

January 2012 Bulletin

Policy & Research Update

Dear Colleague

Welcome to the New Year! We hope you all had wonderful holidays. We've rounded up quite a few items to help you catch up on policy and research news you may have missed over the festive season.

In policy, there was a lot of attention to protecting vulnerable people in care. In our [Cross-cutting issues](#) and [Health & wellbeing](#) sections we link to various articles and guidelines. There have been some important developments in the [Housing & homes](#) section as well.

In research there have been some interesting studies on dementia (see [Health & wellbeing](#)), don't miss reports in the [Communities](#) section, including studies on the impact of post office closures.

We have a couple of new presentations on the [Knowledge Hub](#). [What is Old Age?](#) by Professor Paul Higgs from UCL is about past, present, and potential future courses of issues around how we think of and experience 'later life', including policy implications. And [Is there a future for care homes?](#) has facts and figures about care homes, and information about My Home Life, by Julienne Meyer and Tom Owen.

Warm regards
Susan Davidson

This month's Spotlight on:
Making digital technology inclusive

Jeremy Myerson, Director of the Helen Hamlyn Centre of Design, has written an article for us about user-centred product design, and how important this is for older people. He gives two examples – a 'chalkboard-like' digital tablet and phone interface, and instructions for setting up a mobile phone – and the reasoning behind them.

[Read more...](#)

Click on the topic areas which interest you to jump to the latest information on:

<p>Cross-cutting issues</p> <p>Protecting people with dementia from financial abuse, financial crime against vulnerable adults, end of life care, safeguarding adults: new guidance on the law, and Agenda for Later Life Conference 2012</p>	<p>Health & wellbeing</p> <p>New approaches to supporting carers' health and well-being, national audit of dementia care in general hospitals, vulnerable adult interventions, Health Survey for England, alternatives to antipsychotic drugs for individuals living</p>
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	with dementia, brain health app, NHS Atlas of Variation Series, joint health and wellbeing strategies, and measuring subjective wellbeing in the UK
<u>Social care</u> Disability Benefit changes overturned, Social care quality of life survey results, National Audit Office report on CQC, Audit Commission integration briefing, extra care housing, and social care advice	<u>Communities</u> Age-friendly neighbourhoods, making older people safer from fires in homes, the future of our high streets, local decision-making, Post Office Closure Programme, and fuel poverty in rural areas
<u>Money matters</u> Small pension pots, who saves for retirement, retirement income seldom discussed, and planning for retirement	<u>Housing & homes</u> Lifetime Homes, older people's housing, mortgage interest payments for pensioners, and review of extra care housing
<u>Engagement & volunteering</u> The Big Society – Public Administration Select Committee report	<u>Consultation responses</u> Payments Council Governance Review, The Financial Ombudsman Service, and oversight of the care market
<u>Consumers & lifestyle</u> Water for Life, and the Green Deal	<u>International</u> 2012 - A big international year for ageing
<u>Transport</u> Road Transport Red Tape Challenge	<u>Computers & technology</u> Protecting and promoting the UK in a digital world, and making digital technology inclusive

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Short changed: Protecting people with dementia from financial abuse

Alzheimer's Society undertook the largest ever survey carried out on this subject, and analysed responses from 104 carers and 47 people with dementia - as well as focus groups and interviews with professionals - to find out more about this issue.

Their report '[Short changed: Protecting people with dementia from financial abuse](#)' highlights that an alarming number of people have been subject to financial abuse and calls for people with dementia to be better protected.

SCIE Report 49: Assessment: Financial crime against vulnerable adults

On a similar note, this [assessment](#) commissioned by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) Economic Crime Portfolio has been produced to highlight the current and potential future threats to vulnerable adults in relation to economic crime.

It covers the wide spectrum of financial abuse and exploitation against vulnerable people by family members, care workers and unscrupulous individuals within our society.

End of life care

There's new help for staff who want to provide support to people at the end of their lives. A new [website hub](#), launched by the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), provides information and ideas for social care professionals who work with people at the end of their lives, and their families. It will also be of interest to medical colleagues who work with them.

SCIE says it's important that everyone involved has access to high quality resources and information, so they can give the best care possible.

The web pages look at five practical resources that have "end of life" sections:

- SCIE's Dementia Gateway. The latest information on dementia and end of life care
- Dignity in Care. Promoting care that will minimise suffering and enable people to have dignity, choice and control
- A Social Care TV film about dementia and end of life care
- Quality Standards from the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE)
- Ideas for practice. Innovation on end of life care, from the social care sector

Safeguarding adults: new guidance on the law

['Safeguarding adults at risk of harm: A legal guide for practitioners'](#) was commissioned by the Department of Health in response to requests from practitioners for a comprehensive guide to the legal framework underpinning adult safeguarding work. It aims to equip practitioners, including volunteers and carers, with information about how to assist and safeguard people.

Knowing about the legal basis is fundamental because the law defines the extent and limits of what can be done to help people and to enable people to keep themselves safe.

Events

Agenda for Later Life 2012 – The essential conference for everyone with an interest in public policy for older people - Book your place now

Agenda for Later Life 2012 will bring together more than 300 policy experts at a time when there are a number of significant developments on the UK's ageing agenda. We are at a crucial time in the reform of the care system, when sweeping reforms of the National Health Service are starting to take shape and further reforms to state pensions are on the table.

This conference will feature a line up of high profile speakers and leading thinkers on ageing who will be addressing these issues and sharing their views on the upcoming challenges for people in later life. Conference delegates will have the opportunity to engage in plenary and discussion seminars, facilitating valuable opportunities for participation, networking and shared learning.

To view the full Conference programme visit the [AFL website](#) or to book your place email: agendaforlaterlife@ageuk.org.uk

HEALTH & WELLBEING

New approaches to supporting carers' health and well-being: evidence from the national carers' strategy demonstrators

The National Carers' Strategy Demonstrator Sites (DS) programme was developed by the Department of Health (DH) as part of the commitments made in the 2008 National Carers' Strategy. Each site was expected to deliver new and innovative services for carers. [This report](#) by CIRCLE at University of Leeds evaluates the success of each project and the programme as a whole. Almost 19,000 carers participated and many really valued the extra help they received; furthermore, this carer support cost only a fraction of what needs to be spent if the informal care breaks down or cannot be sustained.

Report of the national audit of dementia care in general hospitals 2011

The National Audit of Dementia (care in general hospitals) was established in 2008 with funding from the Healthcare Quality Improvement Partnership to examine the quality of care received by people with dementia in the general hospital.

Key questions for the audit were:

- What structures and resources do hospitals have in place to enable them to identify and meet the care needs of people with dementia? (Measuring the ability to care)
- What evidence can be assembled to show that people with dementia in the hospital have received an acceptable standard of care? (Measuring the quality of care)

Key findings and recommendations are included in [the report](#).

Guidance and toolkit for vulnerable adult interventions

The Department of Health has published two 'Building Partnerships, Staying Safe' guidelines on protecting vulnerable patients. One is for [healthcare workers](#).

The other for [health organisations](#) and includes a toolkit for leaders and managers in healthcare organisations to support implementation of the Prevent awareness-raising programme.

Health Survey for England

The main focus of the HSE in 2010 was respiratory health and lung function. Additional modules of questions were also included, covering contraception and sexual health, wellbeing, kidney disease and dental health.

The report chapters are on the [IC website](#).

An economic evaluation of alternatives to antipsychotic drugs for individuals living with dementia

The objective of [this research](#) was to generate economic evidence of the benefits of behavioural alternatives to antipsychotic drug use for individuals living with dementia. NICE guidelines recommend that the first line of treatment for behavioural and psychological symptoms among those with dementia should be psychosocial interventions.

However, in practice antipsychotic drugs are used as the first line of treatment. In line with NICE guidelines, this report suggests that behavioural interventions are a more efficient use of public money than antipsychotic drugs.

The only NICE approved psychological programme for dementia is CST, or '[Cognitive Stimulation Therapy](#)'.

Brain health app now available in the UK

A world-first brain health app has just been launched in the UK as the latest digital tool to help in the fight against dementia. Based on latest research that links brain health and a reduced risk of dementia, to a healthy heart and cardiovascular system, BrainyApp is the first dementia risk-reduction iPhone app designed to help people monitor and improve their Brain-Heart health.

BrainyApp allows users to take a Brain-Heart health survey about their diet, exercise patterns and lifestyle. It then provides suggestions and ideas about how to improve. It also includes all-new brain games, and encourages users to build Brain-Heart points by staying physically and mentally active, socialising with friends and family, and sharing their progress on Facebook.

BrainyApp is available as a free download for users of iPhone, iPod and iPad devices from the App Store. There are plans to develop an Android version in early 2012. More information about BrainyApp is available on the [BUPA website](#).

NHS Atlas of Variation Series

The aim in publishing the Atlas series is ‘to stimulate, within all levels of the NHS, a search for unwarranted variation, defined as “Variation in the utilization of health care services that cannot be explained by variation in patient or patient preferences”.’

‘Commissioners should consider the opportunities to maximise health outcome and minimise inequalities by addressing unwarranted variation. We hope by extension, to stimulate action to tackle the drivers of unwarranted variation to improve quality for patients and increase value for the NHS.’

These atlases have been available in print; they are now [online as interactive maps](#) as well.

JSNAs and joint health and wellbeing strategies explained

The document [“Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and joint health and wellbeing strategies explained”](#) aims to support development of a joint health and wellbeing strategy.

The purpose of this document is to support the NHS, local government and emerging health and wellbeing boards as they engage with the refresh of Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNA) and develop their strategy. It describes what support the Department of Health will provide, including what resources will be available, when, and how it will build in learning from the early implementer health and wellbeing boards.

First report from the Office for National Statistics aiming to measure subjective wellbeing in the UK

[This report](#) reviews the following questions: What is subjective wellbeing and why should we measure it? How is subjective wellbeing currently measured in the UK - what subjective wellbeing questions are already being asked on major social surveys? What are the potential uses of subjective wellbeing data collected via these surveys?

It concludes that subjective wellbeing is a valid construct that can be measured reliably.

SOCIAL CARE

Disability Benefit changes overturned

In the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review the Government planned to remove the mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

Minister for Disabled People Minister Maria Miller [has announced](#) that the Government will lay down an amendment to the Welfare Reform Bill so that the mobility component will be provided regardless of the care setting. The Government plans to review the evidence relating to the mobility component of the Personal Independence Payment, which will replace DLA.

Social care quality of life survey results

The NHS Information Centre has published the results of its first [Adult Social Care Survey](#). The results represent the views of people who use services and will in future be used to populate the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework.

This publication supersedes the provisional information published in September. Council level excel annex tables for all Councils with Adult Social Services Responsibilities (CASSRs) in England are provided as well.

National Audit Office report on CQC

The NAO has published [findings of its investigation into the social care and health regulator the Care Quality Commission](#). The NAO reported on significant challenges which mean CQC has not been able to undertake its statutory duties in full. It found that compliance

inspections fell significantly as a result of tight provider registration deadlines, that there is a lack of suitable data available to assess quality standards, and that currently CQC does not provide value for money. The National Audit Office has said that the regulator must be supported adequately so that it can support providers to improve quality. It also acknowledged that the budget given to CQC was insufficient to enable it to carry out its duties effectively.

Audit Commission integration briefing

The Audit Commission [has published a briefing](#) which sets out the benefits of closer working at a local level between health and social care organisations. The briefing finds that progress in integration is patchy and sets out details of the efficiency savings that can be made through closer working.

Review of extra care housing

The Housing Information Network and PSSRU have published [an evaluation of the Department of Health's extra care housing fund](#). The study looked at 19 extra care housing developments part funded through the fund. The research has found that residents in extra care housing report positive changes to their quality of life on moving into schemes, that for most residents in the study their functioning and abilities remained stable over the first 18 months of their stay and that because of the better outcomes and similar or lower costs to residential care, extra care housing appears to be a cost-effective alternative for people with the same characteristics who currently move into residential care. The most cost-effective schemes tended to have joint housing and care management.

Getting over the threshold for social care advice

Independent Age published [a report into English local authorities' performance in providing advice and information on social care](#). The report is drawn from previously unpublished research by the Care Quality Commission which involved 7,500 mystery shopping calls - 50 to each of the 150 local authorities in England (only the City of London and the Isles of Scilly were excluded)

Some highlights from the report are that, of the councils reviewed:

- Only 5 of the 150 were rated as good or excellent in exploring users' needs at first contact
- Only 30 out of 150 were rated good or excellent when it came to asking about needs before financial circumstances
- Only 8 out of 150 were good or excellent at providing information to allow a caller to follow up on initial advice

COMMUNITIES

New government report on age-friendly neighbourhoods

The Department for Communities and Local Government has just published a report commissioned from the Centre for Housing Policy at York University titled '[Lifetime Neighbourhoods](#)'. The report brings together existing writings and research and practice examples of Lifetime Neighbourhoods ie places designed to be inclusive regardless of age or disability.

Age UK's [Pride of Place campaign](#) is calling for better neighbourhoods for people in later life and is working with local councillors to improve their areas.

Older people set to be safer in their homes

Millions of older people in the UK are set to become safer from fire in their homes following the launch of a [National Older Persons Strategy by the Chief Fire Officers' Association \(CFOA\)](#).

The aim of the strategy is to provide guidance and support to fire and rescue services and their partners to enable them to rise to the challenge of keeping older and more vulnerable members of the community safer from the risk of injury and death as a result of fire in the home.

The strategy is being driven by the fact that almost twice as many people over the age of 50 now die in dwelling fires in the UK each year compared to those under 50. These deaths and injuries are set to rise as the number of older people increases.

Vision for the future of our high streets

Mary Portas was tasked with [reviewing the future of England's high streets](#) and suggesting ways to promote their prosperity and diversity. The recommendations focus on the relationship between businesses and local government, with the aim "to free up the high street from constraint, to level the playing field, to mobilise landlords and communities, and to address the ongoing management of our town centres".

Age UK believes any regeneration of our high streets must take into account the spending power of Britain's older people. They spend more than £111 billion annually – more than 15 percent of overall household expenditure. Yet town centres routinely lose out on this valuable business because they ignore their needs.

Local decision-making

[New research has been published](#) which investigates what happens when older people are given the opportunity to shape service commissioning and delivery.

Carried out on behalf of JRF by the London School of Economics and Political Science, the research focused on two areas (Dorset and Salford) where structures and processes exist to encourage and facilitate the involvement of older people in local decision-making.

The study also raised questions about the involvement of older people in local decision-making and their contribution to wider democratic processes.

Devon knows – Long-term impacts and lessons from the Post Office Closure Programme

Local authorities can help ensure customers don't lose out when their post office closes, [says a study](#). Published by Consumer Focus, the report says engaging with local communities and local authorities can help ensure services remain accessible to rural residents despite changes. The document - unveiled ahead of a nationwide restructuring of the post office network in 2012 - focuses on the way Devon County Council dealt with the loss of post offices during the closure programme in 2007.

Fuel poverty worse in rural areas

Households in fuel poverty are defined as those that spend more than 10% of their income on heating the home, but there is a striking difference between the percentage of rural and urban homes in fuel poverty, according to government statistics.

[Estimated fuel poverty levels for local authority areas](#) were published by the Department for Energy and Climate Change on Thursday 24 November and the areas with the seven highest levels of fuel poverty were all rural.

MONEY MATTERS

Small pension pots – simplifying the system

Age UK policy has been lobbying for some time for the Government to recognise the difficulties facing modest pension savers who may accumulate a number of small pension 'pots' over their working lifetime. The rules for turning these small pots into a retirement income are complex and can lead to extra costs for small savers. We're delighted that the Government has listened and is currently consulting on how to simplify the system. The DWP consultation paper "[Meeting future workplace pension challenges: improving transfers and dealing with small pension pots](#)" can be read.

Jane.vass@ageuk.org.uk will be responding and would be interested to hear any views by 23 March 2012.

Who Saves for Retirement?

The Strategic Society Centre in partnership with the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) at the University of Essex has published [a new report looking at the savings decisions](#) of over 25,000 UK workers, and the factors that influence participation in pension saving. The study uses data from the first wave of the Wealth and Assets Survey to explore the prevalence of pension saving across the population, and the precise influence of individual, household and employer characteristics on participation in pension saving.

Retirement income seldom discussed

[A study commissioned by Prudential](#) found that 20% of those over 40 never had a conversation with their partner about the income they think they will need once they retire.

More than one third of over-55s have yet to plan their retirement

Over two-thirds (67%) of retirees wish they had saved more for retirement. The savings pots for over-55s fell 27% in 12 months from December 2010. Additionally, over a third (37%) of economically active over-55s have yet to make plans for their finances in retirement, according to the latest [Real Retirement Report from Aviva](#).

HOUSING & HOMES

Lifetime Homes

Habinteg Housing Association and the Building Research Establishment (BRE) have just published [an updated guide to the design of lifetime homes](#). The revised guide looks at the practical implementation of the Lifetime Homes Standard based a survey of private sector housing developers and architects and unpublished research by DCLG. More information and how to order is available on the Habinteg website.

Older people's housing

The Association of Directors of Adult Services and Housing Learning and Information Network have just published [a resources pack looking at the practical delivery of older people's housing](#). The resource pack contains a general guide to planning and design as well as a guide focusing on extra care housing. It also contains an evaluation of extra care housing by the Personal Social Services Research Unit at the University of Kent and a useful bibliography of key resources.

Mortgage interest payments for pensioners

The DWP are currently [consulting on mortgage interest payments for low income pensioners](#). Care and Repair England are concerned that this support has been the basis for some older homeowners taking out loans to tackle disrepair, which may be threatened by proposals contained in the consultation paper. The deadline for responses is 27th February 2012.

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ENGAGEMENT & VOLUNTEERING

The Big Society – Public Administration Select Committee report

The Select Committee have been conducting [an inquiry into the way the government's Big Society agenda is being translated into policy](#). The Committee found there is little clear understanding of the Big Society project among the public, and there is confusion over the Government's proposals to reform public services. They also raised concerns about the financial health of the charitable sector and to what extent charities and small and local community groups in particular, are willing and able to deliver public services.

In [Age UK's response](#) we highlighted the detrimental effect on services for older people cuts are having across the country, putting the less affluent and most vulnerable at risk.

AGE UK CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Payments Council Governance Review

This consultation fulfils a recommendation made by the OFT that the Payments Council should conduct a review of its governance and performance. [Age UK's response](#) calls for clarification of the Payments Council's objectives and for much greater independence.

The Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS)

FOS published a consultation on increasing transparency, in particular by publishing final decisions made by Ombudsmen. [Age UK's response](#) is broadly supportive, however we call for care to be taken that there is enough context to make sure publication is meaningful.

Oversight of the care market

Age UK has responded to the Department of Health's consultation on this.

We agree that oversight of the care market must be strengthened. However, this cannot be done by voluntary industry agreements. Either CQC or Monitor must be given a duty to ensure financial viability of care providers, and the powers to enforce compliance. If financial viability is in doubt, the provider must be required to provide a bond. Firms should also be required to set up resolution or post-failure arrangement sufficient to allow time and funding for an orderly transition.

CONSUMER & LIFESTYLE

Water for Life

The Government has just published its [White Paper on water](#). Due to the combined effects of climate change and an increasing population it has been felt necessary to improve incentives for water companies to become more efficient and reduce demand for water.

Green Deal

The Government has published [its proposals for Green Deal and the new Energy Company Obligation](#). The Green Deal will provide for an independent accredited assessment to be made of the energy efficiency of homes which will provide recommendations for what action could be taken to make improvements and an estimate of their costs.

Long term loans (up to 25 years) will be available to the household to fund these improvements provided the cost of repaying the loan is less than the reduction in the energy bills these improvements will make. The loan will be repaid in the energy bill. The Energy Company Obligation funding will be targeted at the fuel poor and hard to heat homes.

INTERNATIONAL

2012 - A big international year for ageing

The EU has designated 2012 as the [European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations \(EY2012\)](#). The four themes of EY2012 are active ageing: in employment, in the community, and at home; and solidarity between generations. Age UK will play an active role, with our partners in [AGE Platform Europe](#).

2012 is also the 10th anniversary of the [Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing](#), and the [2012 World Health Day](#) theme on 7 April will be Ageing and Health.

TRANSPORT

Road Transport Red Tape Challenge

[The Red Tape Challenge](#) is a government-wide process to get rid of unnecessary, burdensome and overcomplicated regulation. Following suggestions from the public, the government is planning to modify or scrap 142 regulations relating to road transport. For instance, they will be scrapping the regulation requiring motorists to hold a paper counterpart to their driving licence by 2015 – saving drivers up to £8m.

COMPUTERS & TECHNOLOGY

Protecting and promoting the UK in a digital world

The Government today published its new Cyber Security Strategy, setting out how the UK will support economic prosperity, protect national security and safeguard the public's way of life by building a more trusted and resilient digital environment.

More about this report, and a link to the report, are on the [Cabinet Office website](#).

Making digital technology inclusive

Jeremy Myerson, Director of the Helen Hamlyn Centre of Design, has written [an article for us about user-centred product design](#), and how important this is for older people. He gives two examples – a 'chalkboard-like' digital tablet and phone interface, and instructions for setting up a mobile phone – and the reasoning behind them.

Age UK is a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in England (registered charity number 1128267 and registered company number 6825798).