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Project Evaluation Report

Project name: Sustainable Long Term Care for Older People

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Background

● Brief description

The project explored sustainable long-term care models by collecting the experience of residential care through 86 interviews with elderly residents, their relatives, social workers and staff personnel in care and nursing homes across East Anglia. The project website was created and eight interested 'student associate' volunteers at UEA participated in the project as action researchers. I arranged oral history and interview skill sessions for them with Norfolk Sound Archive and BBC Voices, and took two of them to interview visits. The oral testimonies gathered and research findings were shared with a wider audience through two 'collaborative' workshops and six public presentations. As a further engagement activity, I paid weekly visits to care homes where I offered befriending with elderly residents and had open discussions with staff members. To ensure the sustainability of the project, I produced a project poster, summary hand-out and detailed report, which were presented in the CUE East event *Launch, Lunch & Learn* and were distributed to the project partners and interested parties. In addition, I will keep the project website open to the public and interact with them and will shortly deposit recorded interviews at Norfolk Sound Archive for educational and research purposes. Above all, I have secured another CUE East Sustainable Living Partnership Fund for my new project 'Community Care and Social Engagement for Older People', which involves the project's partners and participants.

● Rationale

A pressing challenge facing Britain today is the provision of long-term care for growing numbers of frail older people. The Government is currently reviewing long-term care provision in the contexts of population ageing and economic uncertainty and amid recurrent criticism of the quality of residential care. There is increasing recognition that effective solutions to this problem must reflect grassroots needs and expectations of people in receiving and providing care provision. This is endorsed by the outgoing Labour Government who launched the six-month "Big Care Debate" in May 2009 and gathered thousands of public responses about care and support, fed into The White Paper: *Building the National Care Service*, published in March 2010. Given the considerable importance and urgency of the issue and its relevance to the general public, particularly care service providers and recipients, it is critical that research values "voices" of service providers and recipients and findings are shared between researchers and the public. In this way, we may be able to produce more sustainable and user-led solutions based upon evidence.

At a time of preparing the project's application (November 2009), I was in the final stages of my PhD study in the School of History, UEA. My doctoral thesis examined the development of residential care for the elderly in Britain and Japan, particularly local authority provision in the County of Norfolk and Gifu Prefecture. My methodology involved oral-history interviews with former and current residents and staff in various care facilities in both regions. Starting

initially from a purely academic perspective, my understanding has widened and been reinforced through participation in local public meetings and events related to long-term care, and continuing contacts with the interviewees and care homes in Norfolk. At the same time I also acknowledged the reality of my research environments in the School of History at UEA, notably the school's limited capacity of public engagement in this area and difficulties of new postgraduate researchers to develop postdoctoral research under squeezed budgets. The project was designed to address these deficiencies and contribute to a change of culture in the School and UEA.

Project aims and objectives

The overall project vision was to provide a good example of how a newly-qualified postgraduate overseas researcher could produce and benefit from a local outreach project. The main aims of the project were:

- To enhance the understanding of long-term care for older people through grassroots, interactive project activities
- To establish and develop community-UEA engagement and knowledge exchanges in this critical policy area
- To produce sustainable outcomes to ensure the project and its findings are used by a wide audience for research and educational purposes for the future.

The objectives were:

- To collect the experience of residential care thorough interviews with elderly residents, their informal carers, social workers and staff members in care and nursing homes across East Anglia
- To provide training and teaching seminars for interested 'student associate' volunteers, who will help and gather material on an 'action research' basis for incorporation into a MA or BA dissertation and to enhance his/her own experience of research methodology and future career development (e.g. CV, social skills and networking)
- To organise collaborative workshops at UEA and non-UEA venues to share experiences and findings and to discuss priorities and goals
- To give presentations in public meetings and conferences to disseminate the project findings and to enhance the understanding of the long-term care for older people
- To organise follow-up visits to care homes to review the objectives and findings of the project
- To produce the project website to share the project with a wider audience
- To produce a poster, summary hand-out and detailed report summarising the findings
- To produce anonymised, edited oral testimonies, to be deposited at Norfolk Sound Archive

Not realised (reasons discussed 'Challenge' section below):

- To visit local schools and colleges to offer my research findings
- To give public lecture(s) to illustrate and reinforce the public relevance of the project

- To produce articles for local newspapers and periodicals to heighten public awareness
- To write chapters in the forthcoming (proposed) book, “Residential Care for the Elderly in Britain and Japan”

Targeting

The project targeted specifically to project partners in and outside UEA and participants, but also recognised other interested local parties. Thus anyone in the locality who is receiving, providing, researching or interested in residential care was targeted, including older residents and their carers; personnel in care and nursing homes; professionals in NHS and social services departments; voluntary and informal organisations representing and supporting older people; and academic staff and students across the Faculty of Health.

The project activities

The project lasted one year from February 2010 to January 2011. It proceeded in three phases.

1. February to August 2010: Interviews and collaborative workshops

- Created the project website
- Ordered recorder equipment
- Sent information pack to 61 care and nursing homes across East Anglia
- Visited Norfolk Sound Archive to obtain advice regarding editing and depositing recorded material
- Completed ‘Interview Permission Form’ with the help of Norfolk Sound Archive
- Devised questionnaire
- Recruited eight interested ‘student associate’ volunteers in the School of International Development (DEV), with the help of Prof Peter Lloyd-Sherlock
- Provided private introductory session to each of the volunteers
- Arranged and provided oral history and interview skills sessions for the volunteers with Norfolk Sound Archive and BBC voices
- Visited two Day Centres to share the ideas and recruit potential interviewees
- Identified interviewees and organised interview visits
- Conducted a series of 86 interviews in care and nursing homes across the region and took two of student volunteers to interview visits
- Analysed interviews
- Organised two collaborative seminars at UEA and Norwich Japan Society ICHIGO Monthly Discussion

2. June to September 2010: Public engagement

- Prepared presentation papers and powerpoint slides
- Gave presentations in six public meetings and conferences
- Paid weekly visits to two care homes to have on-going engagement with residents and staff

3. September 2010 to January 2011: Publications and reflection of the project

- Produced project poster, summary hand-out, presented at *Launch, Lunch & Learn* event and distributed to the project partners and interested groups
- Wrote a detailed report and distributed to interested project partners
- Sent book proposal to publishers
- Transcribed recorded interviews
- Paid follow-up visits to care homes to review the objectives and findings of the project
- Collated feedback from interviewees, workshops and follow-up visits
- Completed the final report for CUE East

Partners engaged and people involved in the project

30 organisations and over 100 individuals contacted

- **UEA partners** (Names in blanket were my mentors or facilitators of the project)
 - School of History (Steve Cherry)
 - School of International Development (Peter Lloyd-Sherlock)
 - School of Medicine, Health Policy and Practice (Roy Marsh)
 - School of Applied Health Professions (Harrison Deborah, Sheila Gregory)
 - School of Nursing and Midwifery (Jill Robinson)
 - Centre of East Anglian Studies (Lucy Marten)
- **Non-UEA partners**
 - 86 interviewees - local elderly residents, their carers and social workers
 - 12 local care and nursing homes and sheltered accommodation
 - 2 day centre groups in Swaffham and Thorpe St Andrews, Norwich
 - Former CUE East projects: “East Meets East” and “Collaborative Research - Mental Health”
 - BBC Voices
 - Norfolk Sound Archive
 - Age UK
 - Norfolk Link
 - WISE Archive
 - Adult social services in Norfolk County Council
 - NHS health professionals in Norwich
 - Norfolk Social Workers Action Group
 - Norwich Living History Group
 - Norwich Japan Society ICHIGO

Outputs created

- Project website
- 83 interviews with completed ‘Interview Permission Form’ documents
- Three interviews without recording

- Two ‘collaborative discussions’ at UEA and Norwich Japan Society ICHIGO
- Six presentations at:
 - The Centre of East Anglian Studies Open Study Day
University of East Anglia (20 February 2010)
 - British Society of Gerontology’s Emerging Researchers in Ageing Annual Conference
University of East Anglia (23 April 2010)
 - The Older People & Ageing Research & Development Network Seminar
University of Swansea, Swansea, Wales (16 June 2010)
 - Anglo-Japanese Postgraduate History Colloquium
Institute of Historical Research, London (10 September 2010)
 - International Conference on Evidence-based Policy in Long-term Care
London School of Economics, London (11 September 2010)
 - The Norfolk Social Worker Action Group Meeting
Norwich (28 September 2010)
- Papers and Powerpoint slides for each presentations and discussions
- Follow-up visits to care homes
- Project poster
- Project summary hand-out
- Project detailed report

Evaluation

- **Achievements and benefits:**
 - Involvement of UEA and non-UEA people throughout the project
 - Establishment of many partners (see above) at and outside UEA
 - Good networking and engagement developed between UEA and community groups and also between individuals
 - Many outputs (see above) produced to ensure the sustainability of the project and its findings
 - Enhanced understanding of long-term care for older people through the project activities
 - The ‘voices’ of interviewees - older residents, their family carers, social workers and care providers – valued (see below example)
 - Positive responses from student volunteers received (see below examples)
 - Positive responses from participants in discussions and presentations received (see below example)
 - Enhanced academic knowledge and interview skills gained
 - Personal and professional development as a researcher (e.g. confidence, better engagement with vulnerable elderly people, good communication skills and new project management and evaluation skills)

- Secured a new CUE East Sustainable Partnership Funding for my next project 'Community Care and Social Engagement for Older People', to extend the scope of the current project as well as involving existing partners
- **Feedback from people involved in the project**
 - Kanako Momo, a Japanese MA student volunteer in DEV, said, "I am writing my MA dissertation on care for the elderly in Thailand and my experience in interviewing care home assistants from developing countries helped better understanding of care in these countries and research methodology".
 - Another MA DEV student Kaori Hashimoto, a qualified nurse in Japan, said, "after having visited English nursing homes with Mayumi [the project leader], I have noticed distinctive as well as similar features between England and Japan and would like to disseminate good Japanese practices in English through publications and international conferences in the future"
 - After interviewing an 87-year old resident in a care home, she commented. "I very much enjoyed talking to you. I hardly talk to other residents, and the carers are too busy. ... It's good to know that research like this [interviewing service users] exists and our views are recorded".
 - A care worker, who attended a discussion, said, "I think the discussion was really useful because I was able to learn good and bad practices in other homes and share my views with others".
- **Challenges and possible reasons for not completing targets**
 - Initial difficulties in recruiting potential interviewees: I sent the project information pack to 61 care and nursing homes across Norfolk in February and March 2010 and received just two positive responses. I eventually managed to find sufficient interviewees but this delayed the project by two months
 - Difficulties in interviewing: large number of residents was too disabled or demented to participate in interviewing; a few declined to be recorded; very demented elderly interviewees were unable to understand or fill the 'Interview Permission Form'.
 - Difficulties in local school visits: I have tried five schools but they were either not interested in the project or were really busy. Fortunately, I kept in touch with them and finally got agreement with some of schools who are my new project partners.
 - Lack of time or interest of care and nursing homes for participating in workshops and presentations.
 - Short of interested 'student associate' volunteers in the School of History
 - Lack of time for transcribing all interviews and public lectures. The reason was partly because the project did not allow unexpected circumstances and was also a bit too ambitious for time available and number of activities and people involved.
 - Difficulties in publishing a book. It took considerable time and energy to produce and improve book proposal. I initially submitted book proposal to two publishers and got rejection from both. I revised and submitted to three other publishes and got rejection from all. I further revised and submitted to two other publishers and await their comments. These made unable to produce other publications.

● **The lesson learned and advice for someone thinking of running a similar project**

- Set realistic targets: I underestimated the amount of time and energy for producing publications and organising and analysing interviews.
- Allow enough time for unforeseen circumstances and bureaucracy when undertaking an outreach project involving interactive activities and a variety of people: There may be lack of participants, cancellation of planned activities due to host organisation's circumstances or a lot of paperwork required by partner organisations.
- Keep update the project regularly to partners and any interested people: many people are busy at their own things but are generally interested in the project. To keep them interested, it is important to provide one-way information to keep them informed in addition to personal correspondence.
- Utilise personal and established networks and contacts: I first tried to find potential interviewees through official and professional contacts (i.e. sending formal project information pack by post), but received very poor response. I then started to contact my friends and former interviewees (through PhD) who gave me information about relevant care homes and potential interviewees. Once I conducted a few interviews through these references, the sample snowballed as the interviewees suggested other potential interviewees.
- Establish good relationships with partners to run the project smoothly: prompt responses are critical
- Allow enough time for activities involving schools: teachers are really busy or not keen on taking projects which put extra burden on them
- Revise the project plan regularly during the course of the project to decide priorities of planned activities to meet the project aims and targets as many as possible: It is necessary to negotiate balances between time available and work involved and be brave enough to skip some activities.

The future

The project and its findings can be sustainable through the above-mentioned outputs, to be used for personal, educational and research purposes by project's partners and participants and beyond. Furthermore, my new project "Community Care and Social Engagement for Older People" will involve established partners and interested participants in the current project. Hopefully, the link between the two projects and their partners will contribute to enhance community-University engagement and knowledge exchanges and transfer in a critical policy area.