Independence and Quality of Later Life:
A decade of research to support older people

Investing in British Research:
From SPARC to KT-EQUAL

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Today's Agenda
Background
EQUAL
SPARC
KT-EQUAL

2009 - A good time to take stock
- Older people a major issue for UK government
- Investment in ageing research is increasing
- Moving up the learning curve on how to organise ageing research

The research councils and ageing research
- MRC - Medical
- ESRC - Economic and Social Sciences
- EPSRC - Engineering and Physical Sciences
- BBSRC - Biotechnology and Biological Sciences
- AHRC - Arts and Humanities

Research Council Programmes
- Past
  - Growing Older – ESRC - 1998
- Current
  - Life Long Health and Wellbeing - All – 2008-
  - New Dynamics of Ageing – All – 2005-
  - EQUAL Consortia – 2002 -
Important Foundation of Current Programmes

• Multidisciplinary
• Collaborative
• User Involvement
  – Pioneered by EQUAL
  – Extremely successful
  – Now, generally accepted approach by all research councils
  – But, still some resistance and breaking of ranks
  – Some variation in approach to user involvement between programmes

Planned investment – research councils

• Science Budget
  – for cross-research council activities 2008/9 – 2011/12
    • Energy - £319m
    • Living with environmental change - £363m
    • Global threats to security - £113m
    • Ageing - £485m
  – Emphasis on multidisciplinary working to address key public policy challenges

• Other programmes
  – will also provide opportunities for ageing research

Planned investment – government, charities…..

• Increasing involvement of government departments and research funding charities
  – Difficult to separate ‘normal’ ageing from disease-related ageing – so estimating volume of research is difficult
  – The more competitive ageing research becomes the greater the resources available

A Voyage of Discovery

“……..but it’s what happens outside of the hospital, clinic and surgery which is so important to quality of life - the home, the street, public buildings, transport…., consumer products. Why can’t engineers and designers take a greater interest ….?"

Conversation with an eminent clinician in 1996

Taking Older People Seriously?

• Very little investment in research and development concerned with older people
• Over-medicalised and over-socialised
• ‘Top-down’ policy doesn’t work
• Policy documents often useless
• What about offering some solutions?
• Try ‘bottom-up’, scientists working directly with older people?
EPSRC EQUAL Initiative 1997-
• Multidisciplinary
• Multi-professional
• Intermediate Organisations
• Older People as experts
  – Built Environment
  – Design for All
  – Rehabilitation
• 34 projects, 5 consortia
  – 3 still running – hear from them later!!!!

EQUAL - Areas of Activity
• Housing
  – Design, adaptation, smart homes, telecare, independence
• Accessibility
  – Urban design, access, navigation systems, wheelchair issues, public transport
• Design for All
  – Product and packaging design, ergonomics, aiding designers
• Hearing, Seeing
  – Impact of colour & contrast, navigation in urban/complex environments
• Cognition, Dementia, Learning Disabilities
  – Stroke rehabilitation, housing for dementia, smart homes, care home design, reminiscence

Making a difference since 1998
Informing public policy
• Improving:
  – Building Regulations
  – British Standards
  – Professional Guidance Documents
  – Expectations
• Supporting those who commission:
  – Buildings and infrastructure
  – Transport systems
  – Consumer products
• Assisting the professions:
  – Design
  – Health
  – Social services
• Aiding policy development:
  – Housing
  – Transport
  – Care....

Touchstones for Success
• Bottom-up not top-down
  – ageing is a new area for research
  – the innovators are at the leading edge of science
  – policy driven approaches fail to spot the opportunities for matching science and the needs of an ageing society
• Ageing research thrives
  – when those with knowledge of leading edge of science become engaged with ageing issues
  – when older people, practitioners from all walks of life and researchers get together
  – on grassroots enthusiasm of researchers and their supporters who want to make a difference to the quality of life of older people.

SPARC - a community-led Initiative
• Focused on:
  – Encouraging newcomers into ageing research
  – Building rapport and involving all stakeholders
• 2005 – 2008
  – Took three years to secure support
• EPSRC & BBSRC - £1.75m
  – Design and engineering research
  – Biological research
  – All areas in between
• Three themes
  – Workshops for all comers
  – Advocacy
  – Pump-priming

SPARC
For the research community and its supporters in health, social and housing services, charities, voluntary agencies, local and central government, and amongst older and disabled people....
Capacity building awards
Developing the evidence base

- Small awards scheme for newcomers to ageing research
- 185 proposals total value £5.7m were considered in Summer 2005 & Spring 2006
- 34 were funded at total value £1.25m
  - for superior scientific excellence and capacity building
  - for more information see posters and www.sparc.ac.uk

The 34 award holders

Areas of Work

- Furniture Design
- Adaptations to the Home
- Product and Packaging Design
- Older Drivers
- Transport Planning involving older people
- Safer Urban Design in depressed areas
- The Older Worker
- Making Computers easier to use
- The Organisation of Clinical Care (hip fracture)
- Vision & Falls
- Diet, Exercise, Activity & Falls
- Cell Ageing
- Stem Cells etc etc

SPARC very broad, spread very thinly!

Not just Funding!

- Funding £17k to £60k
  - 9 to 18 months
  - (research assistant or student, t&s, equipment)
- Mentoring & Advice
- Platforms – National & International
- Training in proposal writing, working with the media, etc
- Introductions to:
  - press and media
  - funding opportunities
  - key people/organisations
- Editorial assistance
- Regular contacts, support, information

Investment in Projects

- 34 projects - £1.25m as projects
  - + £0.25m for administration and support
  - supported 100 scientists
  - attracted 100 collaborators
  - additional support estimated to be £1.25
    - largely as additional resources, mostly ‘in kind’

Quality of proposals & final reports

- Proposals (18% were funded)
  - 8% International Leading
  - 22% International Competitive
  - 20% National Leading
  - 22% National Competitive
- Final Assessment
  - 10% Outstanding
  - 40% Tending to Outstanding
  - 35% Good
- Worthwhile?
  - 15% Extremely
  - 42% Very
  - 20% Yes!
Adding Value to Careers - did SPARC make a difference?

Value of new funding = £10m!
Secured by award holders

- **Academic Funding = £6.2m**
  - Research Councils and funders with strong academic orientation — For example EPSRC, BBSRC, DfA

- **Other Stakeholder Funding = £3.7m**
  - Funders with a focus on older people, or diseases of old age, or a more pragmatic orientation — For example, JRF, BHF, NICE, government

- Figures at December 2008.
- Another £1m secured recently!

Motivation for EQUAL & SPARC

- Scientists can gain considerably from communicating and discussing their work with older people, their carers and professionals in the field and listening to them

- Older people should be valued and involved as experts in the full research process

- Practitioners and older people have as much right to hear about the latest findings from research as have scientists and at the same time!

Before SPARC
Even experienced scientists had little experience of non-scientific publications, audiences and media. Afterwards they had, so too the early career scientists

Ageing Investment Times

- **Return on investment**
  - 500% in two years — Impossible
  - 200% in two years — Unbelievable

So much for the researchers but what about older people, their carers, professionals and other users, beneficiaries and stakeholders?
Workshops – 48
Showcasing research

- Maintaining Independence in Later Life, Brunel Univ.
- The business case for ageing research, Unilever plc
- Living with stroke, Sheffield Hallam University
- Old and Active: Maintaining the older person’s health, activity and employment, LARC
- Ageing Research and Occupational Therapy, College of Occupational Therapists
- A Walk a Day Keeps a Fall at Bay, Camden Council
- Health, Workplace Design and the Older Worker, TAEN
- Older People Going Places, BA Festival

Keeping good company

Investment in Workshops
- 48 workshops - £200k
  - 31 all stakeholder
  - 12 specialists/scientists
  - 5 award holders
  - 10 international (6 overseas, 4 UK)
  - 3500 participants
  - 50% non academic stakeholders of all types
  - 311 Speakers, 66 Chairs
  - Press & TV coverage
  - Proceedings available on SPARC website
  - Much visited

Advocacy
Informing public policy

- Making the case that ageing research can and is making a difference
- Lobbying
- Developed a good track record
  - MPs do listen!
  - Two questions in Parliament on, Ageing Research and Older Workers
  - Ministers do listen
  - Royal Patronage

A New Face?
**From Proposal to Delivery**

**Investment in Advocacy**

- Advocacy - £50k
  - 100s of meetings and letters
  - 50 public lectures, keynote addresses and similar
  - 2 questions in Parliament
  - Many publications
- Collectively:
  - 64 Refereed journal papers
  - 53 Refereed conference papers
  - 66 Other publications

Nearly 200 publications from a £1.75m project!

**What Else?**

- Website (4000 hits a day)
  - News Items
  - Proceedings of Workshops
  - Funding Guides
  - Forthcoming Events
  - Videos & Audio Interviews
  - Unique system for handling research proposals and refereeing
- Mail List (2000 members)
- Frequent Enquiries

2009!

- December 2008 – SPARC ended
- January 2009 – KT-EQUAL began
  - Knowledge Transfer for Extending Quality Life
    - Workshops
    - Advocacy
    - Developing younger researchers
    - Dissemination, application, utilisation
    - Even closer to policy makers and practitioners

**Keeping on Track**

- You must tell us if ever we seem to forget our roots in the community and its support for our style of research
  - Bottom-up not top-down
  - Ageing research (and KT) thrives
    - when those with knowledge of leading edge of science become engaged with ageing issues
    - when older people, practitioners from all walks of life and researchers get together
    - on grassroots enthusiasm of researchers and their supporters who want to make a difference to the quality of life of older people.
- Inclusion, Transparency, Accountability

**The ultimate aim**