

# SOCIAL WELL-BEING IN EXTRA CARE HOUSING

# PSSRU

*Outline of a research project funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation*

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P66/May 2007

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## BACKGROUND

The Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU) is currently undertaking an evaluation of the Department of Health's Extra Care Housing Funding Initiative, evaluating 22 new build schemes opening between 2006 and 2008 and receiving support from the fund. These 22 schemes will provide around 1,500 units of extra care accommodation.

Extra care housing is a development of sheltered housing that aims to meet the housing, care and support needs of older people, while helping them to maintain their independence in their own private accommodation. An important consequence of moving into a care setting is that residents' levels of activity and social well-being are particularly reliant on that community. The schemes being evaluated have put forward a variety of proposals for encouraging activity and community participation, including user-led approaches and the provision of facilities such as gyms.

The early stages in the development of a scheme after opening can be critical to the type of community that develops. Aspects of physical design, location and scheme operation and management will have a profound influence on the social climate, friendships and activities of the residents. While there is some information about activity and the formation of friendships among disabled older people in a care home setting, there is little in the field of housing and care. This study should address this problem, and help inform those commissioning and designing these schemes about what residents want to see and what is most effective in facilitating social participation, activity and well-being.

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## RESEARCH AIMS

The project is focusing on the first year after opening, when new communities are being formed. It aims to identify:

- How the variety of approaches to developing social activities and community involvement are implemented in practice
- Residents' expectations and experiences of these approaches
- The relative effectiveness of different approaches in terms of friendship formation and activity participation by individual residents
- The variation in social climate and incentives to participate 12 months after opening.

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## METHOD

As many of the 22 schemes as is feasible will be included in the study.

There will be three stages of work on the project:

1. The first stage will encompass consultation with residents and prospective residents, a literature review and the collection of more details about the plans from the schemes. If possible, schemes will be categorised by type of approach to activity.

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2. At the second stage, six months after each scheme has opened, four residents and two members of staff will be interviewed in each scheme, using semi-structured interviews. The interview will aim to discover what is happening in practice, the degree to which the respondent feels that facilities are being used, how much they feel residents participate in activities, and the extent of community involvement in the scheme and residents' involvement in the wider community. The aim will be to identify facilitators and barriers to participation (including both social and design factors) and the aspects of schemes that are seen as particularly successful.
3. At the third stage, 12 months after opening, a survey of all residents, and interviews with a subsample of up to 250 will identify individual views, well-being, levels of participation, and the social climate of the community.

The work will be undertaken in the context of the PSSRU's wider long-term evaluation of the extra care housing schemes and draw on data from this evaluation to inform the analyses. Multivariate analyses will aim to draw out the complex relationship between individual characteristics, scheme characteristics, social participation and individual well-being.

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## **TIMETABLE AND OUTPUTS**

The project will run from May 2006 to May 2009.

The results of the study will be fed back to participants and disseminated widely in a variety of ways, including an ongoing PSSRU programme newsletter for service users.

In addition to the main reports (an interim report and final report), we will publish summaries on our website and through the Department of Health's Housing Learning and Information Network. This network is a key resource for those developing schemes and has links with the Elderly Accommodation Counsel, which provides advice to older people and their relatives on housing choices and what to take into consideration in making moves in later life.

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## **RESEARCH TEAM**

The full team working on the evaluation of the Extra Care Housing Funding Initiative includes:

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The **PERSONAL SOCIAL SERVICES RESEARCH UNIT** undertakes social and health care research, supported mainly by the Department of Health, and focusing particularly on policy research and analysis of equity and efficiency in community care, long-term care and related areas — including services for elderly people, people with mental health problems and children in care. Views expressed in PSSRU publications do not necessarily reflect those of funding organisations. The PSSRU was established at the University of Kent at Canterbury in 1974, and from 1996 it has operated from three branches:

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