

Sustainable neighbourhoods for older people

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I'DGO consortium project

- Inclusive Design for Getting Outdoors (I'DGO)
- Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC)
- Extending Quality Life Initiative (EPSRC EQUAL)

Academic partners

- OISD:WISE
 - Wellbeing in Sustainable Environments Research Unit
 - Promotes social sustainability in the built environment; particularly wellbeing, mental health and quality of life
 - Researching how urban form affects older people's quality of life for the I'DGO project

Academic partners

- SURFACE
 - Inclusive Design Research Centre at the University of Salford
 - Research focus on detailed design for I'DGO
- OPENspace
 - research centre for inclusive access to outdoor environments at Edinburgh College of Art/ Heriot-Watt University
 - Research focus on open space for I'DGO

Consortium partners

- Sensory Trust
- Housing Corporation
- RICAbility
- Dementia Voice
- Attend advisory group meetings and provide practical help, such as sourcing participants

Consortium collaborators

- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
- Aberdeen City Council
- UK Institute for Inclusive Design
- Cherwell District Council
- Edinburgh City Council
- JMU Access Partnership
- Manchester Disabled People's Access Group

Consortium collaborators

- Merseytravel
- Page and Park Architects
- Respect for People
- Southern Derbyshire NHS Trust
- Wales Tourist Board
- Attend stakeholder workshops/forums

Research challenge

- UK Government's Sustainable Communities Plan
 - to contribute to a high quality of life
 - to meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents and other users
 - to provide opportunity and choice
 - to help people live where they want
 - to help people feel proud of their neighbourhood

Research challenge

- Increasing numbers of older people, especially over the age of 85
- Now more people aged over 60 in UK than children aged under 16
- Government committed to improving all older people's quality of life

Research challenge

- To date, research has focused on the usability and safety of internal environments
 - Lifetime Homes standards aim to provide housing suitable for all ages and needs
 - Smart Home technology aims to provide a safer home environment for people with memory problems

Research challenge

- Also important to ensure that older people's neighbourhoods are safe, welcoming, accessible and legible
- Otherwise many older people can become effectively housebound

Research challenge

- Getting outdoors has many positive benefits
 - psychological: relaxation, reduced stress/depression
 - physiological: fresh air and exercise
 - social: social contact and interaction
 - physical: buying supplies, visiting doctor

Research aim

To identify the most effective ways of ensuring that the outdoor environment is designed inclusively to improve the quality of life (QoL) of older people

Research objectives

- To establish QoL criteria for older people in terms of the outdoor environment
- To investigate how different outdoor environments perform in relation to these QoL criteria
- To identify positive and negative features of outdoor environments
- To provide guidance for developers, designers and user groups

Who will benefit?

- All users of the outdoor environment
- Organisations and groups representing the interests of older people and disabled people
- Planners, designers, managers, developers and landowners
- Community and residents' associations
- Academics and other researchers studying built and natural environments

Focus group objectives

- To identify aspects of QoL that older people feel are important in terms of the outdoor environment
- To hear about older people's opinions and experiences of their local neighbourhoods
- To use this information to develop an interview questionnaire and checklist of outdoor elements

Focus group participants

- 2 urban, 3 suburban and 2 rural groups of 3 to 8 people
- 28 women and 12 men aged 65+
- White, Caribbean and Asian
- Living in own home or in sheltered housing

Focus group schedule

- Opening question: “When you think of the term ‘quality of life’, what comes to your mind?”
- Slide show of features of the outdoor environment to encourage discussion of how these affect their QoL
- Review exercise to establish level of importance of each key point raised

Quality of life criteria

- Safety and comfort
 - not falling or having accidents
 - safety from traffic
 - being able to rest or seek shelter
- Physical health
 - fresh air and exercise
- Mobility
 - access to services, facilities and amenities
 - being able to get around easily

Quality of life criteria

- Perceived safety
 - from crime, assault or robbery
- Enjoyment
- Stimulation
 - variety in life
 - being mentally active
- Emotional wellbeing
 - relaxation
 - purpose in life

Quality of life criteria

- Sense of community and belonging
 - safety
 - wellbeing
- Social interaction
 - meeting people
 - variety and purpose in life
- Autonomy and control
 - independence
 - self-esteem and motivation

Urban form

- Location
 - major city/town centre
 - major city/town district
 - major city/town suburban/edge
 - large town centre
 - large town suburban/edge
 - small town
 - village

Urban form

- Street pattern
 - regular geometric grid
 - distorted grid
 - curvilinear
 - cul-de-sacs
 - radial
 - linear
 - no discernible pattern

Urban form

- Street type
 - main road
 - high street
 - avenue
 - residential street/square
 - residential cul-de-sac
 - mews/court
 - rural through street
 - rural side street/lane

Urban form

- Mix of use
- Enclosure
 - ratio of building height to street width
- Variety/styles of built form
- Street frontage
 - amount of setback between buildings and footway

Urban form

- Street activity
- Street surveillance
 - streets faced with blank walls, tall fences or hedges
 - streets faced with front doors and windows
- Amount/type of street greenery
- Topography

Next steps

- Develop questionnaire and book of photographs to find out how urban form affects QoL criteria
- Interview 200 older people in different UK locations and dwelling types
- Develop checklist of outdoor elements to measure the outdoor characteristics of participants' local neighbourhoods