

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

‘A Better Life’ Programme – key pieces of work in 2011 and 2012

‘A Better Life’ is a five-year programme (2009-2013) funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, focusing on ways of ensuring quality of life for the growing number of older people with high support needs in the UK. In the initial phase of the programme a range of expert reviews were commissioned to bring together the available evidence on various aspects of the lives of older people who have high support needs. A round-up of the evidence, a report on equality and diversity, the expert reviews, as well as the six early messages emerging from the programme can be accessed on the Better Life webpage of the JRF website:

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/work/workarea/better-life>

This update summarises new and on-going work in the second phase of the programme in 2010 -11, including four new research projects starting in early 2011, as well as pieces of work telling the stories of a diverse range of older people with high support needs through words and images.

Research projects

‘Not a One Way Street’

Timescale: 20 months (January 2011 - August 2012)

Principal Investigator: Helen Bowers (NDTi)

JRF Programme Manager: Philippa Hare (philippa.hare@jrf.org.uk)

The National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) and Community Catalysts will be working together to identify and promote ways in which older people with high support needs can and do take up positive and enabling roles within models of mutual support and reciprocity. Their focus will be on approaches which see older people not as a burden and a drain on resources, but as individuals with gifts, skills and assets.

The project will explore what does and doesn't work (both in the UK and further afield), highlighting critical success factors for wider adoption, examining the primary conditions for establishing and sustaining successful models in different settings, and identifying potential risks inherent within relationship based models. It will develop practical guidance for participants, commissioners and providers. The project team will also model coproduction in its membership – comprising equal numbers of staff/associates from the two partners and older, peer researchers.

This work has particular relevance for informing policy and developing practice associated with a Big Society, personalisation and the vision for adult social care in the context of an ageing society.

‘Affordability, choices and quality of life in housing with care’

Timescale: 21 months (January 2011 - September 2012)

Principal Investigator: Ian Copeman (HSP)

JRF Programme Manager: Ilona Haslewood
(ilona.haslewood@jrf.org.uk)

This research project, carried out by the Housing and Support Partnership, is one of three projects looking at key aspects of the experience of older people with high support needs living in housing with care schemes. This project investigates how affordability affects the choices (of care and other services) that older people with high support needs make (or are made for them), and the consequences of these for their quality of life. The primary focus is on those people who fully or partially self-fund their housing and care, and on those who hold individual personal budgets.

Key areas the research will investigate include *decision-making* (timing, processes, who decides); *quality of life* (for the individual and other residents); *value for money and affordability* (different perceptions, also in comparison with other housing options). The research will explore these areas from the perspectives of older people and their families/carers, providers, commissioners, as well as other people and organisations working with older people with high support needs. The project will benefit from the input of two small consultative groups, one of older people with high support needs living in a housing with care scheme, and another of providers and other stakeholders.

In an age when increasing numbers of older people are expected to fund their own care, the findings of this research will contribute to the evidence base on the take up of care options in specialist housing and on key factors that drive these choices.

‘Whose responsibility?’

Boundaries of roles and responsibilities in housing with care schemes

Timescale: 20 months (January 2011 - August 2012)

Principal Investigator: Ian Copeman (HSP)

JRF Programme Manager: Ilona Haslewood (ilona.haslewood@jrf.org.uk)

One of the distinguishing features of housing with care schemes is that they confer housing rights to residents (as opposed to care homes which do not). This means that the boundaries of responsibilities between housing providers and others, such as care providers (when separate) and commissioners, need to be clear. More importantly, this can help answer the question of how these issues affect the lives of older people living in schemes who have high (or increasing) support needs. Can a rights-based approach empower them?

The Housing Support Partnership will look at the national context (e.g. legal, regulatory, policy) as well as at the local circumstances such as commissioning, market conditions, internal management, partnership working and ways of dealing with complaints and redress. The research will identify differences between schemes and solutions, and will seek and reflect on the perspectives of older people and their families and carers. As with the project examining affordability, consultative groups of older people and other stakeholders will help shape this research.

As well as highlighting issues and recommendations for policy and practice, one of the key outputs from the research will be a practical guide for housing providers and residents.

‘Living together, getting along’

Timescale: 18 months (January 2011 - June 2012)

Principal Investigator: Karen Croucher (CHP, University of York)

JRF Programme Manager: Ilona Haslewood (ilona.haslewood@jrf.org.uk)

The team at the Centre for Housing Policy, University of York, will seek to identify and explore current approaches to promoting supportive communities, reducing the marginalisation of, and minimising frictions and tensions between, groups of people and individuals with and without high support needs living in housing with care schemes.

The investigation will include a variety of potential approaches, both formal and informal, proactive as well as reactive, used by housing providers and other organisations, but also by residents themselves, and will incorporate a range of different housing with care settings. The project will consult and work with groups of older people with high support needs to identify the most promising approaches. As part of this, it will proactively seek to engage with residents with cognitive impairment, who are often the most marginalised among those living in housing with care.

Developing an understanding of approaches that can enable meaningful, supportive relationships and full, active participation is an important part of investigating housing with care as a way of living which enhances the quality of life of older people with high support needs. The outcomes will therefore have messages for older people and their families, housing providers and other professionals, but also for local and national policy makers.

Residential and nursing home care

Our partnership with My Home Life continues throughout 2011 and 2012, with its focus on voice, choice and control; leadership; practice development; and pay and funding. The initiative has now been rolled out across a dozen local authorities and is also working with our own care home staff in the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust.

Housing with care: a round-up of the evidence

The publication will round-up the available evidence on housing with care as a living environment for older people with high support needs and for others. It will primarily build on existing JRF research but will also incorporate other key sources. Publication is planned for summer 2011.

Faces and voices

What older people with high support needs want and value

A team from the Open University has reviewed what is known about what older people with high support needs want and value – and has asked a diverse range of individuals how the findings reflected the things that mattered to them. We plan to publish this work in autumn 2011.

‘Centenarians’: a project of images and words

The ‘A Better Life’ programme is pleased to support photography artist Chris Steele-Perkins, who has set out to create a body of work focusing on a small but increasing group of people who have reached their 100th birthday. The project wants to bring people with the ‘lived experience’ of longevity closer to audiences, presenting their lives visually, through photography, and also through interviews. Where possible, the photography documents a “day in the life” of the person, to give a sense of their daily lives, surroundings and personality. The images and words together draw attention to the things that make life in very old age both meaningful and challenging. The date set for completion is June 2011, and potential plans for promoting the work include a newspaper feature, an exhibition, printed publication, and the JRF and other websites.

‘Viewpoints’ series: diverse perspectives and voices

In autumn 2011 we will be publishing a series of Viewpoints, which will aim to ‘give voice’ to diverse and often marginalised groups of older people. These will include contributions from South Asian elders in Wolverhampton; older people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual; gypsies and travellers in Derbyshire; dementia activists; and people with learning difficulties who are growing older. The aim is to highlight the increasing diversity of older people with high support needs, and the importance of hearing their voice so that their different perspectives are recognised and better understood.

For more information on ‘A Better Life’ programme please contact:
Philippa Hare (philippa.hare@jrf.org.uk) or
Ilona Haslewood (ilona.haslewood@jrf.org.uk) Programme Managers
Christine Appleton (christine.appleton@jrf.org.uk) Research Administrator

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