

EPSRC

Introduction to the EPSRC Extending Quality of Life (EQUAL) Programme

Catherine Coates

Director of Planning and Communication
Engineering and Physical Sciences
Research Council

EPSRC and Extending QUALity of Life

EPSRC's mission is to:

- Promote and support, by any means, high quality basic, strategic and applied research and related postgraduate training in engineering and the physical sciences.
- Advance knowledge and technology (including the promotion and support of the exploitation of research outcomes), and provide trained scientists and engineers, which meet the needs of users and beneficiaries (including the chemical, communications, construction, electrical, electronic, energy, engineering, information technology, pharmaceutical, process and other industries), thereby contributing to the economic competitiveness of Our United Kingdom and the **quality of life**.

The Mission of EQUAL

- To draw together disparate research activities that bear on the extension of the active period of people's lives, thereby helping individuals to achieve a better lifestyle, participate more fully and actively, and avoid or alleviate the effects of disability.

The Spirit of EQUAL

EQUAL research should be:

- **Multi-disciplinary**, linking physical science, design and engineering with social, health and medical scientists
- **Collaborative** with industry, healthcare providers, charities, local authorities, intermediaries etc.
- **User focused** – directly involving older and disabled people

History of EQUAL

- Began 1997, last of current projects due to finish 2011
- More than £12M committed, across 42 projects, 48 research teams and 33 universities.
- Projects focused on Built Environment, Design for All and Rehabilitation.
- EQUAL Research Network (2001-04) linked over 500 researchers, intermediaries and older people

Examples of Impacts Built on EQUAL projects

- Judith Torrington's "Upgrading Buildings for Older People" RIBA endorsed report
- Hilary Dalke et al.'s "Lighting and Colour for Hospital Design" NHS Estates report
- Elizabeth Burton's contributions to "Neighbourhoods for Life: A check-list of recommendations for designing dementia-friendly outdoor environments" from Housing Corporation to housing associations
- Roger Coleman and John Clarkson's Inclusive Design toolkit supported by RSA and Design Council

Current EQUAL Consortia

- **I'DGO TOO** – to identify the most effective ways of ensuring that the outdoor environment is designed inclusively and with sensitivity to the needs and desires of older people, to improve their quality of life.
- **i~design 3** – to prioritise the role and value of extreme users in innovation and new product/service development
- **SMART: Self-Management supported by Assistive, Rehabilitation and Telecare technologies** – to deepen understanding of the potential for technological support of self management of chronic conditions.

Other EPSRC Ageing Research Activities

- SPARC – Strategic Promotion of Ageing Research Capacity (with BBSRC)
- New Dynamics of Ageing (with ESRC, AHRC, BBSRC and MRC)
- Lifelong Health and Wellbeing (with MRC, BBSRC and ESRC)
- Assisted Living Innovation Platform (with Technology Strategy Board and Department of Health)

Future EQUAL Activities

- **KT-EQUAL**
 - a network of networks to support the exchange of knowledge between research and user communities
 - Discussions with EQUAL community over autumn on composition, funding decision by June 08