

**August 31 2011**

## **Research looks at care of older people in Norfolk**

Reduced public funding for services is threatening community care and social engagement opportunities for older people in Norfolk, according to research to be presented in Norwich next month.

The study by Dr Mayumi Hayashi, a research fellow in the School of History at the University of Anglia (UEA), looks at community care and social engagement for older people living at home in Norfolk. It underlines the vital role played by the public and voluntary sectors, without which many older people could not live in their own homes.

The findings will be presented during a public event, *The Care of Older People in Norfolk*, on September 16 at the Assembly House in Norwich. The event is being held in association with CUE East, the university's community engagement initiative. The study is part of a wider project, *Community Care and Social Engagement for Older People*, funded by CUE East and the School of History.

Dr Hayashi's study, *'The Care of Older People in Norfolk: Experiences of social engagement, informal care and volunteering'*, found that some social programmes have been surviving thanks to public funding, allowing the use of paid staff to compensate for the shortage of volunteers, while subsidised transport also enables older people to access community programmes. However, it highlights the impact that dramatic cuts in public spending could have in Norfolk and elsewhere, a situation likely to intensify throughout the Spending Review period (2011-16) and possibly beyond.

Dr Hayashi said: "This research has shown the importance and benefits of social engagement for older people, and the existence of unknown numbers of excluded older people, left isolated and struggling financially, physically and emotionally. There is a clear need to enhance services for older people to meet further demands and to compensate for the loss of public provision despite challenging circumstances facing us.

"The key finding arising from the project is the significant role and contribution made by the voluntary and informal sector, often involving older people themselves, as formal volunteers and/or informally as carers or as friends and neighbours giving assistance. Without this regular help, older people could not remain at home and would lose 'social engagement' opportunities. Older people are therefore very often 'contributors' rather than 'dependent burdens' on society, and are, in effect, key actors in sustaining the Big Society."

The study builds on Dr Hayashi's previous work on residential care for older people locally, and used interviews to explore the first-hand experiences and views of older people living at home and their carers. Student volunteers from UEA were also involved as researchers.

Dr Hayashi added: "Demonstrating evidence-based good practice and recognising the challenges ahead, this study will, I hope, help inform positive policy to enhance services for older people in Norfolk and their quality of life. Both the study and this event will also help ensure that the often-neglected voices of older people and their carers will be heard and understood."

The good practice identified has been fed into engagement activities and one-to-one befriending isolated older people. The 'voices' collected have been shared through public talks, local carers' meetings and school visits, enhancing links between the community and UEA and reaching a wide audience.

The Care of Older People in Norfolk event will involve older people, carers, representatives of partner organisations such as Age UK Norfolk & Norwich, Norfolk LINK, Norfolk Older People's Forums and local community groups, as well as students and researchers from UEA and Universities of Cambridge and London and from Japan. Speakers include: Joyce Hopwood, chair of the Norfolk Older People's Strategic Partnership Board and chair of Norwich Older People's Forum; Bob Russell of Age UK Norwich; Jeanne Norman from Norwich & District Carers Forum

and Norfolk Counselling & Learning Matrix (C.A.L.M.); and Joanna Crown, a family carer.

The event takes place from 10am-2pm on September 16 at the Assembly House, Norwich. Further details, including the programme and study report, are available from <http://mayumihayashi.net>. A buffet lunch and transport will be provided for those who have registered to attend. For registration or enquiries, contact Mayumi Hayashi on [m.hayashi@uea.ac.uk](mailto:m.hayashi@uea.ac.uk) or 01603 499683.

## **Ends**

### **Notes to Editors**

1. CUE East at the University of East Anglia supports community-university engagement across all disciplines and is funded by the UK Higher Education Funding Councils, Research Councils UK and the Wellcome Trust. Website: [www.cueeast.org](http://www.cueeast.org). Email: [community@uea.ac.uk](mailto:community@uea.ac.uk)
2. Dr Mayumi Hayashi has twice received CUE East funding to develop her doctoral research. She recently received a CUE East Individual Public Engagement Award for her engagement work on the care of older people in Britain and Japan, and will take up a Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship at King's College London in 2012.
3. For further information or to arrange interviews, please contact Cat Bartman at the UEA Communications Office on +44 (0)1603 593007/[c.bartman@uea.ac.uk](mailto:c.bartman@uea.ac.uk), or Mayumi Hayashi on 01603 499683/[m.hayashi@uea.ac.uk](mailto:m.hayashi@uea.ac.uk)