Design and community regeneration: investigating personal safety concerns of older people in socio-economically deprived communities in South Wales

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The research team

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Objectives

• To identify the personal safety and fear of crime needs of older people in relation to a range of environmental settings in deprived communities

• To develop and refine a package of recommendations and design guidelines to tackle the major areas of concern.
An identified need for the research

• Literature claims that older people often experience a high fear of crime
• There is often a discrepancy between fear and actual crime levels
• Previous research based mainly on quantitative techniques
• Crime surveys reduce perceptions to narrow responses
• Techniques do not provide insight into social or physical contexts of crime and fear of crime
Perceptions - an Alternative Approach

- Pain (1997: 119) claimed that “the missing discourse in work on crime and elderly people is the perceptions of elderly people themselves.”
- Perceptions are useful to explore situational and contextual details of fear of crime
- A qualitative perceptual approach provides revealing insights into how the design and maintenance of communities impact on personal safety
- Focus groups provide a forum for in-depth discussion of user concerns and issues in terms of how older people perceive their physical environment
Local context

• The research will be carried out within the Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT), one of the most socially and economically deprived regions in Wales.
Local context

• Wales has the oldest population in the UK with 17 per cent of people over 65.
• Addressing the needs of older people is therefore an increasingly important concern, socially and politically.
• Two communities will be used as case studies, selected on the basis of their socio-economical deprivation.
Methodology

• Liasing with local organisations and target groups
• Interviews with older people to identify common routes in the community
Virtual Reality Panorama filming of routes
Panorama Walkthrough Demonstration
Focus groups - analysis of key themes in discussion
Methodology

• Framework of recommendations
• Seminar to local decision makers
Previous projects

• Campus safety
  – University of Glamorgan
  – Loughborough University

• Local railways - Valley Lines
View of Train Station in South Wales Before and After Environmental Improvements

Original form of Dingle Road station

Dingle Road station after improvements
Work to date

• Background reading
• Identifying two communities:
  – Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000
  – 11 wards from RCT are in top 50 most deprived in Wales
  – University Community Partnerships
Work to date

- Identifying two communities:
  - Tylorstown
  - Cwm Clydach
Selected Communities
Conclusions

• Study will provide a richer and more profound insight into personal safety issues confronting older people.
• Tangible benefits to older people in the form of improved environmental conditions will lead to safer communities and improved quality of life.
• To make a contribution to promoting inclusive communities, increasing mobility and reducing fear in the community for older residents in deprived areas.
• Influence community planning and design decision makers