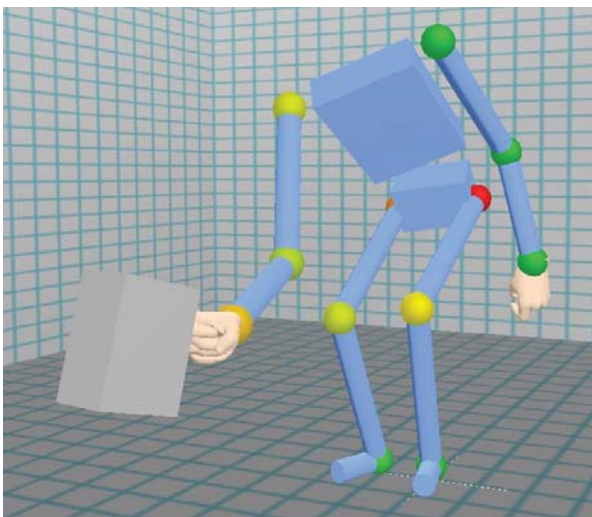
Later life is a time of significant change and challenge. The increased likelihood of bereavement and problems with health and mobility bring death into sharp focus and can pose a threat to older people's autonomy and sense of dignity. The aim of this research is to examine how older people with supportive care needs experience this stage of the life-course, what preparations they make for the end of life and what supports or undermines their sense of dignity. Dignity has become an important principle in the development of services. We understand dignity as encompassing respect, recognition, autonomy, independence and identity. The research will examine how changing circumstances, including increased dependency on others affects participants' sense of dignity.

This is a qualitative study to be carried out over three years with 40 people aged 75+ who will be selected because of their need for support and care. Our view is that this relatively longitudinal approach will enable us to identify how perceptions of dignity change with changing circumstances and how others who provide care and support influence these perceptions. Through its focus on the experiences and perceptions of older participants this research has the potential to enhance our understanding of dignity and be of benefit to health and social care practice.

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## Innovation in Envisioning Dynamic Biomechanical Data to Inform Healthcare and Design Guidelines and Strategy

Alastair Macdonald, Glasgow School of Art



For many older people certain routine tasks associated with daily living are difficult or painful to perform. This research is concerned with gaining benefit from scientific data collected through motion capture and force-plates from 84 older adults in the 60+, 70+ and 80+ age groups each performing 11 separate daily living tasks. This will be visualized in an

innovative format: a graded coloured visual system will show where least or maximum stress occurs at different joints in an animated figure of each individual. An understanding of the points at which the greatest functional demand is placed on joints during a movement cycle will be easily and quickly identified. These visualisations will form the basis for both single-discipline and cross-discipline consultations, and include older people at all stages throughout, through systematically structured interview and focus-group sessions, culminating in a national seminar and workshop supported by the Strategic Programme for Ageing Research Capacity (SPARC). The goal is to facilitate cross-disciplinary discourse in which older adults will also be empowered to participate on an equal basis with specialist disciplines, to influence care and rehabilitation strategies, the design of the built environment, furniture, products and technological devices, and the quality and extent of work and living activities in later life.

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# New Metrics for Exploring the Relationship Between Mobility and Successful Ageing

Lynn McInnes, Northumbria University



Ageing is generally associated with a decrease in mobility and social interaction and this decrease can be dependent upon various health and social factors. However sustained levels of activity are important for successful ageing and for those for whom mobility is a problem suffer in a variety of ways. Social lives can be restricted and the less mobile become more limited in terms of their access to nutrition, leisure and other activities leading to dependence on others for visits to shops and to use other services. This study aims to examine actual mobility patterns of older people by utilising and developing innovative methods including accelerometry and location-aware technologies for mapping the mobility of a surviving cohort of 'oldest old' as they move through their world. These actual mobility reports will be compared with self-reported mobility, cognitive and mental well-being, health, diet and participation in social activities in order to establish the predictors and consequences of mobility amongst the oldest old. These new mobility measures together with indices of

health and lifestyle will also help to identify older adults at risk and, in addition, interventions can be suggested which will have a positive impact on maintenance of mobility for future generations.

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## Ageing, Poverty and Neo-liberalism in Urban South India

Penny Vera-Sanso, Birkbeck College, University of London

The project examines the impact that 16 years of liberalisation and foreign direct investment has had on the lives of older people among the urban poor of Chennai, a South Indian city of over four million residents that is seen as a neo-liberal success story. It addresses economic and demographic issues of particular concern to developing countries: current trends indicate that within the next 23 years the overwhelming majority of the global population aged over 60 will be living in developing countries, that 61% of the global population will be urban and 80% of these will be living in developing countries cities, that the growth of urban slums will double that of urbanisation, that integration into the global economy can deepen inequalities and that neo-liberalism aids the commodification of goods and services. What is not known is what impact these trends are having on the capacity of older people amongst the urban poor to be self-supporting or to access the support of their families, local networks or the state. This research will be the first in-depth, longitudinal study of the impact of liberalisation on the livelihoods and welfare of the older urban poor in a developing country. By analysing data collected by the research team in Chennai (formerly Madras) prior to liberalisation

with that to be collected in 2007-9 the study will: a) chart how the capacity of the older urban poor to be self-supporting or to access family, market-mediated and state resources to supply subsistence has changed under neo-liberalism and b) identify policy measures that could strengthen their capacity to earn a living. The project team comprises: Susan Erb (HelpAge International), Barbara Harris-White (Oxford), V Suresh (Centre for Law, Policy and Human Rights Studies, Chennai); Penny Vera-Sanso (Birkbeck) and two local research assistants.



*Elderly flower vendor in Chennai, South India*

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# Older People's Use of Unfamiliar Space (OPUS)

Judith Phillips, Swansea University



The research explores older people's use and navigation of unfamiliar spaces as drivers, pedestrians and public transport users. It aims to investigate the influences on someone's ability to cope with unfamiliar environments; to examine the extent to which unfamiliar environments curtail autonomy and independence and lead to social (and environmental) exclusion; and to identify the environmental triggers that older people respond to, for example to determine the characteristics of places that makes them

threatening or worrisome. In addition it will explore how technologies can assist in enabling older people to adapt to/ change the environment.

Filming of unfamiliar spaces and routes will be displayed in a virtual reality cave. The filming will take place as a passenger on a bus, as a driver of a car and as a pedestrian in these unfamiliar environments. Older people will be asked to give a detailed narrative as they navigate a route and will be interviewed after the experience. Spatial planners (from the area of filming) will also be interviewed and will interact with older participants in discussing environmental design.

From the information obtained we will develop a prototype GIS/GPS based spatial information tool, which older people will test. The research will also lead to a good practice guide for spatial planners.

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## Families and Caring in South Asian Communities

Christina Victor, University of Reading

Within the next 20 years the proportion of older people living within Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities in the UK will significantly increase. However, there is limited empirical evidence about the lived experiences, social networks and family lives of people growing older within these transnational communities. In particular, we understand little about the interconnections between gender, ethnicity, 'place' and ageing.

The focus of this research project is to document the changing nature of family lives, care and support, social networks, and everyday lives of older people in Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities. In particular, the research aims to explore the participants':

- (1) social identities and levels of participation in transnational and local communities;
- (2) perceptions and experiences of family lives, social networks, 'place' and locality; and (3) own ideas,

meanings and experiences of 'care' and 'support'.

The data collection methods will involve the interconnection of in-depth interviews and visual/written diaries with a diverse group of 60 men and 60 women aged 50 years and over from Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities living in the UK. Data will be thematically analyzed using Atlas Ti. A participatory approach will be taken throughout the research process to ensure that the perspectives and concerns of the participants are central.

The main outcomes from the project will include: increasing participation of Bangladeshi and Pakistani groups in ageing research; dissemination to a wide range of audiences; and important insights about the daily and family lives of Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities living in the UK that can help inform policy and practice.

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## Landscapes of Cross-generational Engagement

**Peter Wright, Sheffield Hallam University**

*Landscapes of cross-generational engagement* responds to the NDA call for ways to enhance people's experiences of growing older through a better understanding of the technological, social and cultural issues of ageing in the twenty first century. Much existing work on digital technologies and older people has concerned devices to ensure people's safety to support 'ageing in place'. Such work is valuable, but runs the risk of casting older people narrowly in terms of frailty and need. Our project aims to undermine age-based stereotyping and encourage cross-generational engagement and participation.

This project will use the design of innovative digital technologies to promote older people's engagement with their physical and social environments and encourage new forms of social interaction between younger and older people and the wider community. This will be done through three case studies which progressively expand the focus of the research from stimulating cross-generational interaction to mobilising cross-generational participation in public affairs. Digital innovations will be designed and developed with the participation in of older and younger people. Designs will be deployed in people's living environments through cooperation with Help The Aged and with selected residential homes. People's experience with our technologies will be documented and evaluated through extensive field study.

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## Promoting Independence and Social Engagement Among Older People in Disadvantaged Communities

**Mike Murray, University of Keele**

This research project aims to increase our understanding of the social and psychological processes involved in promoting independence and social engagement among older people living in disadvantaged communities. The participatory action research design will examine the impact on older people of different forms of community initiatives in particular inner city neighbourhoods. These initiatives include community arts, community health, community health technology and benefit support. A range of both qualitative and quantitative data will be collected from participants throughout the study. The information collected will be reviewed and fed back to the different project teams on an ongoing basis so as to refine the different initiatives and clarify their particular impacts.

The project will be based in the east end of Manchester, a multiply-disadvantaged area which displays the complex problems that are typical of deprived urban communities. The project was developed in partnership with the city council. Working with the city council and relevant agencies the research team also aims to develop policy guidelines for the promotion of active ageing among older people.

The research is interdisciplinary involving researchers with expertise in social and environmental



gerontology, social/community psychology, health services research and nursing. The aim is to build an interdisciplinary understanding of the processes involved in social engagement among older people that is both conceptually and empirically grounded.

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## Sustaining ICT Use Amongst Older People = Sustaining Autonomy for the Future

**Leela Damodaran, Loughborough University**

New ICT-based technologies have tremendous potential to enable older people to live independent, engaged and connected lives. Older people are the fastest growing sector of internet users and this trend is likely to continue as government and commercial service providers make efforts to engage older people in the 'digital world'. Older people who are confident and empowered users of ICTs stand to gain significant benefits from ICT for the full duration of their old age, if their use of ICT can effectively be sustained. A significant threat to this continued use of ICT by older people is their experience of changes in their capabilities and circumstances that may act as a barrier to their access of ICT. A key question for research, therefore, is how to support older people effectively to sustain ICT usage as their capabilities change, to avoid the limitation or curtailment of their ICT use and to continue to access the benefits that ICT can bring, so that they can continue to lead autonomous and independent lives.

Our multi-disciplinary network combines expertise from such varied fields as psychology, computer science, information science, gerontology, learning, e-learning and skills development, e-services, disability and older people's organisations to bring powerful

and innovative solutions to the research problem. Our network also includes close engagement with older people, as we believe that only with the active engagement of older people in the research can the factors involved in the transition of ICT user to non-user be adequately explored and understood.

A series of facilitated workshops have been undertaken, with the aim of enabling participants to share knowledge and experience, identifying knowledge gaps and research problems, building consensus about priorities and developing innovative and proactive ideas for future research and development. The network has been exploring ideas about the dynamic nature of ageing and ICT, and identifying exciting new ways of looking at older people's sustained engagement with ICT. Particular attention has been given to utilising ICT for communication amongst network participants, with use of collaborative software tools for effective network activity.

The network is well on the way to the formation of a research proposal based upon strong and exciting ideas to address the research question.

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## A Life Course Approach to Healthy Ageing

**Diana Kuh, University College London**

This network is developing a collaborative research programme that will use nine UK life course cohort studies for scientific discovery of the lifetime determinants of healthy ageing. The purpose is to transfer knowledge gained in accessible and timely ways so that end users, working with the scientists, can translate this knowledge into opportunities across life to promote healthy ageing. Over 30 UK and international members of this network, including cohort investigators, cross-linking methodologists, specialists in biology, psychology and social ageing, and non-academic partners met for 2 days in March 2007 at Goodenough College London for a stimulating set of presentations and discussions. We agreed the overall structure of programme and work packages and identified project leaders. Our research plans encompass a series of cross cohort studies and we have spent time demonstrating proof of concept through identification and preliminary analyses of comparable data across the nine cohorts. The cohorts represent the full spectrum of the older population, from the oldest old to the post war baby boomers poised to join its ranks. How a life course approach can help understand better how to maintain a population that remains healthy and independent for longer was the subject of a recent editorial by network members in the Journal of Gerontology. We are currently holding a series of small meetings to develop the work packages that focus on aspects of capability, wellbeing and the biology of ageing and innovative ways of delivering our knowledge transfer plans.

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# Working Late: Strategies to Enhance Productive and Healthy Environments for the Older Workforce

**Cheryl Haslam, Loughborough University**



The increasing age of the UK workforce presents new and exciting challenges for organisations and for occupational health services. It is now essential to facilitate an extended working life by maintaining a healthy working environment for older workers.

The 'Working Late' network, established by Professor Cheryl Haslam of the Department of Human Sciences at Loughborough University is developing a major research programme which will lead to significant improvements in understanding the requirements of older workers. The network comprises a multidisciplinary research team from Loughborough University, the Oxford Institute of Ageing and the Institute of Occupational Medicine, Edinburgh. The network also involves partners from The Royal Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA); Age Concern; JMU

Access Partnership; Transport Research Laboratory and The Age Employment Network.

The research will gather empirical evidence on how employers can provide flexible and dynamic working conditions for older workers and for those experiencing mid-life transitions. The role of occupational health services will be investigated to determine how these vital services may be more proactive in tailoring occupational health solutions to the workforce. The research programme will develop and evaluate interventions to improve the health and well-being of older workers. The Loughborough Network will also focus on the journey to work, the design of the built environment and equipment for older workers. This research will lead to workplace design of environments and technologies that accommodate the needs of workers as they age, which will encourage inclusive working environments and remove physical and psychological barriers to work.

The implementation of this innovative research agenda will facilitate a transformation of working practices, support services and the working environment, allowing freedom of access to work and an improvement in the quality of working life of older people.

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## An Integrated Methodology to Quantify the Benefits of Housing Interventions for Older People

### The AIMWELL Project

**Frances Heywood, University of Bristol**

With the focus on both the cost benefits, and the impact upon health and well-being, of interventions in the home environment of older people, the core group was quickly expanded to include a health economist and senior representatives from a Primary Care Trust and a national Government department. To further widen the methodological expertise and interdisciplinary repertoire there was a major consultative event in April 2007 which attracted a range of academic, and non-academic, stakeholders and experts from across the fields of health care, medicine, environmental sciences and engineering, as well as from organisations for older service users. Important outcomes included:





- confirmation of the need for a fundamental evidence base on the housing/health linkage
- identification of many additional elements on how older people manage their housing environment
- a commitment from some group members to sustained involvement in the Project
- a major review of the methodology and design of the research

The group has submitted an outline proposal which will incorporate many innovative features drawing on our experience and expertise within the social sciences and economic evaluation, as well as technical advances in ICT and telemetry. The continued involvement of home improvement providers will ensure that the design is rooted in practice and can be rapidly implemented.

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## The Development of an Interdisciplinary Rural Ageing Research Agenda Using the OPeRA (Older People in Rural Areas) Network

**Catherine Hennessy, University of Plymouth**



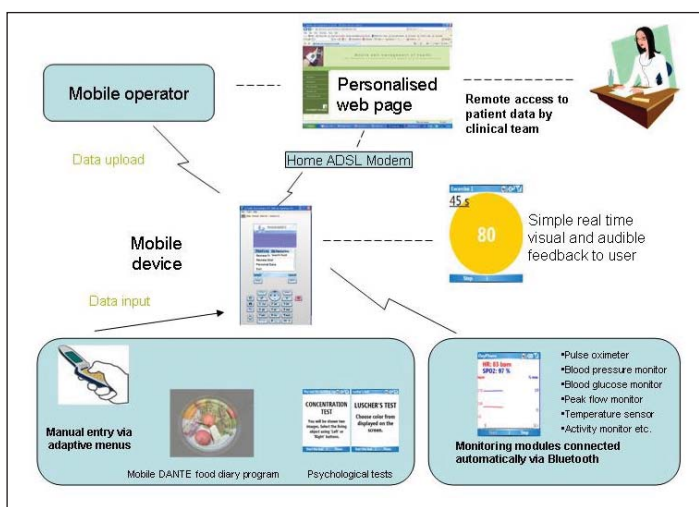
Rural areas have some of the highest rates of population ageing in the UK, however comparatively little research has been done on the impact and implications of the 'greying countryside'. This 12-month NDA Preparatory Network project builds on the capacity of OPeRA (Older People in Rural Areas), an applied research collaboration between three universities in south west England (Bournemouth University, University of Plymouth and University of the West of England) to create an interdisciplinary research programme on rural ageing. The overall focus of the research programme has been defined and developed as **the determinants and impact of older people's involvement in civil society in rural areas**. The project has been carried out based on three strands of input: (1) **an interdisciplinary review of the research literature** on older rural people and civil society covering areas such as older people's contributions to social and cultural capital, and barriers and facilitators to social inclusion in rural settings; (2) **consultation with an Older People's Panel of rural residents** through face-to-face and 'virtual' meetings; and (3) the participation of additional academic and non-academic partners. These include collaborations established with the

University of Cardiff and the University of Swansea to expand the geographic coverage of the research programme, and the engagement of partner organisations relevant to the proposed programme's work packages in addition to existing non-academic alliances (e.g., with South West Regional Development Agency, Age Concern). A typology for differentiating rural areas and a related sampling strategy for selecting candidate areas for the research in England and Wales has been developed by team members at the Wales Rural Observatory and the Countryside and Community Research Institute (UWE/ University of Gloucestershire). The disciplinary coverage of the programme encompasses among other areas gerontology, social and behavioural sciences, rural studies, geography, informatics, the visual arts and heritage studies.

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# Self Management of Chronic Disease in Older People Using Wireless Technologies

Alison Marshall, University of Leeds



Chronic disease is a major, and growing, issue for older people. Current health and social care provision has largely developed in response to demands for acute care. Not only does this provision not meet the needs of modern society, but there is also insufficient resource available to continue in this way. Government policy is to enable people to self manage their illness and lifestyle, for which new ways of working need to evolve. This network is about investigating whether wireless information and communications technologies can facilitate such new ways of working. In particular, we have focused on the use of mobile Smartphones, recognising the mobile as 'the acceptable face of technology' to many lay people. The mobile phone has

the capability to collect data, perform simple analysis and provide feedback, and to transmit this data to remote locations, where clinical and other professionals can access it. The model is summarised in the diagram.

The issues to be investigated in the project include usability issues; data management, integration and control; trust, privacy and security issues; clinical feasibility, economic viability.

Work has focused initially on developing two prototype systems, which can be demonstrated to non-technical partners (both academic and non-academic) leading to more focused (clinical) user evaluation, feedback, further development and full trial. The plan is to use the main phase of the programme to focus on one of these prototypes in a much larger scale trial. The partners will evaluate the prototype within a number of different contexts.

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## Experiences and Uses of Technology in Older Age

Judith Sixsmith, Manchester Metropolitan University

The infiltration of technology into everyday life has progressed at a rapid pace. While technology is usually designed to improve people's lives, its impact is not always beneficial. Research suggests that the psycho-social and organisational effects of technologies are contradictory, especially concerning the health, social care and participation of older people. Whilst technology can *potentially* enhance their access to information/communication and improve quality of life in many ways; it excludes those who cannot gain access to equipment or lack the skills or confidence to use it. Technology can facilitate independent living but there are risks of unintended and harmful consequences as well as exclusion from the benefits that technology could bring.

This preparatory network brings together experts from a range of academic, public and private organizations to explore the individual, psycho-social, engineering and political contexts in which technologies are located. It focuses on providing better understandings of how older people can be supported in accessing and using technology to enhance quality of life. Issues of life course, culture and gender are explored, with implications for policy, product development, new approaches to commercial activities and training and support services. This creative and innovative cross-disciplinary network will facilitate collaborative dialogue promoting the engagement of older people with technologies.

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## Inclusive Work in an Ageing Society – the i~work consortium

Kerry Platman, University of Warwick



More than a million people aged 50 to State Pension Age are currently claiming incapacity benefits. Poor health and disability remain the two most significant barriers to employment among older people. Our i~work consortium brings together academic and practitioner experts in order to address these issues.

The multi-disciplinary team includes engineers, economists and ergonomists, as well as organisational psychologists and designers. We have expertise in health and safety issues; the design of office furniture, lighting and acoustics; in career and training structures; in inclusive design tools and methodologies; and in labour market analysis.

For the last 12 months, we have been working together intensively to bridge our disciplinary boundaries and evolve a shared research agenda. We have undertaken a consultation exercise to engage appropriate stakeholders in order to guide the development of our Collaborative Research Proposal and to develop a ground-breaking, integrated approach to the challenge of achieving longer, healthier working lives.

Our network is underpinned by two overarching frameworks, that of Inclusive Design and of Workability. Inclusive Design allows us to investigate the specific needs and preferences of older workers, whilst providing better workplace solutions for all ages. Core partners include the University of Warwick, the Health and Safety Laboratory, the Royal College of Art, the University of Nottingham, the University of Surrey, the International Longevity Centre-UK and the University of Cambridge.

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## Smart Clothing for Older People

Jane McCann, University of Wales, Newport

Serious questions are currently being raised as to how society will care for older generations. It now seems likely that older people will be encouraged to live independently, relying upon new technological innovations to support their autonomy. Smart clothing of the future will be able to monitor an individual's vital signs; determine body movement, posture and geographical location; regulate temperature; offer impact protection from falls and communicate this information to care providers.

Clothing for older people can benefit from the 'new revolution' in textile and clothing manufacture and the embedding of micro-electronics. The current markets for clothing and electronics are separate and with quite different cultures and terminology. Medical devices are developed with little aesthetic appeal for 'ill people'. Technological advances are not readily accepted by older people due to badly designed interfaces, which often have small controls or displays that are difficult to read.

Emerging electronic and textile related technologies are confusing to traditional clothing and textile

development teams, while electronics and medical experts are not normally conversant with textile and clothing technology. Appropriate technologies need to be selected and merged from the choice of fibre and fabric assemblies through to near market prototypes.

The aim of the network is to define a methodology for the application of emerging smart clothes and wearable technologies, which enable older people to enjoy better quality lives. The network fosters new multidisciplinary partnerships, embracing expertise from: independent experts, university research groups, textile and garment developers, wearable computing, telecommunications, product design, interaction design, policy makers, health care professionals and user groups. The network is committed to facilitating end-user involvement and encouraging older users of health and social care services to work directly within the network. We also gain views, opinions and expertise from wider 'older people' advisory groups.

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# KISS – Keeping Individuals Safe and Secure : Safety and Security for Older People

Rachel McCrindle, University of Reading



The aim of the Keeping Individuals Safe and Secure network is to form a multidisciplinary team to identify, assess and prioritise threats relating to safety and security that occur during the day-to-day lives of older people and how such threats can affect their independent living and quality of life.

Research has consistently shown that the majority of older people want to continue to live independently at home for as long as possible and public policy across a variety of different countries supports this objective, an important dimension of which is to

promote the safety and security of older people. This is illustrated within the WHO (World Health Organisation) conceptualisation of 'active' ageing that identifies the significance of safety and security to the quality of life of older people. There is little research that directly explores older peoples' everyday lives, frames this in terms of safety and security and explores potential solutions.

In a typical day, an older person will undertake many activities – some vital and common and some more exceptional and sporadic. Each presents a potential threat to their safety and security. Such threats may be related to an older person's well-being, home, environment or other people that they come into contact with, and events such as crime, falling, illness, isolation, abuse etc., which if they happen require additional support for the older person and can reduce their quality of life.

Throughout the past year, the KISS network has actively engaged older people so that the priorities they identify can inform and shape the research agenda. We have explored these issues via self completion questionnaires, focus groups and workshops, undertaken with diverse groups of older people to enable comparison across key characteristics, such as, levels of dependency, rural/urban and socio-demographic factors.

Based on analysis of our results we have developed a model of factors relating to safety and security of older people and their quality of life and in relation to this we are currently developing our CRP to develop innovative solutions to address the issues of most concern.

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# Cultural Perception and Adherence to Exercise and Nutritional Interventions in Older Individuals

Claire Stewart, Manchester Metropolitan University



Ageing is associated with loss of skeletal muscle and gains in body fat. These changes lead to decreased mobility, metabolism, independence, quality of life (QoL) and ultimately increased morbidity and mortality. Declining metabolic reserves in older age also impact on an individuals' potential to recover from acute or chronic trauma. Therefore, the ultimate objectives of this network, are to tackle issues of muscle wasting and frailty associated with a lack of adequate exercise and nutrition in order to ensure an optimal quality of older life. We aim to advance our understanding of the dynamics of ageing from a molecular/endocrine perspective and to evaluate the impact that exercise and nutrition have on this process. Derived data together with essential input from our older populations will be used to devise exercise/nutrition interventions which will reduce muscle wasting and enhance muscle mass and strength and therefore improve the functional reserves, recovery and QoL of said populations. Finally, we plan to implement our findings through the development of feasible policies targeted directly at our population group. We propose to explore how individual influences (physiology, lifestyle and nutrition), affect the perception of successful ageing, the interaction between chronological and biological age and the ability to recover from trauma. We propose not only to raise awareness of this gap in current knowledge, but also to design and implement feasible, yet innovative interventions and policies. Our protocol seeks to develop a future where not only older members of the public but also hospitals, GPs, social workers and policy makers have a well-rounded knowledge of fitness and nutrition therapies targeted at healthy older ageing and recovery.

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## NDA Programme Advisory Committee

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**Professor Chris Carey**, University College London

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**Mr Mark Gorman**, HelpAge International

**Ms Tessa Harding**, Help the Aged

**Professor David Leon**, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

**Professor Janet Lord**, University of Birmingham

**Dr Carol Lupton**, Department of Health

**Mr Tony Martin**, Department for Work and Pensions

**Ms Sam Mercer**, Employers Forum on Age

**Professor Naina Patel**, PRIAE Policy Research Institute on Ageing and Ethnicity

**Professor Chris Phillipson**, Keele University

**Professor Anthea Tinker**, Kings College London



**Baroness Sally Greengross (Chair)**

## NDA Older People's Reference Group

The Programme has established an Older People's Reference Group to:

- advise the Director on older people's perspectives
- provide a resource for Projects
- be proactive in ensuring that the Programme maximises benefits for older people

This group was established in conjunction with Help the Aged. A fuller report on the work of the group will be included in the next newsletter.

## Forward Look

There are three further rounds of commissioning before the NDA Programme is fully constituted:

- A second call for collaborative research projects (outline applications by 15 November 2007, full applications in March 2008 and Commissioning Panel in June 2008).
- An Ideas Factory focussing on the New Dynamics of Nutrition for Older People in January 2008.
- A second call for programme grants in April 2008.



If you would like to receive further copies of the **nda**news and/or future ones please let us know. Also comments on the content and design of the **nda**news would be welcome.

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