



**Cambridgeshire  
Community Study –  
*‘Unsung heroes in a  
changing climate’***



# CAMBRIDGESHIRE OLDER PEOPLE'S REFERENCE GROUP

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## Cambridgeshire Community Study – 'Unsung heroes in a changing climate'

### Summary

#### About the study

*Cambridgeshire Older People's Reference Group* (COPRG) is a self governing community group which is run by Older People for Older People. Our membership consists of one person from older people's community groups of all sizes across the county who agree to join our "linking" structure. In this way we aim to strengthen the voice of older people across the county. COPRG works to support community groups, advise and assist service providers in the statutory, voluntary and commercial sectors working in partnership where appropriate.

In 2006, COPRG representatives undertook a series of visits around the county's villages and towns, where meetings were held in sheltered housing units/residential care settings, and where we learned of the relative isolation of residents from the mainstream of village/neighbourhood life. They spoke of transport problems, and inconveniently located bus stops, which made outings more difficult. The need for more activities, and lack of relevant information, was mentioned by both residents and wardens. We heard how efforts to provide an exercise class had failed because of prohibitive costs. Some of the issues raised were taken up and resolved, but many were beyond our brief, although residents' issues were raised at county meetings with officers and councillors. Surprisingly we also discovered that informal support was the mainstay of many older people's lives. This self help is largely unrecognised by paid care and service providers.

Following this we wanted to learn more about older people's involvement in community groups and to use the study to provide evidence to policy makers and service providers from the perspective of a community group. This focus supports our efforts to improve services for older people in the county, in particular the 85% plus who do not receive social care services.

#### Methodology

Various methods of obtaining the information were used. These methods included postal questionnaires, focus groups, village studies, study of parish plans and village and organisations' newsletters. This was supplemented by interviews with community group members, statutory and voluntary organisations service providers. The internet proved to be a good source of information. In all information was collected on 260 groups during this study as a sample of the total picture.

We discovered that little has been written about community groups and their contribution to our social fabric.

*'The social ecology of small community organisations and their contributions needs to be better understood. At least equal to the amount of knowledge of small business dynamics.'*  
**'Low flying heroes, micro-social enterprise below the radar screen'**. *New Economics Foundation;*  
*MacGillivray Alex, Conaty Pat, Wadhams Chris, 2001*

#### The extent of involvement in voluntary organisations and community groups

In February 2008, the *Cambridgeshire Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Consortium* (CVSIC) estimated that there are 11,732 voluntary organisations and community groups in Cambridgeshire. CVSIC go on to claim that this is only a small proportion of organisations and people when compared with the *Quality of Life Survey* undertaken by the *Cambridgeshire County Council*, which recorded 68% of the population as volunteers, or 387,736 people.

Whilst the 260 groups studied comprised mainly of older people we have discovered that many older people are involved with a wide range of groups outside those classed as older people's groups. Our sample provides a snapshot of voluntary and community activity.

We categorised the groups we studied into three types:

1. **Self help groups within which older people re involved**
2. **Faith and church supported groups**
3. **Groups run by specialist organisations**

## 1. **Self help groups within which older people are involved**

There are an estimated 8,032 community organisations with 88,352 volunteers active in the county (CVSIC).

We gathered information through questionnaires and interviews from 127 community groups out of our total sample and have information on the numbers of people involved i.e. members, volunteers and trustees for 97 of these groups. This sample involved 6,800 people who were beneficiaries, volunteers or trustees of groups operating in localities on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis.

All of the activities offered by these groups could be characterised as promoting active ageing, raising local issues, networking and supporting social inclusion.

Of the groups listed 2 had waiting lists because of the size of accommodation available for their weekly or fortnightly meetings

*“We could do with some more, younger members. At 60, they don’t see themselves as old.” (An 86 year old group secretary)*

*“As a 61 year old, I am busy caring both for my grandchildren and my 85 year old mother.” (A part-time worker in a voluntary organisation)*

The majority of groups met in village halls but other venues included pubs, hired rooms/halls, day centres, residents’ homes, church halls, community rooms in schools and school halls, community centres, colleges, recreation halls, memorial halls, sports and social centres, youth clubs, united services clubs, public halls, village institutes and university centres.

### **Case Study – “Friday Bridge Senior Citizens” held in the Tower Hall Community Centre.**

- This club offers a wide range of events and activities offered at regular fortnightly meetings.
- These include information sharing, raising local issues and concerns, socialising, active games e.g. carpet bowls, floor curling putting game, quoits, darts, hoopla, plus cards and dominoes. Various outings ranging from lunches with speakers, events inviting other clubs are arranged.
- Members come from a wide area and the club has a waiting list of people wanting to join.

### **Case Study – “Not Quite Over The Hill Club”**

- This club meets weekly and has attendance of 80 plus members. The total membership is about 100 and there is a waiting list of 20. This waiting list is needed because they cannot accommodate more people in the community centre.
- The club is connected with the Kings Hedges neighbourhood partnership and referrals are made to the club by workers attending the partnership.
- As well as weekly meetings, other events are organized, for example outings, visits, and an annual holiday.
- The group started with a drop-in coffee morning to which 5 people came along. Gradually attendance outgrew the building. The club now hires larger accommodation in a larger community centre.
- Speakers are booked for the meetings. There is a news letter distributed to 600 people in the neighbourhood. However the main communication that supports the club is by word of mouth. The club has a very positive reputation locally.
- The group is self funding and has an active committee of 10 members together with 4 extra members who take regular extra tasks. There is a constitution and AGM. For parties, food, e.g. a ploughmans lunch, is prepared by a small group. Everyone plays an active role in maintaining and extending the activities of the club, e.g. one lady organises an annual holiday.

*“We don’t talk about age, it’s energy and interest that matter.”*  
**(A 79 year old group chair)**

## 2. Faith and church supported groups

There is no one source of information on faith group numbers in the County.

The Cambridgeshire.net lists 222 groups (accessed 15/04/09) under the category of ‘*Faith and Religion*’. This is not an exhaustive list of churches or faith groups in Cambridgeshire, but it is a list of those which have chosen to display information on this website.

Our village studies and Parish Council enquiries indicate that there are often a range of churches/faith groups in each moderately large village e.g. 5 in Burwell, and more in each town. Larger towns are likely to include many more faith and church groups.

There are 240 listed parish and town councils in the County. Many of these groups indicate that they undertake community work. From local information we know that this includes work supporting older people which is mainly provided by people over the age of 50.

We had a sample of 29 faith groups from which we obtained information about activities, participation and numbers benefiting. We established that about 1,000 older people benefit from services provided.

This sample of churches and faith groups further illustrates the extent of volunteering and provision for and by older people in the county.

On average this means that each group provides services for 35 people. Using this average we estimate that the 222 groups listed on could be providing services and support for up to 7,770 older people. About half of our sample (15), listed 243 volunteers involved in their groups. These volunteers are also mainly over 50.

In addition we found that faith groups commonly provide separate activities for older people. Some also positively strive to include older people in their general activities e.g. through help with transport.

Some activities are open to all irrespective of church/faith group membership. It is the aim of some to reach out to wider groups within their locality and make use of their facilities, resources and volunteers to this end.

People commonly attend more than one activity on a regular basis. Faith groups are well positioned to undertake work in physical and mental health crisis situations and with vulnerable people. Many individual members of faith groups and churches are involved in social action and crisis support. Leaders also offer crisis support and other forms of pastoral care to older people. They often play a significant role in end of life care.

More than half of the groups hold weekly or monthly lunches at pubs or village halls. Some groups meet weekly in members’ houses. Most have older people influencing their programmes which cover both inter-generational activity and specialist older people’s groups

In our sample church and faith groups have programmes which include seated exercise classes, craft clubs, fellowship groups, information sharing, talks, demonstrations, advice, outings and visits, history groups, recreational activities, knitting club and mental health promotion groups. There are examples of ethnic organisations which support older people’s groups e.g. the *Indian Community and Cultural Association (ICCA)* and the *Chinese Community Association*. These associations have established and supported older people’s groups.

There was clear evidence in our discussions that elders were respected and empowered to take leading roles. Both groups provide transport for their elders.

### ***Aims and Objectives of the Indian Community and Cultural Association (ICCA)***

- To educate members concerned with problems about health, finance, pension and Social Security Benefits etc.
- To help and give company to isolated members.
- To help with communication, filling-in forms etc. in English, which is our second language, and some members feel that help and guidance is needed.
- To organise day outings with visits to Temples, historic places, religious places like Katha, Havans or to special event celebrations, also day outings to seaside, picnics and to the theatre, or to Mela.

## **3. Groups run by specialist organisations**

The examples described in the study, are part of the estimated 3,700 voluntary organisations in Cambridgeshire with 40,700 volunteers involved (these figures are from the CSVIC, 02/08).

We obtained detailed information from 19 specialist groups, and from this we estimated that there were 4,440 beneficiaries. These include people who use these services and facilities, and benefit from them.

In addition, from Cambridgeshire.net, we identified further groups in Cambridgeshire from other sources e.g. 2 NHS Retirement Fellowship

groups, 17 Ex-Servicemen's clubs and 6 Probus clubs. This is just a small snapshot of activity and involvement. On the basis of the numbers listed above we can estimate that the number of beneficiaries based on the enhanced sample of 44 groups is around 10,282.

Voluntary organisations are now providing services as social enterprises (businesses with a social purpose) to raise funds for their activities. There has been some progress in low level services to sustain older people at home, for example the 'handyman schemes'.

## **The contribution older people make to sustain themselves, their communities and localities**

Older people are informal family carers for family and friends. It has been estimated that 3 million people, that is one in seven men and one in six women who are over 50 are involved in unpaid caring for frail, sick or disabled adults (*"The Economic Contribution of Older People"*, *Age Concern 2004*). If this care were paid for rather than unpaid it would cost around £15 billion a year. Caring responsibilities are widespread among people aged over 50. Overall women over 50 are most likely to be providing care for others (25%) and around 18% of men in this age group provide unpaid care. In the Eastern region the estimated value of unpaid care provided by people aged over 50 was estimated to be £12,888,000 (*Family Resources Survey 2001-2002*). Interestingly, grand-parenting is the main source of child care provision (*Age Concern Study*).

Volunteering in other capacities within community groups and voluntary organisations is also a source of 'social capital'. If voluntary organisations had to pay for the services of their older person volunteers it has been suggested that this would cost them in the region of £5 billion a year. The Eastern region is

ranked second in volunteering rates (42% of people aged over 50) in the *Office of National Statistics (ONS) Omnibus Survey 03/2001 and 06/2001*.

Differentiation between types of volunteering is not apparent in most studies. In this study we have differentiated between the work of self help community groups and those groups run by voluntary organisations including faith groups where volunteers are used to fulfil their charitable aims.

### ***Tackling Social Isolation***

Many of the community groups studied are promoting social inclusion and are aware of the social isolation and loneliness of older people. Throughout the study it has been part of our objective to get suggestions and ideas on how people with support needs who are not in touch with social care and health services can be assisted. A list of recommendations for workforce development forms part of the <sup>1</sup>report which was submitted to *Eastern Region Skills for Care* and local *NHS/Social Service* directors in April 2009.

<sup>1</sup>The report '**Unsung Heroes in a Changing Climate**' will be available from COVER <http://www.cover-east.org/>

These include:

- Involving service users in training programmes;
- Engaging with community groups when planning and reviewing services;
- Extending training in the skills of empowerment and recognising ageist practices.
- Measuring the gaps in social care needs;
- Extending users and carers' organisations;
- Extending support to older carers who are largely outside service provision;

Some communities are more successful than others in tackling social isolation in conjunction with service providers. We have been able to identify the many contributions to neighbourhood support and networking made by older people. For many of them this is a natural process and part of normal living. These are some of the 'unsung heroes below the radar screen' who are seldom recognised for their contribution. However there remain gaps in the extent of provision and evidence of unfairness in the health and social care systems which have been documented and widely publicised.

The village studies complemented the examination of parish plans and revealed different characteristics of the many villages in relation to their concern for vulnerable and isolated people. Much of the community activity of the villages, and as revealed in the parish plans, depended on people having time and interest to spend in the village. Some places contained more commuters than others. Village transport facilities varied which impinged on the well-being on those who weren't driving.

An interesting local example is *The Burwell Community Forum – "Supporting community life in our Village"*. This voluntary group started as a community organisation in the 1980s and now includes a County District and Parish Councillor, the local Extra Care Housing Manager, and the District Nurse. Its purposes include giving support to the many community groups and activities in the village with help and small grants, planning and implementing wider events, and providing a community Lunch and Coffee Bar. This example provides us with a model of good practice which may be replicated elsewhere.

A major, biannual event is the "*Burwell at Large Exhibition*" - the showcase event for local clubs, classes and organisations which take place in the Village College. These include a range of weekly/regular events targeted at older people, though most are for all ages. At least 35 community groups/organisations exist in Burwell.

## ***The changing climate***

### **Social and economic change**

The period of this study (April 2008 to April 2009) coincides with a period of social and economic change within Cambridgeshire, as well as nationally and internationally. These changes may influence the attitudes and values of workers and citizens towards older people, and are likely to affect the availability of resources for them. Concerns regarding the sustainability of voluntary organisations which provide some essential services are becoming more apparent in a competitive climate.

The previous culture of voluntary sector provision has changed from being grant aided to that of commissioning and tendering. There is now a growing awareness of the business potential of social care services as voluntary and commercial interests increasingly engage and compete.

There has been limited progress in developing approaches including the personalisation agenda and services to sustain older people at home. Gaps remain in the extent of provision and evidence of unfairness in the health and social care system have been widely documented and publicised. There still remains a postcode lottery within Cambridgeshire. Services are patchy throughout the county, which is widely diverse in terms of the opportunities available to citizens e.g. housing, income, health, transport, employment etc.. Mortality rates vary widely.

The need for a holistic approach to the promotion of well-being for all citizens continues to influence recent policy discussions, but has not become a priority.

As this study has identified, the need for collective wellbeing is being more widely recognised. It is expressed in some of our localities in different ways and strengthens communities which include older people. Some individuals are able to mobilise others to fulfil community needs and develop common interest groups. Many of these are run by older people and are autonomous, controlling their

own agenda. Other groups are run by voluntary organisations with staff support meeting specific needs e.g. *Parkinson's Society, Age Concern*.

In addition it appears that an increasing number of unemployed people and those retiring early are seeking opportunities to acquire new skills through volunteering e.g. through volunteer bureaux. The intention is to match them to meet the needs of other organisations and individuals.

The media has drawn attention to inadequacies in the present social care system which is now widely considered unfair and is the subject of a national consultation. The need for services to work together in partnership has not been uniformly achieved. The desire to promote wellbeing for all citizens is often stated as an objective but there is a gap between the words used and the reality of the situation.

## Population

The UK has an increasingly older population, with the number of people over 65 predicted to rise up to 60% by 2034. Looking ahead, in Cambridgeshire the number of over 65s is expected to increase to from 89,800 in 2007 to 141,899 by 2021. This is an increase of 52,099 which is approximately 58%. In the shorter term by 2011 there are expected to be 102,800 people over 65 which is an increase of 13,000 from the 2007 figure or an increase of 14.5%.

Figures from <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/community/population/forecasts/Populationforecasts.htm>

(verified 15/09/2009).

This rapid change is with us now and illustrates the urgency to transform training and service provision to improve the quality of this longer life-span. Actions plans to maintain and support independent living are required in Cambridgeshire. Good practice can be identified in localities but there is still no comprehensive plan to promote the social inclusion of older people.

## Changes in Cambridgeshire

The Government 'Change Up' programme and *Capacity Building Projects* are intended to benefit and strengthen the voluntary and community sectors. In Cambridgeshire grants were made through CSVIC. It has been difficult to discern outcomes from these initiatives which have benefited older people and community groups in the county. We do know that help has been given for the development of websites. However, 71% of older people

do not use computers (Audit Commission). In our sample a very small proportion of older people's community groups used computers.

The promotion of Parish Plans by the *Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)* has stimulated some interest in encouraging local participation and recognising the diversity of local communities.

A recent development has been the launch of the *Cambridgeshire Older People's Partnership Board (COPPB)* which was launched at a *Cambridgeshire Celebrates Age* event in October 2007. This is a partnership between interested councillors, officers in the voluntary and statutory services and representatives from some older people's community groups. Currently the COPPB is working to clarify its role.

The first *Strategy for Older People 2008-2011*, was published during the course of this study. An action plan was still under consideration when this research was completed in April 2009.

## The national picture

At the time of writing, the government was due to release the long awaited Green Paper during summer 2009, which will set out plans to reform adult social care. At the same time, the government is set to launch a consultation paper on its *National Strategy for an Ageing Society* which aims to reach beyond the traditional spheres of health and social care and consider how we can adapt to the changing population profile to develop a society for all ages. There are opportunities for older people's groups to make themselves heard.

## Moving from patronage to partnership

One evidence of ageism is the extent to which older people are patronised by those providing services. The main aim of older people working for older people and speaking up for themselves is to achieve dignity and respect through working in a partnership of equals. However, few professional workers are skilled in the art of empowering their users to engage in this way.

*"We need a cultural revolution – a move from patronage to partnership"*  
**(An 86 year old vice-chair)**



Health and social services are needed to promote positive attitudes to older people. Front line workers are in a good position to pursue a 'joined-up' approach to older people's care. However, this aim has to still to be translated into partnership practice in most areas.

*"Improving services for older people" recognises that 'Older people greatly value good physical and mental health but they also stress the importance of being able to participate in life. They want to maintain independence and dignity in older age, have choice and control and crucially be part of mainstream society'. 'Improving services for older people'. Roberts, Emily, King's Fund*

Our study confirms that older people are significant contributors to society.

## Locality links, networks and partnership working

We discovered that in a few areas, informal linking mechanisms between different local community groups have been established. Also some links have been made between local service organisations and community groups, but the pattern is varied. Over-all, it appears that links between the infrastructure of county organisations and locality networks is not widely established. However, connection has been achieved in some localities between service providers and their member organisations e.g. the Fenland Council of Voluntary Service (CVS).

Other CVS groups in the County have different mechanisms for linking their member groups. Apart from COPRG there are no formal linking mechanisms for older people's community groups across the county. Community groups are not directly engaged with CVSIC and no community groups are listed as members of Cambridgeshire Together.

*Fenland District Council* organises *Golden Age Fairs* which include exhibitions each year in a different villages across the district. At these events information is available on different services and organisers are able to give details of services and help for older people. By this means, some service providers are able to advertise and promote their services. However, community self help groups of older people are not included.

Some of the voluntary societies and charities we identified e.g. Probus, WI, U3A, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's Societies etc. enable people with common interests and needs to meet regularly in accessible locations. One example of how statutory services provide links between family carers is provided through the *Carers' Partnership Board* and informal carers' groups which meet in different localities across the County. Reaching out to older carers who are not known to services remains a challenge.

In the neighbourhood of Kings Hedges/Arbury, the *Cambridge City Community Development Team* has developed a locality partnership board, linking a range of community centres activities, on which older people's groups and others are represented. The *Arbury Festival* started in 1997 attracted about 5,000 people last year and all local organisations and schools, contributed to the colourful procession. This important local community event links local organisations in Arbury/Kings Hedges.

Community organisations also work to link and publicise statutory, voluntary and other community groups e.g. through AGM displays and events providing information to members. One example is the *Petersfield Area Community Trust* which held an annual street party/summer event attracting around 400 local residents. I also involved links with businesses and other community interests. Another local street party held by *Gwydir Street Residents Group* encourages local businesses and groups to participate.

Some groups have formed links with others to share common interests, e.g. through joint meetings, special events, shared meals, outings and holidays. For example, in *Wicken the Older People's Group* shares events with a similar one in Willingham. In Petersfield, the *Cherry Trees Over 50s* have had joint meetings and events with the nearby *Indian Community Association Over 50s Club*. They share outings with *Friends of Disability*.

Over the past four years, the *Cambridgeshire Celebrates Age* project has been focusing its development on district and locality "Hubs". Inter-generational and service links are formed through the partnership programmes of activities—with schools, nurseries, and higher education centres joining in the programme.

A number of Churches and Faith groups join together to share worship and other events. The Inter-faith movement also encourages this to happen. Many churches share clergy.

Some of the county wide organisations arrange quarterly meetings for their members, e.g. *Age Concern*, *Cambridgeshire Older People's Enterprise*, *Cambridgeshire Older People's Reference Group*; and *Cambridgeshire Older People's Partnership Board*. In addition special activities are available and some provide useful newsletters. COPRG links older people's community groups within the county, in order to strengthen their voice at county policy level. This study forms part of our efforts to achieve this aim.

*Cambridge CVS* recently conducted a study in South Cambs exploring the possibility of establishing more structured networks (*Networks and Neighbourhoods 2008*).

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## Findings

This summary report reveals a range of findings. Our full report expands key evidence and themes. The most striking discovery of the research was the existence of many thriving and diverse groups across the county, run by, and supporting older people.

**There is an imbalance** between the participation and engagement of older women and men in community groups and locality activities. The *Health Survey for England 2005*, published by the *National Centre for Social Research (NatCen)*, identifies women as more likely than men to report participating in at least one organised association. This has implications in social care settings and also in finding ways of supporting men at home.

As this study has shown, the need for promoting wellbeing amongst older people is being recognised and expressed; however, this response is variable, depending on the values and attitudes of local leaders.

**The promotion of active ageing** by public sector organisations is now a more common theme and has had some practical outcomes for older people. In some areas, locally accessible exercise groups are provided through the '*Forever Active Forum*' supported by the *Cambridge City Council* and through '*Living Sport*' which is promoted by a joint partnership in other parts of the County.

## Tackling discrimination

Because age discrimination is deeply rooted (to the extent that older people themselves sometimes hold ageist views) it is difficult to tackle even when the problem is recognised. Our evidence indicates that the single most effective strategy is to involve older people, users of services and carers and to recognise the 'unsung heroes' at community level who are themselves essential to promoting social inclusion.

Ageism is attracting widespread attention. It needs wider understanding as to how it affects older people's daily lives. Fortunately, more people are becoming aware of its personal implications. We all need to raise awareness of attitudes and behaviour which are prejudices towards older people.

However, active ageing relates not only to physical exercise but to social inclusion.

**Having direct involvement of older people** in the planning, provision and monitoring of services appears a minority practice.

*'Most councils should do more to create an environment in which people thrive as they age'*

- Increased awareness, better engagement and innovation could help many older people without significant expenditure.'

*'Don't stop me now - Preparing for an ageing population'. Published by the Audit Commission July 2008*

There is much diversity amongst older people. This is not always recognised and accepted. Stereotyping by age is still widely practiced.

## Other findings of our study relating to good practice include:

- Three examples of welcoming new arrivals to village communities were found in Burwell, Lolworth and Linton. This included welcome packs and other ways encouraging participation in the community.
- According status to community elders in order to maintain a sense of identity,

purpose and choice. This was found in our study of the ICCA and *Chinese Community Association*.

- User and carer engagement with service providers is beginning to emerge in Cambridgeshire. Moving this engagement beyond the tick box is the next step for most statutory and voluntary services.
- Current provision shows scant regard for outcomes or mapping un-met needs. One example where this is changing is Care Network who have prepared a business plan for collecting older people's stories and providing a voice for users.

- Some village communities have actively responded to difficulties faced by residents in attending and accessing events, services and shopping facilities by setting up community transport schemes, lift shares and community minibuses. There continue to be gaps in transport provision and therefore access to services and advice in times of crisis. However the county council community transport officer now publishes community transport booklets describing who can use community transport, how to use it and how these schemes may link with other forms of transport.

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## Conclusion and acknowledgements

As an older people's community group, COPRG thanks all those 260 groups who have taken part in the study. Also, those who have participated in interviews, focus groups and by questionnaire. Others who have given their time and shared their stories about their lives, their groups and their organisations. Plus those who acted as 'critical friends' as the study developed and in particular *Community and Voluntary Forum Eastern Region (COVER)*, which provided administrative support and advice. Thanks are due also to *Eastern Region Skills for Care* for funding expenses, including administrative support for the volunteer researchers.

We hope that this study helps to achieve better understanding of how many older people are contributing to their families, neighbourhoods and communities and how services can work together in producing a fairer society.

Most of all, we hope that the voice of older people will be strengthened and taken into account and that we too will be regarded as an equal partner.

We have identified innovative and collaborative practices which have involved older people in bringing support to other older people, thus promoting social inclusion. We have become aware that some service providers are beginning to develop the skills to empower older people's efforts to act collectively.

We hope that we have revealed some of the gaps and inequalities in service provision in Cambridgeshire.

It has been nationally recognised that the present varying eligibility criteria for older people requiring extra social care/support has had the effect of reducing the numbers of people receiving support at home.

In addition we have tackled the stereotypes that surround us and shown the contributions made by older people even those with long term limiting illness and disability who contribute to our society.

*Central to our approach has been 'the search for ways to involve everyone with an emphasis placed on finding creative solutions to maintain social relationships: even in the face of restriction'.*

*'Building a good life for older people in local communities'; <http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialcare/014.asp> (verified 15/09/2009).*

It's not just a question of more resources but how these resources are distributed and used. It is also about changing prevailing attitudes and the barriers encountered. Meeting the needs of our vulnerable and socially isolated people is the challenge facing us all.

## Disclaimer

Whilst recognising the help given by many people, COPRG takes responsibility for possible mistakes and omissions.

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