

Delivering *A Sure Start to Later Life*:
exploring new models of neighbourhood
services for older people

Counsel and Care project report

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Foreword

In January 2008 I was honoured to officially open Helena Lane centre in Ludlow. It is one of a series of community-based, multi-service centres for older people being created by Shropshire County Council.

This is something that Counsel and Care has been championing over the last three years. We have been looking at how we might create 'Sure Start for older people' using the same principles that have led to the development of Sure Start for children and families – providing a single gateway to services that are both universal and targeted; involving older people, their families and carers; highly visible in the local community; joining up a range of services; reaching people early and reaching out into the local community, into people's homes, reducing social isolation. Above all, access is key.

More and more we hear about the problems older people face getting the care and support they need. It's one of the main reasons why people contact Counsel and Care's advice service.

So I was pleased to see an example of how Shropshire is leading the way at Helena Lane and taking a different approach. Helena Lane is pioneering in many ways – the range of facilities and support; the focus on prevention, supporting independence and delivering quality care; preventing unnecessary hospital admissions and saving money; the accessibility and bringing together of the facilities; outreach in a rural area; provision of services like advocacy and chiropody; IT and a fabulous café. Two other key ingredients have been the involvement of older people from the very beginning and the financing and partnership behind the centre. Such an initiative as this centre is impossible without the involvement, leadership, energy and drive of lots of different people and organisations.

Our vision is to have Helena Lane-type centres in every community across the country. The Government is rolling out 3,500 Sure Start children's centres across the country, one in every neighbourhood. I would like to see the same scale of development for older people. And one challenge is how we might bring the two programmes together and create centres for all ages – building on children's centres, building on what is already happening for older people, and really serving all generations. In so doing, we can create caring neighbourhoods for all ages and build stronger, safer communities.

That's our vision for the future. But it's much more than a vision. It is possible because as this report demonstrates, so much is already going on. We explored three different potential models for developing Sure Start to Later Life at the neighbourhood level. I hope this report encourages national and local policymakers to pursue the Sure Start approach.

Counsel and Care is grateful to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation for funding this project and to all who participated and contributed.

Stephen Burke
Chief Executive
Counsel and Care

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Introduction

In 2005 the Government's Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) was tasked with developing analysis to tackle exclusion amongst older people. The experience of exclusion can be particularly acute in later life for three reasons. First, it is generally the case that people who experience social exclusion in mid-life find it difficult to break the cycle of exclusion in later life: indeed it can often become more acute. Secondly, the impact of key life events, such as bereavement, can lead people to become excluded. Thirdly, the impact of age discrimination on both the aspirations of individuals and the environment within which they operate can lead to exclusion.

We need better ways to re-connect older people with their communities. For most people and particularly for older people, living in a strong, open community is desirable. Knowing your neighbours, being able to trust people you meet on the street, being able to rely on others are all important for quality of life. Yet growing numbers of older people are living isolated, lonely lives.

A Sure Start to Later Life

The SEU report, *A Sure Start to Later Life: Ending Inequalities for Older People*, was published in January 2006 and it aimed to tackle the social exclusion faced by some 1.2 million older people. Key in the report is a recognition that all too often exclusion is compounded by the failure of services to react to the complexity of exclusion both at earlier stages of the life course and in old age.

It is argued that the approach of Sure Start in galvanising communities and reshaping children's services could work just as well for older people, including the most vulnerable and the most excluded. The Sure Start model provides an opportunity for bringing the right kind of services together in the right place, so that older people are enabled to participate fully in their community.

The principles underlying the Sure Start approach, which can be applied to the provision of older people's services, include ensuring that there are services for everyone and promoting well-being and independence. Sure Start is about making it easier for people to access services through a single gateway; focusing on early intervention rather than crisis; reaching out to excluded people through a 'hub and spoke' model; engaging and involving people; and delivering at a neighbourhood level close to where people live.

The vision is of Sure Start centres as a focal point of the local community, not just for older people but the wider community as a whole. The centre will be a place that offers a range of services. From older people dropping in for a cup of tea and a chat, to continuing education, leisure activities, advice, advocacy and

benefit take-up. In addition, the centres can be a point of access for a range of social, care and health services. This offers a one-stop, individually tailored approach to service delivery, with a key focus on social inclusion, participation and prevention.

The centre will be staffed and run by local people who can respond to the needs of the local community. This will provide a physical base from which communities can be built and sustained – in essence they will be community centres that reach out into the community and older people’s homes. Outreach is crucial to meet the needs of those older people who are isolated in their own homes.

Some communities already have such places and, historically, many of our strongest communities have had a range of such facilities. But, with an increasingly fractured and individualised society, we need to encourage providers to co-ordinate their services better and to involve the voluntary and community sector (VCS).

A Sure Start approach will have a strong emphasis on preventative services and will allow problems to be picked up early to avoid the need for costly interventions later on. Involvement of voluntary and community organisations in Sure Start centres will be crucial to their success. There are activities, like befriending services and outreach, that the VCS often does better. Specific examples of programmes run by community organisations aimed at helping the most excluded older people are highlighted in *A Sure Start to Later Life*.

Following the SEU report, eight local authorities are piloting the Sure Start approach through LinkAge Plus pilots. The eight pilots cover a variety of settings from rural counties to inner cities:

- Devon County Council
- Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council
- Gloucestershire County Council
- Lancaster City Council
- Leeds City Council
- London Borough of Tower Hamlets
- Nottinghamshire County Council
- Salford City Council.

Lifetime Neighbourhoods

The concept of Lifetime Neighbourhoods also has a place in the *Sure Start to Later Life* approach. Creating homes and neighbourhoods that are good places to age within is part of Counsel and Care's wider vision of care and support for older people, their families and carers. A 2007 report from the International Longevity Centre notes that planners need to have much more awareness of the concept of Lifetime Neighbourhoods if they are to ensure the social inclusion of all citizens, whatever their age.¹

The care debate

Care, and in particular social care, has climbed to the top of the government agenda over the last three years. Following a Green Paper on social care, and a subsequent White Paper on delivering better health and social care - *Our health, our care, our say* – the Comprehensive Spending Review of 2007 promised a 'radical rethink' of how social care is funded and delivered.²

The focus has finally shifted to one of prevention, an approach which organisations, including Counsel and Care, have been calling for in policy papers and campaigns. Counsel and Care's paper *Real Choice, Real Voice: older people in control* looked at a range of low-level services such as advice, information and advocacy, and telecare, as mechanisms by which older people can remain in their homes for longer, thus saving on higher acute treatment costs and higher dependency in later life. *Real Choice, Real Voice* made a range of recommendations, including:

- That government “invest to save” in preventative services. The Older People’s Inquiry into *That bit of help* and the *Sure Start to Later Life* approach clearly show that in the long run, with a preventative approach, older people can remain at home for longer whilst maintaining their physical health and emotional well-being.
- The paper also called for government to roll out the lessons from the pilots on Individual Budgets, LinkAge Plus, and Partnerships for Older People. For commissioners, it was recommended that they work more closely with older people, their families and carers, as well as providers in allowing older people themselves to design their own menu of care options.³

¹ ILC-UK *Towards Lifetime Neighbourhoods: Designing sustainable communities for all*. Department of Communities and Local Government, November 2007

² Department of Health (2006) *Our health, our care, our say: a new direction for community services*, DH, London.

³ Social Exclusion Unit (2006) *A Sure Start to Later Life: Ending Inequalities for Older People*. ODPM, London

Exploring new models of neighbourhood services

In this context, Counsel and Care undertook a policy/research project to look at three innovative models for delivering better neighbourhood services for older people to create *A Sure Start to Later Life*.

The project aimed to identify examples of these three models from across the country, interview agencies and older people involved about what works and why, examine the financing of these schemes and monitor impact, highlight lessons for roll-out, and publish and promote good practice through a report and national event.

The project explored three particular models:

- **Extra care sheltered housing** – where schemes act as the hub for services for scheme residents and the local community, and services are delivered to older people living close by in their own homes. This would help integrate sheltered schemes into the wider community and benefit older residents living locally. The project would seek to identify the key requirements of success for such schemes, in terms of engagement, resources, staffing and service provision. Counsel and Care is already working with housing providers, such as Hanover and Housing 21, which run schemes across the country that involve the wider community, local schools etc.
- **Children’s centres** – with 3,500 Sure Start children’s centres being developed in every neighbourhood across the country, some centres could deliver services that meet the needs of older people as well as children and families. Building on this infrastructure, children’s centres could become real community centres and promote intergenerational understanding and activities. The project would identify what is needed to successfully adjust the use of existing children’s centres for a wider purpose. The chief executive of Counsel and Care was previously director of Daycare Trust, the national childcare charity which promoted children’s centres.
- **Neighbourhood watch** – crime and the fear of crime has a major effect on many older people’s quality of life; neighbourhood policing has focused on visible policing alongside tackling other quality of life issues such as the local environment. Neighbourhood watch schemes are involving older people with younger people to build stronger communities. Identifying how such schemes are established and coordinated to be most effective would be a key aim. Counsel and Care worked with the Mayor of London (as part of his older people’s strategy) on a national conference in 2007 on reducing the fear of crime amongst older people and promoting intergenerational projects.

Methodology

The project was undertaken using a combination of methods. After searches online and through other organisations to identify possible examples, contact was made with projects to seek their permission to include them in the research. Where groups of older people were to be interviewed, access was gained via a gatekeeper who arranged for the older people to be available for meetings, and the researcher undertook the investigation using a 'participant observation' approach.

Other methods used were questionnaire, to identify extra care housing schemes that were being used by residents and the local community. The questionnaires were piloted, and then sent to schemes selected by the housing association's research manager, where they were completed by the scheme manager.

To identify examples of intergenerational neighbourhood watch schemes, a combination of internet searches and conversations with local Crime Concern schemes provided examples of projects that had been successful in bringing older and younger people together to form relationships and improve understanding between generations, ultimately reducing the fear of crime by older people in the locality. Children's centres were identified through national childcare organisations, including 4Children.

Structure of the report

Section One of this report will look at the models set out above and the examples we found of extra care housing and day centres being used as a community resource centres for both older people and children, and children's centres and neighbourhood watch schemes that encourage intergenerational understanding. **Section Two** will focus on learning points from the project, and discuss challenges faced in carrying out the project. In **Section Three**, the report our 'vision' for delivering *A Sure Start to Later Life*, and gives our recommendations, based on the findings of this research. Finally, our **conclusions** look at the impact of *A Sure Start to Later Life*, and the challenges that local services will have to face if they are to better meet the needs of older people, their families and carers.

Section One: The three models of extra care housing, children's and adult day centres, and neighbourhood watch schemes

Extra care sheltered housing

Counsel and Care contacted three providers of extra care housing that provide services for the community through their schemes. The aim was to discover whether such service provision contributes effectively to delivering the *Sure Start to Later Life* approach.

Services provided in these schemes for the wider community included exercise classes, alternative therapies, lunch clubs and coffee mornings, as well as social activities such as parties in the scheme or group outings. For example, some schemes provide consulting rooms for local GP visits, hair salons, and day care centres.

A number of factors were attributed to the success of these initiatives, with one of the key factors being partnership working with local authorities and other agencies, to enable the fulfilment of local authority strategies and the wider objectives of all partners. One provider defined extra care housing's role as:

'...first and foremost providing older people with their own home to maximise independence.'

Forward thinking is another way in which community activities in extra care schemes can be successful – for example, ensuring that scheme managers network with partners before the scheme opens. This is particularly important in rural areas where it is important to understand the local needs of residents.

The benefits identified by providers of working with local partners to offer these services include fulfilling the aims of the housing provider in helping older people to maintain their independence, and for all partners to provide services that share costs, venues and staff. Challenges were identified as differing priorities between agencies when it is not made clear what the targets and delivery standards are at the outset, and identifying what the needs are at the initial stages.

When introducing new activities, consultation with existing residents and local representatives is vital. The provider also needs to be confident that the activity is properly resourced, and that it is providing something new that could not be offered in another day centre/scheme in close proximity. One of the extra care housing provider's tenants set up their own tenants' association to act as a conduit to other tenants for consultations.

The providers were asked about barriers to extending community services and how they overcame these barriers. All providers cited information and consultation as ways in which concerns could be alleviated, as well as allowing residents to adjust to the changes. There is also a benefit to residents of extra care schemes as charges for activities in schemes can be offset against the service charge, thus offering a financial incentive. Barriers tended to be more of an issue in ordinary sheltered housing than in extra care schemes.

Providers were questioned about the LinkAge Plus pilots that advocate the use of older volunteers as 'navigators' to help arrange and support services for their peers. Whilst all providers felt that the use of older volunteers was a positive move, none could offer any examples of older volunteers in their existing schemes. All were agreed, however, that older volunteers could be used providing they were properly trained, were naturally engaged with the local community, and could integrate well with tenants.

In terms of resourcing and funding, most providers would welcome dedicated funding for staff – one provider preferred taking a community development approach with a manager and support staff to deliver the services in schemes. Another provider suggested borrowing staff from other agencies at nil cost. The third provider noted that tenants themselves managed their own social fund to pay for outgoings such as fees charged by a fitness instructor – if the tenants want the activity, they themselves need to raise the funding for it.

Overall, the providers' vision for the future is to provide additional and more diverse services to the wider community, for people to be able to live out their lives in the setting of their choice, and for more older people to become more involved as advocates and befrienders. Ultimately, extra care housing was seen as a model for maintaining independence and an alternative to residential care for those who choose it.

Hanover Housing Association has some innovative partnership working at their new extra care scheme – Marina Court in Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire. It is mixed tenure with 75 units of flats and bungalows, with funding from the Department of Health and involving the county council and primary care trust. There are a range of the usual facilities, including a 24/7 onsite care provider and midday meal. There is also a therapy and well-being suite licensed to community and adult social care, with a coordinator developing activities including health clinics for after strokes and falls, and visiting holistic therapists. A greenhouse has also been funded to provide horticultural therapy and even lunch.

Adult day centres: Interviews with older people

Twenty older people in total were interviewed in groups at two London locations, both day centres for older people. Some of the group members had been involved with social services, others had not. The aim of the meeting was to discover whether this group of older people would understand and embrace the *Sure Start to Later Life* concept and how it can improve services for older people by joining up different services with a single point of access. Group discussions were chosen to encourage participants to express their views, foster discussion and stimulate others to join the discussion.

Both day centres provide an array of services in the multi-purpose built centres, ranging from exercise skills, legal advice, health checks, intergenerational and outreach work. This clearly identifies that there are services within the community that already have the foundation for the *Sure Start to Later Life* concept.

The intention was to bring together a mixture of cultures and diverse needs. It was hoped that the older people would come from mixed ethnic backgrounds, be of varying ages, and be both male and female. However, the people that attended were mostly white British and female.

The seating in the rooms in which the meetings took place was adjusted to a more intimate format, to allow those older people who had hearing difficulties to participate fully. For such people, open discussion from a distance was unsuitable as they needed to be close enough to hear other speakers. It was important that each older person present was able to contribute to the discussion.

Overview of the discussions with older people

One older person expressed feelings of exclusion because she did not have the knowledge about the services available to her.

'I did not have any family or friends to call upon, so I have looked after my husband for many years without any support from Social Services'.

Participants wanted to see:

- Better coordination of services
- Further investment in services
- Knowledge about services on offer

- Redevelopment of a clinic due to the closure of a local clinic which meant older people have to travel further
- Better regulations for care homes where older people are being looked after
- More activities in their day centre due to a number of cuts following diversification of funding.

The majority of participants had not to date used statutory or community services because they were not yet required. Therefore, there was no need for services beyond what was already available. In contrast, those who were involved with statutory and non-statutory services could potentially see the benefits of the *Sure Start to Later Life* concept. Overall, participants thought that there was a need for better quality of services and more outreach workers, rather than developing a new concept.

The important point that came out of the interviews was that the participants focused on basic needs such as health, finance, shelter and warmth, and generally felt that services were readily available in their community if they wanted them. In their view, the *Sure Start to Later Life* concept is a good one in theory, and the possible benefit of this lies in the outreach workers attending their homes to provide the necessary support, advice and information. Participants were also concerned about the practicalities of the home visiting service, in particular how long they would have to wait for the outreach worker to make the required visit, i.e. on an ad hoc or appointment basis.

Therefore, the additional provision of services was not high on participants' agendas for two reasons:

1. The local community centre already provides services for their social and practical needs.
2. Other services were available within their local area. Participants felt they could access the services as required.

A few participants felt that they would not like to attend these specific centres if they were aimed at deprived older people, as individuals would be focusing on their problems, thus creating a negative atmosphere.

Key findings:

- Over half of the older people cited strong family networks as their first indicator of a good quality of life, with health and well-being cited high as another factor. It was surprising that a higher percentage of older people did not cite strong family networks as a number one preference, but this could be attributed to this need already being met, as on the whole only a few older people interviewed did not have any family support.
- The majority of the older people welcomed the *Sure Start to Later Life* concept and also felt that they were included as a part of society, although they did not feel equal to younger people.
- The community centres that they attended at least twice a week, and on some occasions more frequently, had become the 'hub' for their required needs. There were a few older people who did not have any family or friends to call upon for support, so used the centre to extend their social network, whilst creating a link within the community.
- The majority of the older people present acknowledged that if they had mobility needs, or were housebound, they may feel differently about the *Sure Start to Later Life* concept, because accessing services would become much harder. The need in this case was not for additional services but the delivery, further investment and knowledge about the services on offer.

Case Studies

Better transport is critical to inclusion

One older person who had mobility needs was more in tune with the lack of provision in the community, and raised the issue of transportation because she was no longer able to use the local bus service. She has the use of a mobility scooter and frequently pre-books Dial-a-Ride when it is possible to do so, but she has found the service unreliable, so has limited its use. This is inclusive of the Concessionary Taxi Scheme. She noted restrictions for those with particular health needs or those wishing to visit a place of their choosing.

Another older person had also experienced similar difficulties with Dial-a-Ride and felt that this service was uncoordinated. Pre-booking was required well in advance of the expected ride, therefore any unplanned journeys could not be catered for. The inevitability of ill health also made this very difficult to coordinate.

In conclusion, although the majority of older people initially embraced the *Sure Start to Later Life* concept, the focus was not the need for a 'hub' of services, rather the need was fundamentally about the quality, efficiency, practicality, investment, coordination, delivery and knowledge about services on offer. It was evident that those who were involved, or who have been involved with statutory services were more positive about the plan than those who had little or no contact. This also applied to those who were in a better state of health.

Children's centres

3,500 Sure Start children's centres are being developed across England by 2010, with the aim of having a centre in every neighbourhood. Centres bring together a range of services for young children and their parents; engage families and also reach out to excluded families. Core services include childcare and early education, health and family support, and employment services. Successful centres often have community café facilities and are closely linked to other community resources and to local schools.

Many older people are already involved in children's centres as community activists, as volunteers and as grandparents or great-grandparents. But the creation of 3,500 centres provides an opportunity to develop centres that also serve and include older people across the country. In London, the first intergenerational centre is currently being developed around a children's centre. At the same time, children's information services are increasingly becoming family information services to provide easily accessible information and advice to people of all ages.

Greenwich

The Quaggy Children's Centre in Lewisham is run by a local development trust, which has extensive experience of cross-generational projects. These include, for example, projects on 'where we live', 'healthy eating', 'mapping the local environment' and 'play', which have culminated in an exhibition. Activities include children singing to older people, parents cooking Christmas dinner for older people, and developing social events and projects together. Other local projects include photography, with children and older people recording their lives; people sharing their favourite recipes and making a book; parents volunteering in the older people's lunch club; older people volunteering in the centre with storytelling and gardening; winter warmer sessions for the whole community; a food cooperative and local carnival. The Quaggy Children's Centre is based at Morden Mount School in Lewisham and so is well placed to foster cross-generational activity. Greenwich Council plans to extend this approach to

another local children's centre. Sharing food and sharing local history seem to be two key ingredients for the centre's success, while improved mental health in all generations is seen as a key outcome.

Norwich – the Vauxhall Centre children's centre

The Vauxhall Centre children's centre has recently opened but is based in an adult social services centre that has been in operation for more than 30 years. The centre has served disabled adults and older people, providing a range of day centre services and increasingly attracting other facilities such as IT to make the centre sustainable. The management committee of service users were fully involved in the integration of the children's centre. The wide range of resources, from café to gym, are available to people of all ages and the partnership will ensure that the centre continues to thrive in Norwich. The adults using the centre are now providing a hitherto untapped resource to support children and their families.

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

These examples were gleaned by way of a combination of internet research, subsequent interviews with project leaders, and one to one meetings with Crime Concern, who in July 2007 shared some of their intergenerational projects at a Counsel and Care conference on crime and older people held in London.

Fishburn in Bloom, Durham

A Neighbourhood Watch scheme in Durham was instrumental in establishing the Durham Intergenerational Programme. Part of the programme, started in April 2003 and funded until June 2006, was 'Fishburn in Bloom'. This challenged isolation and promoted social inclusion by bringing together older and younger people through exchange of skills and experiences, in different projects and activities.

Fishburn in Bloom, started by Age Concern Durham, helped older and younger people to plant flowers, shrubs and thousands of daffodil and crocus bulbs. The town was runner-up for the 'Northumbria in Bloom' competition in 2004.

A good working relationship has developed with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership as well as the police and local Primary Care Trust. The project has helped improve understanding between young and old, reducing fear of crime and promoting social inclusion.

Shipley, near Bradford, West Yorkshire

This project was not under the auspices of Neighbourhood Watch, but the Shipley area has been doing a lot of work to enhance community cohesion and safety, including intergenerational projects.

Its Neighbourhood Action plan has been doing innovative work to engage with local residents and help address priority issues such as difficulties between older and younger residents and issues relating to community safety.

Funding was obtained for "Make it Happen", an intergenerational reminiscence project for the over-60s and older schoolchildren. The theme was 'Our Street', and the generations shared memories and experiences of how it was then and now. Out of this came small pieces of drama, writing, pictures and photographs.

The project was very successful and more events are taking place, where the generations can meet and help break down barriers.

Crime Concern has also undertaken some projects which aim to improve neighbourhood relations between older and younger people. One of these, Community Mediation, a countywide community service in Suffolk, held a meeting in a village north of Ipswich, and addressed the fear of crime felt by older people and the concerns of young people who have nowhere to meet friends or to play ball games.

The meeting was set up by Crime Concern, and was attended by 16 people including seven young people, parents, local older residents and the parish councillor. As would be expected, there was some initial awkwardness between participants at the start of the meeting. However, Crime Concern reports that good preparation beforehand helped to ensure good attendance and a productive discussion followed. The older residents expressed the impact the behaviour of the young people was having, and this was taken on board. The result of the meeting was that the parish councillor agreed to look into the possibility of laying an all-weather surface with lights for the young people to play ball games; the young people also agreed to keep noise down after 10pm.

Surrey Avenue Neighbourhood Watch, Slough

This project was formed by two local residents when an older neighbour complained of being bullied by a nearby family. Seventy-six families work together to watch around 12 houses. The initiative has formed good community relations and helped drive down crime. The group holds street parties, organises competitions for local young people, and publishes a regular newsletter. Surrey

Avenue was the winner of the neighbourhoodwatch.net Group of the Month competition.

Both publications and details of the Surrey Avenue project can be downloaded free from: <http://www.neighbourhoodwatch.net/>

Section Two: Learning Points and Challenges

When embarking on any new project, there are inevitable challenges – and these challenges provide lessons that can be taken forward into new pieces of work. There were changes in personnel that meant that the project was taken over by another researcher; however the project management stayed constant throughout, enabling the final report to be completed.

Counsel and Care held a conference on *A Sure Start to Later Life* in November 2007, which helped inform learning. This final report is published at Counsel and Care's annual conference in February 2008.

Learning Points

In terms of the actual research methodology, three main lessons were learned:

- One of the learning points was that in group discussion forums, there is a need to allow for all possible eventualities, such as participants being unable to stay for the entire discussion. Future work could be done over a longer period of time to allow for maximum participation.
- In order to gather the maximum amount of information, it is important to use existing networks, and to use them early in the project. Groups such as the Housing Learning and Information Network (Housing LIN) provided a plethora of examples of extra care sheltered housing being used to provide services to the wider community.
- Another lesson was the need for persistence when seeking contact with a project. As set out below, because many of the gatekeepers to projects were busy, and due to staff turnover, contacts made at the start were not always available throughout the life of the project.

What went well

- Organisations where Counsel and Care had already built up a good relationship were only too pleased to participate. Having a relationship at a high level in the organisation was crucial, as this meant that less senior staff had an incentive to participate as a direction from their line managers.

Challenges

- One of the main challenges faced in completing this project was actually gaining access to the information sought. Most of the research involved 'cold calling' schemes to ask whether they were willing to participate in the project, and whilst many were willing, the sheer 'busyness' of the gatekeepers involved caused a delay in gathering information, some of which, despite being promised and chased on a number of occasions, was never delivered. This meant that the researchers had to look elsewhere for examples, which took up additional time.

Taking the learning forward: good practice points for each area

As mentioned above, the lessons learned provide a good basis for future work. This project identified good practice which should be shared with other stakeholders to encourage services which benefit older people's lives and provide holistic services.

- **Consultation and involvement** is absolutely key – whether in extra care housing, day centres, or in ordinary housing. Any model for delivering the Sure Start approach to older people will only work if they themselves are asked what they want and need and are involved in its development and delivery.
- **Diversity – in services** – is another area of good practice. Counsel and Care's recent updated publication *Not only Bingo* focuses on social activities in care homes, but the principles are the same whatever the setting. When providing community services in extra care housing, it is important that the interests of all residents are catered for as far as possible.
- **Maintaining social networks** is another area that is important to address problems of isolation. By using day centres and children's centres, older people can engage in intergenerational activity, make new friends and remain in touch with old ones.

The comments made by older people in the day centres is that they felt excluded and did not always know where to access services, and concerns about funding cuts show clearly that the 'radical rethink' about care needs to involve older people themselves. As the Green Paper on social care is developed, it will be crucial that older people in every setting are able to participate and contribute.

Section Three: Our 'vision' for delivering *A Sure Start to Later Life*

This report aimed to look at three models that exist in many of Britain's communities – extra care sheltered housing, day centres for adults and children, and neighbourhood schemes. Our 'recommendations' for each are more a 'vision' based on the views of extra care housing provider representatives, those attending and managing day centres for adults and children, and project managers of successful neighbourhood watch schemes involving different generations.

Extra care housing

In future, extra care housing should:

- Provide additional and more diverse services to the community
- Be another option for older people to live out their lives in the setting of their choice
- Encourage older people both in the scheme and in the community to become advocates and befrienders to their peers
- Become a model for maintaining independence and an alternative to residential care

Day centres

Older people using day centres wanted to see:

- Better investment in the services provided within the centre
- Better access to information on what is provided locally
- Better information about services provided more widely
- Equality for older people

Children's Centres

With 3,500 children's centres being established, there are opportunities to involve and serve older people:

- Develop intergenerational activities
- Involve older people as volunteers
- Use centres as the base or hub for older people's services
- Create family information advice and support
- Support carers across the generations

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

Overall, successful neighbourhood watch schemes had one thing in common: the commitment of both older and young people to address existing problems. Crime Concern reported that in its schemes there were a number of factors that ensured better relations between generations and a subsequent reduction in the fear of crime:

- Partnership working
- Openness and honest discussion of problems
- A commitment to finding a solution
- Sharing good practice.

Conclusions

The former Social Exclusion Unit was set up by the government in 1997. The original aims of the SEU were to:

'...create prosperous, inclusive and sustainable communities for the 21st century - places where people want to live that promote opportunity and a better quality of life for all.' Yet, older people were not included at the outset, causing frustration to campaigners and lobbyists for older people looking for a social exclusion policy for older people.⁴

A Sure Start to Later Life was therefore clearly welcomed, because it finally recognised the role of older people in creating those 'inclusive and sustainable communities' – age discrimination has meant that many older people, particularly those who are frail, gradually find themselves on the margins of their communities, no longer able to engage with anything other than social and health care services as their needs increase.

This report contributes to the current debate on care, highlighting the need for better community services as key to meeting the need for more preventative services, and the value of a 'hub' of services – one gateway which older people can enter to gain access to a wide range of services that go beyond health and social care, into all the areas that affect their lives.

Local Area Agreements should also look at the balance of resources across health and other services to ensure more preventative support in the local community. **Better, lifelong** housing is critical. More local partners could provide free home safety checks to ensure homes are warm, safe and secure and reduce risks of falls, fires and crime. Resources could also be directed to creating caring neighbourhoods with support for voluntary and community groups that offer befriending and practical help to isolated older and disabled people.

The broader challenge is for local services to look at families across all generations. There has been a huge investment in the Every Child Matters agenda with 3,500 **Sure Start** children's centres being rolled out across the country, with a whole-family approach focused on the best outcomes for children. We need a parallel agenda for adults that look at how we achieve positive outcomes for all older and disabled people and their carers. Some local communities might want to link the two, creating intergenerational centres offering a first point of contact to the full range of services that promote care. Children's information services, for example, could reflect **this** new agenda by becoming family information services and supporting caring across all ages.

⁴ www.socialexclusion.gov.uk (website no longer being updated but archived for historical purposes only)

Success in delivering *A Sure Start to Later Life* will depend on the willingness and capacity of a range of partners to work together to deliver these joined up services – and on commitment by local government to addressing the needs of some of the longest serving members of their communities. People of all ages, but in particular those approaching later life, simply want to live in neighbourhoods that are good places to grow old in.



Counsel and Care is a national charity getting the best care and support for older people, their families and carers.

We do this by providing advice, information and financial support and by influencing future policies, services and funding.



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