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Northumbria leading research to improve independent living for elderly people

Experts in ageing at Northumbria University, Newcastle, are leading research to understand the role of home adaptations in improving later life.

The Centre for Ageing Better has commissioned a team from Northumbria to carry out primary research to gather real world evidence from practitioners and elderly people with lived experience into how home adaptations can contribute to improving living standards.

The team from Northumbria, and their collaborating partners - Newcastle

University, North Tyneside Council, Newcastle City Council and Newcastle's Elders Council - are a multidisciplinary team with a wealth of experience in ageing, housing, health, home adaptations and service development.

Using creative and innovative participatory methods, they will work with older people, carers and practitioners to develop and deliver the research and produce findings that have practical implications for quality of life.

Cathy Bailey, Associate Professor Ageing at Northumbria University, is leading the multidisciplinary research team.

She said: "In the UK many older people live independently at home but with age, there is a greater risk of living with debilitating long term conditions such as dementia, heart disease and limited mobility. Being able to get on with every day activity and be connected locally and socially, can help maintain health and a good quality of life.

"Timely, affordable, usable and well maintained home adaptations, from hand rails to stair lifts, can support such independence and delay a move to supported housing. Alongside robust research, more needs to be known about the lived reality of home adaptations for older people from different backgrounds and housing tenure. For example, what are their experiences of home adaptations? what helps or hinders finding advice and support? What about cost? How do older people decide what's best? and what impacts do home adaptations have on everyday life?

"Hearing from providers and practitioners, from those working in local authority to a 'handyperson', is also important to understand how home adaptations are perceived, used and maintained and thus how future provision may be improved."

Ageing Better takes a broad view on what constitutes evidence. Ageing Better has already commissioned a team from the University of the West of England, Bristol (UWE Bristol) and the Building Research Establishment (BRE) to conduct a review of the published evidence into how home adaptations can contribute to a good later life in November 2016. This research project will gather evidence from practice and lived experience and be used to help understand how the findings of the review of published evidence can be implemented in the real world.

Rachael Docking, Senior Evidence Manager, the Centre for Ageing Better said: “With the majority of older people living in existing housing it is essential for us to look for the best solutions to adapting current housing stock. Through gathering evidence from experienced practitioners, who witness the challenges people face every day, and people (and their carers), who live with these challenges every day, we can bridge the gap between published research and the real world.”

The research will begin in Summer 2017 and findings from the study are due to be published later in 2017.

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Contacts



Rik Kendall

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Business and Law / Arts, Design & Social Sciences

rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk

07923 382339



Andrea Slowey

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Engineering and Environment / Health and Life Sciences

andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk

07708 509436



Rachael Barwick

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk

07377422415



James Fox

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk

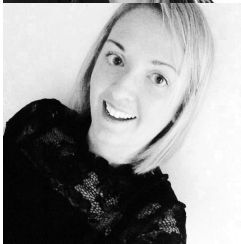


Kelly Elliott

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk



Gemma Brown

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk