

## Healthcare Cross-collaboration to Support Ageing Community



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We now live longer but increased life expectancy has led to more pressure on healthcare services. The Design Council in the UK is involved in an innovative new drive to improve the experience for all concerned. Called [Transform Ageing](#) this new cross-sector initiative brings together people in later life, social entrepreneurs and health and social care leaders to define, develop and deliver innovative new solutions that support the needs and aspirations of people in later life. Chris Finnegan answers HealthManagement.org's question:

What obstacles will Transform Ageing overcome to better the healthcare situation for older people?

The Big Lottery Fund saw the potential in our ambition, and the programme [received £3.65m](#) this summer. Design Council will be working alongside [UnLtd](#), the [South West Academic Health Science Network](#) and the [Centre for Ageing Better](#). Launching in Cornwall, Devon and Somerset the next step in the process is to recruit delivery organisations to get the programme off the ground, directly connecting with local people to help shape and design solutions.

One of the triumphs of the previous century, a vastly improved life expectancy – looks set to be one of the great *challenges* of this one. Today, for the first time in history, Britain's over 65s outnumber people under the age of 16. By 2020, nearly *half* of the adult population will be over 50. It's not just that people are living longer; people are living longer with increasingly complex health conditions. With that, new generations have different expectations about how they interact with services and the type of products developed to support them in later life. This creates huge demand on an already stretched health and social care system. New, innovative products and solutions are required – and quickly.

The obstacles – or *challenges* – in our way to achieving this are varied and numerous. We must begin by breaking down barriers between different stakeholder groups and involving everyone from the outset. This can then create collaborative environments that encourage a user-led approach.

We must help health and social care leaders find opportunities to try new ideas while managing risk, and understand that 'iteration' does not necessarily mean 'failure'.

Through first-class research, collaborative working and rigorous design, Transform Ageing will help local communities to take charge of their care needs. By directly engaging with local people we can identify the key health and social care challenges they face. In turn, by taking this approach we can generate tangible, creative and lasting solutions to meet the needs of the south-west of England and beyond.

In order to do this, local communities, individuals, carers, family, friends and professionals in each of these regions need to be at the heart of the process. It is the Transform Ageing partnership's job to work with local organisations to make that happen. It's essential to support commissioners to feel more confident in incorporating new services and interventions into mainstream care supply chains, and social entrepreneurs to scale their solutions and provide evidence of their impact to enable them to be commissioned.

That's why our partnership's first steps are to recruit up to four delivery organisations (or consortia of organisations), ideally one in each of Cornwall, Somerset, north-east and west Devon and south Devon. We believe that cross-sector collaboration, including social entrepreneurialism, that is shaped and driven by lived experience will bring about a health and care system that is more personalised, more connected and, above all, more preventative.

The programme has been welcomed by health and social care leaders as an important step in improving services for people in later life. Rt Hon  
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Prof. Paul Burstow, former Minister of State for Care, said: “Transform Ageing offers a practical approach to making communities in the south-west more age-ready. Using design innovation that starts with the experience of people in their later lives and taps into the energy of social entrepreneurs and the insight of health and local government to devise practical solutions. Above all, this programme has the potential to deliver new, scalable and sustainable solutions that meet the needs and aspirations of our ageing communities across the UK. It could make a real difference to people in their later lives.”

We want the best health and social care innovations – whether that’s a new service, product or indeed anything else – to reach people in later life as quickly as possible. Our vision is that by creating services better aligned to real-life needs and issues, everyone’s experience of ageing will be improved. Ultimately, the aim is to help design a better experience of ageing, for everyone.

If you would like to find out more and get involved, contact [transformageing@designcouncil.org.uk](mailto:transformageing@designcouncil.org.uk)

Published on : Mon, 2 Jan 2017