Welcome
Thanks
sp arc

A Review

Peter Lansley
Director
Agenda

• Our report back to you
  – £1.28m in awards
    • Money well spent?
  – £0.48m supporting you
    • Was it worth it?

• SPARC – summary, analysis and evaluation (PL)
  – Past, present and future
  – Key achievements
  – Highs and Lows

• Meeting the Metrics (RF)
Models of Research

- Start
- Do
- Complete

- Start
- Do
- Growth & Development
Models of Research

1. EPSRC Meetings for an emerging community
2a. EPSRC EQUAL Network
2b. AGEnet – Thames Valley
3. EPSRC/BBSRC SPARC
4. EPSRC KT EQUAL

SPARC-type emulations

BBSRC ERA/SAGE meetings
The starting point -
Taking Older People Seriously?

• Very little investment in research and development concerned with older people

• Over-medicalised, over-socialised, over-intellectualised, disorganised

• ‘Top-down’ policy not working, policy documents often useless and very condescending

• What about offering some solutions?

• Try ‘bottom-up’ - scientists working directly with older people?
Ageing Research – Moving Forward

- SPARC motivated by:
  - Success of bottom-up, user-engaged approach to identifying issues and for pursuing and demonstrating value of research
  - Need to engage more scientists (such as biologists) with other stakeholders in ageing research
  - Need to promote ageing research more effectively
    - to policy makers & to the public

- Result of three years hard lobbying
SPARC – The Essence

• Establishing a new culture
  – a **race** of newcomers (awards)
  – a **place** for newcomers (workshops)
  – a **face** for ageing research (advocacy)
  – adding **pace** to ageing research (that which follows)
A new Race?
From Furniture Design to Stem Cells

• Projects
  – Furniture design, Smart homes, Adaptations to the home
  – Better recovery from hip fracture
  – Design of the workplace for older people
  – Better packaging
  – Safer more friendly streets
  – Computers that are easier to use
  – Assisting local government with transport planning
  – Keeping your car and driving safely
  – Regaining speech after stroke
  – Understanding automated telephone messages
  – Ageing eyes, Stepping safely, Following moving objects
  – Activity, Exercise, Nutrition in later life
  – Oxidative stress, Ageing cells, Stem cells, Lots of biology!

• 6 – 18 months
• £17,000 - £60,000
One Race or Two or Four?

- 34 Awards across a wide range of experience and topics
  - Experienced – 12
  - Early Career - 22
  - Ethnographic - 8
  - Modelling - 9
  - Health - 8
  - Biological – 9
So, what were the results for the Race?

- All reports reviewed by:
  - Two reviewers
  - Directors
  - Members of the Advisory Committee

- Discussed and debated by:
  - Advisory Committee
An effective Race?

Reviewer’s Assessments – typically two per project
Was the Race worth it?

Reviewer’s Assessments for was the project worthwhile?
Main Messages

• Considerable support for you from academic community:
  – revealed in very positive response to requests to referee proposals and review reports
  – encouragement of you and of the SPARC model
  – very positive views of the projects

• Small projects – major achievements
  – just look at the quality
  – and the leverage in terms of funding, contacts, collaborations

• **Value for you** - Credible platform for making major steps into ageing research (see later)
Looking for a new Place?

• Two environments
  – Academic
  – Other Stakeholder

• Mechanisms
  – Workshops (46)
    • All-comers, Older People
    • Specialist
      – Award holders
      – Invitation only
      – International
  – Executive Summaries (23)
  – Brochures
  – Meetings
  – Interviews etc
Opening Doors to a new Place

Older People & Ageing Research & Development Network

OPAN Cymru aims to:
- Enhance the quality and volume of research on ageing
- Improve the integration of policy, practice and research
- Strengthen research collaborations across and within sectors
- Improve the coordination of research both across and within health, social care and clinical specialties
- Increase the participation of older people in the research process

Make a difference: become part of a multidisciplinary society feeding into international, national and local debates on policy and services for older people

A supportive and mentoring environment for those working in the field of ageing and older people

Dedicated support for Emerging Researchers in Ageing (ERA)

Direct contact to people with similar interests who live in your area

BSG website: Membership Directory, Jobs, Courses, and the on-line journal Generations Review

On-line discussions

Reduced rates at BSG conferences

Bursaries for students, post docs and Members

Reduced subscription rates to the peer reviewed journal Ageing and Society

Are you new to the field of ageing?

Do you want to make a difference?

Do you want to be part of international, national and local debates on policy and services for older people?

Do you want to access dedicated support for Emerging Researchers in Ageing (ERA)?

ERA offers:
- Membership of a truly multidisciplinary organization leading change and innovation
- Direct contact to people with similar research interests who live in your area
- BSG website: Membership Directory, Jobs, Courses, and the on-line journal Generations Review
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- Bursaries
- Reduced subscription rates to Ageing and Society

Show commitment
Get involved

Join BSG-ERA

www.britishgerontology.org

Join BSG-ERA

www.britishgerontology.org
## Workshops – last six months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Host</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Number participants (non-academic %)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technologies for Health, Rehabilitation and Self Management of Long Term Conditions</td>
<td>BIME, Bath University</td>
<td>June 2008</td>
<td>79 (49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing Old in Wales: A Showcase of Ageing Research</td>
<td>OPAN Cymru, Swansea</td>
<td>July 2008</td>
<td>130 (79%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older People Going Places</td>
<td>BA Festival, Liverpool</td>
<td>September 2008</td>
<td>115 (70%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Research and its Applications for Ageing Populations</td>
<td>Glasgow School of Art</td>
<td>November 2008</td>
<td>72 (52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ageing and Disability</td>
<td>CARDI &amp; National Disability Authority, Dublin</td>
<td>December 2008</td>
<td>107 (82%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Keeping Good Company

• Hosts & Supporters of Workshops (46)
  – Universities - 12
  – Professional & Scientific Bodies, Industry - 10
  – Charities, Government, Local Government - 11
  – Conferences, EP/BBSRC - 7
  – SPARC - 6

• Participants (3200)
  – Academics - 38%
  – Charities, Individuals - 22%
  – Health, Social Services - 15%
  – Business - 8%
  – Government –Central, Regional, Devolved - 4%
  – Organisers and Speakers - 13%

• Mail-list (nearly 2000)
  – Non-academic members - 60%
Even Keeping Company Overseas

= funding schemes =

for you

American Aging Association (AGE)

National Institute on Aging
Keeping Good Company
Keeping even Better Company
Rubbing shoulders

Presentations at workshops

- SPARC
- EQUAL
- SAGE/ERA
- NDA & Sand Pit
- Other academic
- Non-academic

speakers (number)

- All 2005-6
- All 2007-8

chairs (number)
Did we find a new Place?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of project</th>
<th>Ethnographic</th>
<th>Modelling</th>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Biology</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average number of</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>workshop presentations per project</td>
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</table>
Feedback on workshops

Distribution of ratings %ages

Very poor | Poor | Unsure | Good | Very good | Excellent

Useful | Presentations | Networking

Venue | Catering | Administration
Main Messages

• Considerable support **for you** from audiences of all-comers from all backgrounds
  – Appreciation of work being done and of your personal investment
  – Understanding of the complexities of science and your efforts to communicate it
  – Increasing political interest in potential of your work
  – Demand for more workshops and information

• **Value for you**
  – Being able to meet eyeball-to-eyeball end users, beneficiaries, ordinary folk and to learn about their interest in your work and the insights they can bring to that work and your personal priorities
Key requirement for getting research used and into practice

Affective Bonding
A New Face?

• Advocacy
  – Directors’ Activities
    • Contacts – legion
      – Discussions and correspondence with MPs through to community groups – (literally hundreds)
      – Formal presentations on SPARC– 62 (4/quarter)
      – Formal refereed journal publications on SPARC– 8
      – Other publications on SPARC - 6

  – Award Holder-Focused Activities
    • Executive Summaries
    • Other Publications
    • Interviews
    • Sign-posting
A New Face?

Ageing research going places

Strategic Promotion of Ageing Research Capacity

Ageing Research is on the Move

Meeting the challenges of an ageing society
From Proposal to Delivery

Strategic Promotion of Ageing Research Capacity

Improving Computer Interaction for Older Users: investigating dynamic on-screen targets
Faustina Hwang & Nitin Williams

Meeting the challenges of an ageing society

Workplace Design for the Older Worker
Peter Buckle, Valerie Woods, Ozhan Oztur & David Stubbs

Meeting the challenges of an ageing society
Did we Establish a new Face?

Number of Executive Summaries

Ethnographic: 100%
Modelling: 80%
Health: 40%
Biology: 0%

Under production
Shorties
Main Messages

• Audiences very appreciative of being able to take home an accessible summary
  – Great interest in the summaries, in some cases worldwide; many downloads
  – Praise for vigorously pursuing science and society agendas

• Interviews – much visited

• Value for you
  – Having something different to provide non-scientists to sustain their interest
Key requirement for getting research used and into practice

Effective Information Processing
A new Pace

• What you have told us about:
  – Your Publications
  – Your Follow-on Funding
Publication/Presentation Strategies

Across the board:
- 3 or more refereed
- 1 or 2 refereed
- Being processed

Largely Academic:
- 3 or more refereed
- 1 or 2 refereed
- Being processed

Presentations & Conferences

Number of teams
Follow on Funding - Age and Experience?

Number of project teams

- Mature and experienced
- Less experienced and very early career

- Busy PIs
- Busy CIs
- Small Awards
- Busy Searching
- Not so Active?
Follow on Funding - Research Area?

Number of project teams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnographic</th>
<th>Modelling</th>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Biology</th>
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<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Busy PIs**
- **Busy CIs**
- **Small Awards**
- **Busy Searching**
- **Not so Active?**
Value of Funding = £10m!

• Research Councils and funders with strong academic orientation - £6.2m
  – For example EPSRC, BBSRC, RiA

• Funders with a orientation on older people, or diseases of old age, or more pragmatic orientation - £3.7m
  – For example, JRF, BHF, NICE
Main Messages

• Given that most projects finished recently:
  – Level of publication
    • About what would be expected - lively
  – Funding
    • Surprising number of awards secured – very lively
    • Would expect mature researchers to secure work as PIs more quickly, but less experienced researchers are doing very well indeed!
  – Value for you
    • Tangible outputs
      – Publication
      – Adoption – some instrumental, others conceptual
      – Take up of ideas in new projects
      – Achievements in terms of way forward
Key requirement for getting research used and into practice

Strategy Formulation and Control
Adding Value to your Careers

• Two Environments
  – Academic
  – Other Stakeholder
    • Follow on awards
    • Publications
    • Presentations
    • International
    • Media

• Two Perspectives
  – Own Account
  – SPARC Influenced
    • What you have told us about the benefits of SPARC
Bringing it all Together

• Academic Environment
  1. Funding from RCs and similar
  2. Academic publications
  3. Academic presentations
  4. International activities

• Other Stakeholder Environment
  1. Funding from, for example, charities focused on particular ageing issues
  2. Publications for non-academics
  3. Presentations to non-academics
  4. Media activities
Where did SPARC make a difference?

Number of teams

- Funding
  - Academic
  - Other
- Publications
  - Academic
  - Other
- Presentations
  - Academic
  - Other
- International
  - Academic
  - Other
- Media

- Own Account
- SPARC Influenced
Value of Funding

• Academic Funding
  – Own Account - £2.5m
  – SPARC Assisted - £3.7m

• Other Stakeholder Funding
  – Own Account - £2.3m
  – SPARC Assisted - £1.4m

• Total - £9.9m
Example of Two Award Holders

• Mature
  – New to field
  – Existing international networks, frequent publications
  – Largely academic operator
    • Main SPARC benefits:
      – funding – academic;
      – publications – other;
      – presentations – other;
      – media involvement - other
    • Index scores: other – 3, academic – 1

• Very early career
  – Recently completed PhD, new job
  – No overseas links
  – Few presentations, none outside of university world
    • Main SPARC benefits:
      – funding – other;
      – publications - other;
      – presentations - other and academic;
      – international involvement - academic
    • Index scores: other – 3, academic – 2

• Max score = 4, Min score = 0
Where are the differences?

Index of Environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>academic</th>
<th>other</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Own Account</strong></td>
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<td>SPARC Influenced</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mature &amp; Experienced</td>
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<td>Early &amp; Very Early Career</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Overall</strong></td>
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Significant differences on Own Account Academic $p<0.001$ & SPARC Influenced Academic $p<0.02$
Where are the differences?

Index of Environment

Significant differences on SPARC Influenced other and Overall other p<0.001
Adding in SPARC = Overall

Academic Environment

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<th>3</th>
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</table>

Other Stakeholder Environment

- Ethnographic
- Modelling
- Health
- Biology
Own Account v Overall

Academic Environment

Other Stakeholders Environment
Experienced v Early Career

Academic Environment

Other Stakeholders Environment
Culture’s Consequences?
or Something Else?
What Else?

• Website (4000 hits a day)
  – News Items
  – Proceedings of Workshops
  – Funding Guides
  – Forthcoming Events

• Mail List (nearly 2000 members)

• Frequent Enquiries
Finally

• Collectively the projects were rated highly

• But, what about the Administration of SPARC?
  – Achieving *Scientific Excellence and Capacity Building* through serving needs of the award holders and other stakeholders?
    • or self-serving and following other agendas?
  – *Resource Management* – Effective?
    • or disorganised?
  – *Worthwhile* - Good value for money?
    • what did we really get for £0.5m?
Assessment of SPARC Admin

• Administration of SPARC?
  – Scientific Excellence
    • Support to development of award holders as scientists - excellent
  – Capacity Building
    • Support to award holders and their broader roles and responsibilities in ageing research very uneven, range from excellent to very poor, similarly for support to other stakeholders – typically, say, good
  – Resource Management
    • Exploitation of infrastructure for supporting award holders and other stakeholders, and for bringing them together and capitalising opportunities – very variable – tending to unsatisfactory
  – Worthwhile
    • Mixture of highs and lows – Overall, probably yes
Meeting the metrics
Richard Faragher
These are SPARC’s conditions of award as set by EPSRC & BBSRC

Special Panel KPIs:

♦ At least 12 workshops to be held during SPARC
♦ At least 60% of Awards to lead to follow on grant applications
♦ At least 30% of SPARC award holders to become PIs on conventional RC or similar grants within two years of completion of funding
♦ Questionnaire to be sent to ageing research community to gauge our wider impact

But where did they come from?
Here!

Strategic Promotion of Ageing Research Capacity: new blood, new ideas and more benefit

SPARC
Promoting ageing research

• EPSRC and BBSRC
  – good track record, credible with users and intermediaries
  – understand what is needed, committed
• Small research community in relation to national need but with genuine commitment
• But, absence of capacity building initiatives and lack of continuity. We need to:
  – attract newcomers
  – Allow the younger workers in the field to become established
  – provide trickle funding and stimulation
SPARC: A capacity building network

Our discussions identified two problems:

• Limited networking & dissemination.
  ♦ Limited ability to network the ‘wider ageing community’ (e.g. BBSRC ~90 ‘ageing’ grants from people who would not consider themselves gerontologists)
  ♦ Lack of promotion of EPSRC-BBSRC successes to stakeholders, key gatekeepers and the general public.

Capacity Building

♦ Cadres of trained PDRAs now exist. How can they establish themselves? How can the community do discipline bridging? How can experienced researchers become gerontologists?
SPARC is not a universal panacea

It is a limited solution focussed on BBSRC-EPSRC community
The SPARC solution - 1

• Integrated networking to:

♦ Communicate our success.
♦ Strengthen the relationship between the research community and end-users.
♦ Allow the natural development of interdisciplinary ageing research.
♦ Facilitate the expansion of the research community.
♦ Contribute to an internationally competitive programme of ageing research.
The SPARC solution - 2

• Capacity building to:

♦ Support PDRAs with relevant experience who wish to become PIs.
♦ Allow pump priming/prototyping.
♦ Allow interdisciplinary links between biological gerontologists and researchers within design, engineering to be primed.
♦ Produce a proportionate increase in the UK gerontological research base.
Network activities
The network

- **Network Meetings**
  - regular thematic workshops ✓
  - three types
    - Design & Engineering ✓
    - Biology ✓
    - Interfacial ✓
  - international dimension
    - International workshops (e.g. AAA meeting) ✓
    - Option to conduct n+n ✓

- **Dissemination activities**
  - Media ✓
  - policy makers ✓
  - users & intermediaries ✓
  - Internationally ✓

- **Advocacy ✓**
Example workshop themes -1

- Interfaces
  - Ergonomics/ skeleto-muscular systems/ bio-mechanics ✓
  - Bio-materials/ bio-compatible implants ✗
  - Neurobiology / dementia stimulation / stroke recovery ✓
  - Chemical probes ✓
  - Healthy eating
    - kitchen & gadget design
    - food packaging
    - diet
  - The old immune system and the clinic
    - Falls – biology and mechanics ✓
    - Vision ✗
Example workshop themes - 2

• Biology
  – Do senescent cells matter? ✓
  – Chemistry of ageing ✓
  – Prospects for immune improvement in older people ✓

• Design and Engineering
  – Ergonomics of consumer product design ✓
  – The workplace ✓
  – Care home design and management ✓
  – Smart technologies ?
  – Transport and urban design ✓
  – The business case for ageing research ✓
Likely Meeting Timetable

• Based on successful experience of EQUAL
• Meetings planned 3-6 months in advance
• 6 - 8 meetings planned each year
• Will work with learned societies or other stakeholders where appropriate

♦ At least 12 workshops to be held during SPARC (grant text suggested 24)
♦ In fact 46 workshops were held
Capacity Building Grants
The grants

- **Eligibility**
  - SPARC will not:
    - support projects which could be funded through existing EP/BB instruments
    - support projects that do not demonstrably build capacity
    - ‘Real’ support from host institution should also be demonstrably present.
  - SPARC will:
    - Allow access to funds for a larger range of researchers than is normally possible
    - Stimulate cross-disciplinary working
    - Lay ground for larger applications

- **Grants**
  - Potential PIs mostly newcomers
    - Former PDRAs
    - Experienced researchers moving into ageing research
  - Wide range
    - Any BBSRC-EPSRC priority area and anything in between
  - Basic Support (£25-60k max)
    - Staff and consumables
    - Equipment
    - Travel (also access to ISIS etc)
    - Specified overheads
The assessment process I

- Directly modelled on RC practices
- SPARC scheme will be advertised
- Short application form requires PI to justify (i) why SPARC? & (ii) how will the award build capacity
- Applications then triaged on remit by advisory committee with aid of BBSRC-EPSRC observers
- PIs who can be supported by other RC routes will be appraised of this and encouraged to apply through them
- Applications within remit to proceed to peer-review

100% of applications had 3+ sets of reviewers comments
The award itself
Financial - 1

• Grants to Cover
  ♦ Staff and consumables
  ♦ Equipment, routine travel (including to workshops)
  ♦ Specified overheads, RC practice will be used to determine if costs are allowable.

• Payment
  ♦ 6 monthly intervals on delivery of interim or final report.
  ♦ Reports will be short, timely and intended to ‘focus’ grant holder rather than assessed for quality
  ♦ Involvement with the network programme is a condition of the award.
Grant scheme (misc)  ☒

- Participation of Other Bodies
  - Government Departments (ODPM?)
  - Charities (RiA✓, unexpected bequests)

- Joint Projects on Specific Themes
  - Benefit from the SPARC Infrastructure
  - Accommodate special themes
  - Cement research/practice/user relationships
How did you do on the metrics?

- At least 60% of Awards to lead to follow on grant applications ✔

- At least 30% of SPARC award holders to become PIs on conventional RC or similar grants within two years of completion of funding ✔
My three favourite SPARCs

• Boston
• Hexham
• Brighton
My three least...

- Japan
- Derby
- The *Tonight* programme
New research questions?

- Raise pension age for academics, says report
- Academics lifespan is increasing faster than the national average
- Is this the reason?
Goodnight from me...

- “the habit of being listened to attentively even when you are being boring, proves a great boost to longevity”

Andrew Marr A *history of modern Britain*
Did we take Older People Seriously?
Your Say

What can we Learn from SPARC?
Discussion
From the Sidelines

Dr Deborah Dunn-Walters

Dr Elizabeth White
Final Discussion
The Way Ahead

• Be prepared
  – For the highly multidisciplinary, collaborative user-focused world of ageing research
  – Keep close to practitioners, older people’s organisations and older people
  – Keep an eye on official reports on health and on older people
  – Look behind the words of research council calls for hidden opportunities

• Get out and about
  – Make yourselves known in circles where funding might be on the horizon
  – Become part of the woodwork
  – Anticipate
  – Seek out some ‘unusual’ funders
  – Dare to be different

• Keep trying, trying, trying
  – Your number will come up eventually
  – Don’t get despondent – keep in touch with us for leads and ideas

• Common sense with a little humility and peppered with ambition
  – Can take you a long way
The Ultimate Aim