

THE OLDER PEOPLE'S INQUIRY

'That little bit of help'

A central message emerging from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Older People's Programme was that older people valued support which enabled them to live in their own homes and have 'a life worth living'.

The Older People's Steering Group directing the Programme did not want yet more research into the difficulties of getting low-level support or identifying shortfalls in services. Rather, they wanted an independent inquiry to look at what could be changed to support them to live independently.

1. KEY FINDINGS FROM THE INQUIRY GROUP

- Older people value 'that little bit of help' to enable them to retain choice, control and dignity in their lives, but it has become very difficult for them to secure this. Although hours available from services such as Home Care have increased, the services are reaching fewer homes, despite the increase in the population of older people.
- The solution proposed was to look at individuals' needs of low-level support, rather than trying to give older people a token 30 minutes' Home Care.
- The Inquiry Group looked at a wide range of possible approaches which were then ranked by older people to reflect their priorities and a 'Baker's Dozen' identified.
- Some of these approaches are innovative; many are valued, everyday solutions. Some are rooted in health or social care; others in the wider needs of older people.

- The Baker's Dozen was costed in relation to national and local plans. However, the Inquiry Group felt they should be treated as core services and not have to rely on time-limited funding. It would need extra money rather than redistributing resources from savings made from more intensive services.
- The Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Older People's Inquiry itself was one example of involving older people in the shaping of policy, planning and practice. It was strongly recommended that local and national areas should develop similar good practices.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is based on the findings of the Older People's Inquiry, conducted in partnership with older people, academics and policy and practice stakeholders, into the provision of low-level support for older people – 'that little bit of help'. It grew out of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Older People's Programme. Defined and directed by older people, this Programme looked at the issues around growing older that were important to older people. One of the central messages which emerged was that older people really valued support which enabled them to live in their own homes – for example, help with cleaning, DIY, gardening, care of pets, chiropody, transport and befriending.

The Older People's Steering Group (the group which directed the Programme) did not want to undertake yet more research about the difficulties in getting support. Rather, they wanted to look at what could be changed to make independent living achievable.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation agreed to fund an inquiry into 'That little bit of help', chaired by Malcolm Dean (social affairs leader writer for *The Guardian*) with a secretariat provided by Professor Norma Raynes, Dr Heather Clark and Dr Jennifer Beecham. Significantly, the largest group on the Inquiry was made up of older people themselves, in discussion with policy-makers, practitioners, academics and other commentators on older people's issues. The aims of the inquiry were to identify examples of good practice; to highlight the shortfall in supply; and to outline the resources which might be

needed in the future. While recognising that older people were only one of the key stakeholder groups, the consensus between all parties was that priorities for funding and action needed to be dictated by the priorities expressed by older people themselves – “what we want, not simply what *they* can offer”.

2. IS THERE A PROBLEM?

Living standards and expectations have risen over the past 20 years but older people in the Programme said that it was increasingly difficult for many to get support for their ordinary day-to-day requirements where support would have made such a difference to their quality of life. But social services and other partners had increasingly been focusing on more functional ‘life and limb’ issues. Older people were now increasingly sceptical about policies which were meant to enable them to stay in their own homes. Older people, without appropriate support, were being increasingly isolated in their own homes and just as disempowered as if living in the worst examples of institutional care.

Older people in the Programme said there was a lot of unmet need not being measured or addressed. “Unmet need” had even become a term to define what could be possible within existing resources, rather than measuring the shortfall. Older people said that thinking had become so fixed on existing resources, that it was difficult for policy-makers and practitioners to move beyond priority-setting within the budgets available.

3. THE SERVICE GAP: ‘THAT LITTLE BIT OF HELP’ OR INTENSIVE SERVICES?

This briefing note highlights some of the shortfall in service provision; a companion project of the Inquiry Group will look specifically at ‘unmet need’.

3.1. Origins

Services such as Home Care or Sheltered Housing started out as low-level support services. They were not developed as high dependency ones which aimed to keep older people out of residential care. During the 1980s, prior to the implementation of the Community Care Act, the user profiles for services like Home Care had begun to shift towards increased physical and mental

impairment, similar to those previously seen in residential settings. Typically a local authority's number of Home Care clients would fall from 6,500 at the start of this period, to 2,500 just before implementation of the Act, as the level of support required increased.

3.2. The current picture

The number of older people with access to Home Care has declined while the population of older people is increasing.

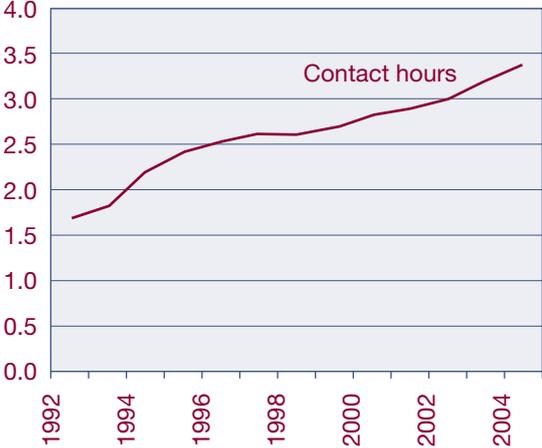
The number of Home Care hours doubled between 1992 and 2004. This period also saw a decline in public sector direct provision, and an increase in other provision, but the overall picture is one of growth.

However, the number of households receiving Home Care has continued to decline.

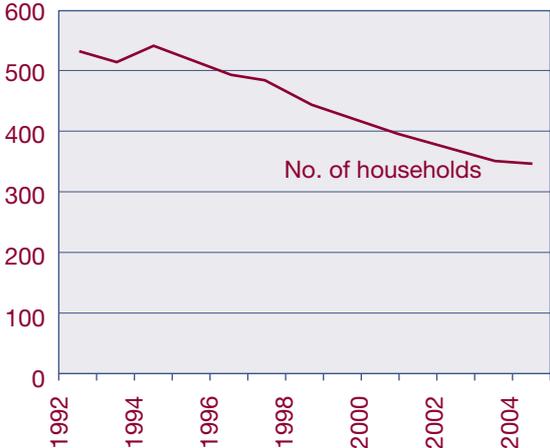
Home Care has continued to develop as a more intensive 'high dependency' service. It is not the only service designed to deliver low-level support; there have been many developments in housing-related schemes, though these too are following the same pattern, focusing on people who have high support needs.

The solution is not simply to give everyone a token 30 minutes' Home Care a week – for some older people, intensive and flexible support was just what they needed. But there was a concern that, unless there was support for older people who might only need that bit of flexible help now, their quality of life would rapidly erode, shortening the time before they too needed more intensive support.

Home Care contact hours (millions)



Home Care (households '000s)



4. THE INQUIRY DISCUSSIONS: FROM PROBLEM DEFINITION TO SOLUTIONS

The Inquiry Group started its investigation into the changes in the size of the older population and the current state of policy and practice in September 2004.

The final report contains chapters on: demographics, health and social care use; research and findings about the types of support that older people valued; a policy context; information on grants available for ‘that bit of help’; examples of good design and of valued services, ranging from voluntary schemes supported by older people to examples of good practice in supermarkets.

Themes that older people considered important:

- comfortable and secure homes
- an adequate income
- safe neighbourhoods
- the ability to get out and about
- friendships
- learning and leisure
- keeping active and healthy
- good, relevant information

The wording may be different but it is notable how similar these themes are to disabled people’s views on independent living.

4.1. Identifying best practice – a Baker’s Dozen

The Inquiry Group considered many services in the context of the above themes and prioritised the ones that best reflected the needs of older people. The range of good ideas was eventually distilled down to the following “Baker’s Dozen” to be further explored.

Handy Help: this section of Trafford Care and Repair is a local charitable trust providing help with small repairs around the house. Handy Help is funded by grants from the business sector and carried out 402 small jobs during 2003/2004. There is a charge of £10 per visit and the user also pays for materials (which can be bought at cost through Handy Help).

Welcome Home: volunteers help people returning from hospital – for example, by doing the shopping, or giving them a lift home. They also help them to settle back at home by tidying up, putting the heating on, sorting post, etc. No charge is made for this.

Help at Home: services including cleaning, ironing, accompanied shopping, collecting pensions, etc. Help at Home aims to provide the same worker at the same time each week. Users pay £8.25 an hour for domestic support. The Gardening and Home Maintenance Service was re-launched in March 2004. Users pay £12.50 an hour for this.

Primary Night Care: staff ‘pop in’ to people in their own homes during the night – for example, helping with toileting, medication, or to check all is well. Most visits are planned but staff can respond to emergencies. People can be supported through the night if the usual carer is taken ill. Users are charged for routine night visits but not for emergency calls.

Befriending Service: provides companionship and support through regular visits. Befrienders have undertaken training, are CRB-checked and are supported by the Community Volunteer Service. Volunteers also provide a phone buddy service.

Sole Mates: provide a footbath and a foot massage for people over 50 who cannot cut their own nails safely. The same volunteer visits each time. The charge is £3.50 a visit plus a one-off charge of £10 for their nail-clippers.

Cinnamon Trust: a national charity helping older or terminally ill people care for their pets. They provide help by walking and grooming dogs, taking pets to the vet, cleaning cages or short-term fostering. Life-long fostering can also be arranged.

Digging Deep: this scheme involves older people teaching school children how to grow vegetables in school-based allotments. Volunteer older people tend to stay working with the school.

RISE: a community outreach project to ‘Reach the Isolated Elderly’. It provides transport to people to attend the REGENERATE.com lunch clubs

four days a week. It also provides transport to take part in outings and other activities. There is an optional £10 membership and a £3 charge for eating at the lunch club.

SMILE: this scheme (in Windsor and Maidenhead) aims to increase older people's access to exercise and leisure opportunities. Other activities included Home Workout, Half Century Club, postural stability sessions, walking clubs and Health MOTs.

Activity and Social Centre: run by the Wimbledon Guild, this provides the focus for older people's support. It has its own transport and holds a range of classes, from computing to art.

Keeping in Touch: a service based in Malton and Norton for people with a visual impairment. Support is available for practical tasks (not personal care), such as shopping for colour-matched clothes, labelling food, filling in forms, reading letters or accompanying people. There is a small membership fee.

Supermarkets and Retail Stores - an ideal: a number of supermarkets took part in a small study looking at approaches that made shopping accessible for older people. This looked at seating, restaurant facilities, different approaches to delivery services, provision of information and advice, connecting services, storage for packages and "smart trolleys", as well as ramps.

4.2. Has the Baker's Dozen made a difference?

The feedback from the Baker's Dozen has been very positive. Some comments point to savings downstream in more acute services; most are similar to: *"I could not manage without it"; "I wouldn't get out if it wasn't for RISE ... I get to see places rather than just my four walls."*

5. INVOLVING OLDER PEOPLE IN POLICY, PLANNING AND PRACTICE

A key element of the Inquiry has been the central involvement of older people in identifying issues of quality, giving prominence to their messages about unmet need, of prioritising valued service approaches according to older people's criteria, and of doing all of this in partnership with other stakeholders.

This process is outlined in more detail in the final report, partly as a way of verifying that the priorities are grounded in older people's own experiences and partly as an example for national and local approaches to involving older people.

The Baker's Dozen should not be followed slavishly. Some areas may already have such schemes in place; and some schemes may not reflect immediate local priorities.

The central message for local planning of services is that local planners should engage with older people in their area about shaping services.

6. KEY MESSAGES

6.1. For Government

- Current developments are encouraging but there is a need to look at the support that older people require for "that little bit of help" in addition to the more intensive support. Preventive strategies will probably have some savings and benefits for more intensive services. Nevertheless, new services will certainly require new money.
- Many of the initiatives identified are time-limited, often vulnerable to cutbacks in local government finance. There is a need to fund the approaches outlined in the Inquiry as core services.
- It is important to build from this Inquiry, either piloting new initiatives or being clearer about the outcomes from initiatives like the Baker's Dozen. It is important to link these to, for example, the In Control pilot studies associated with the forthcoming white paper on Adult Social Care. There should be more emphasis on user-defined outcomes and how to support them.

6.2. For local planners and commissioners

- It can be difficult to think beyond conventional services. The Baker's Dozen has been costed to facilitate discussion. What could your area develop within a budget of £10,000, £100,000 or £500,000?

- The ranking of the Baker's Dozen is not intended to be prescriptive. Some of this may already be happening and the immediate priority might be actions further down the list.
- The Inquiry (and the Foundation's Older People's Programme) has had a strong direction by – and involvement of – older people. This should encourage local strategies which engage older people at a local level. Would older people in your area agree with these priorities and how could you then involve them in planning a local strategy?
- There is a real risk of confusing cost-minimisation with cost-effectiveness. If the need is to keep a focus on issues of quality, how can older people be involved in defining quality outcomes from the services you purchase or provide?
- Older people are often seen as a problem to be solved. Many of the ideas from the Inquiry have come from, and are run by, older people. There is a need to engage locally with volunteers and like-minded organisations to tap the potential of local communities and community-development approaches.

6.3. For older people

- There are many examples of older people supporting each other – individually and collectively. In fact, older people provide the main means of support for each other. The system depends upon you and there are possibilities of developing older people-led solutions.
- There are gains and losses in old age. Older people have a wealth of knowledge and experience. Older people can form partnerships with others to develop the kind of support that older people value.
- Some of the initiatives may be innovative but there is a danger of services wasting large sums of money if initiatives are not grounded in your knowledge and expertise. It is important for older people to emphasise that they are best placed to tell others what works and what doesn't.

6.4. For potential innovators and local schemes

- The Baker’s Dozen highlights some ideas of what might be developed. In the final report there is also a chapter on other possible solutions. Further investigation of examples elsewhere is needed to inform local developments.

7. THE INQUIRY GROUP

More details of the process of the Inquiry are included in the final report. The membership of the Inquiry Group was:

Chair – Malcolm Dean Deputy – Stan Davison		
Older people	Policy and practice perspectives	Counsel and care Secretariat; and JRF
Vera Bolter	Jane Carrier	Norma Raynes
Gisela Feldman	Melanie Henwood	Jennifer Beecham
David Johnson	Glenys Jones	Heather Clark
Harold Jones	Catherine Mangan	Juliet Crissell
Ann Macfarlane	Simon Northmore	Kezia Barker
Imogene Martin	Tom Owen	Yvonne Jones
Nell McFadden	Edna Robinson	Alex O’Neil
Dorothy Runnicles	Kenneth Spencer	
Tom Shephard		
Brenda Williams		
Gloria Williams		

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FURTHER INFORMATION

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has published a number of reports based on the Older People's Programme. These reports can be downloaded free of charge from www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop or can be purchased in hard copy by phoning 01904 430033.

Information, advice and advocacy for older people: Defining and developing services

Andrew Dunning

September 2005

Older people shaping policy and practice

Older People's Steering Group

October 2004

Building a good life for older people in local communities: The experience of ageing in time and place

Mary Godfrey, Jean Townsend and Tracy Denby

October 2004

Does money matter? Older people's views of their monetary resources

Glenda Cook, Jan Reed, Susan Childs and Amanda Hall

January 2004

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Laurie Kerr and Vivien Kerr

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Alison Petch

September 2003

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Unmet need and older people: Towards a synthesis of user and provider views

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February 2001

Exploring unmet need: The challenge of a user-centred response

Mary Godfrey and Gill Callaghan

February 2001

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June 2000

Older people's definitions of quality services

Hazel Qureshi and Melanie Henwood

23 June 2000

Older people speaking out: Developing opportunities for influence

Patricia Thornton

June 2000

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