



Older people: research summary



Older people: evaluation summary

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Executive summary

This document is a summary of research that the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) commissioned in December 2006 about older people, who we define as being people over the age of 50. The aim of the research was to assess the impact of our funding programmes on older people, to explore opportunities for older people in our current funding programmes and to identify areas of need where we could potentially make an effective contribution for older people in the future. The content of this summary is our interpretation of the full research report which is available on our website at: www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

Impact of past programmes

- ▶ Older people directly benefited from programmes funded by the Big Lottery Fund's predecessor organisations – the New Opportunities Fund and the Community Fund.
- ▶ The Community Fund included older people as a priority group and many projects were designed to promote social activities or support social centres and events.
- ▶ Around one third of all grants awarded by the Community Fund aimed to address the needs of older people.
- ▶ Grants for older people from the New Opportunities Fund fell within five overarching themes: health, lifelong learning, preventative health, the environment and neighbourhood regeneration.
- ▶ An analysis of New Opportunities Fund grants by age groups showed that substantially more funding was awarded to projects that targeted young people than to those focussing on older people.

Current programmes

- ▶ Over 32 new programmes had been launched by BIG at the time of the research. The majority of the programmes offer few specific opportunities to meet the distinct needs of older people.
- ▶ Around a quarter of BIG's programmes focus on the needs of the broader community, which could include the interests of older people.

Areas of need

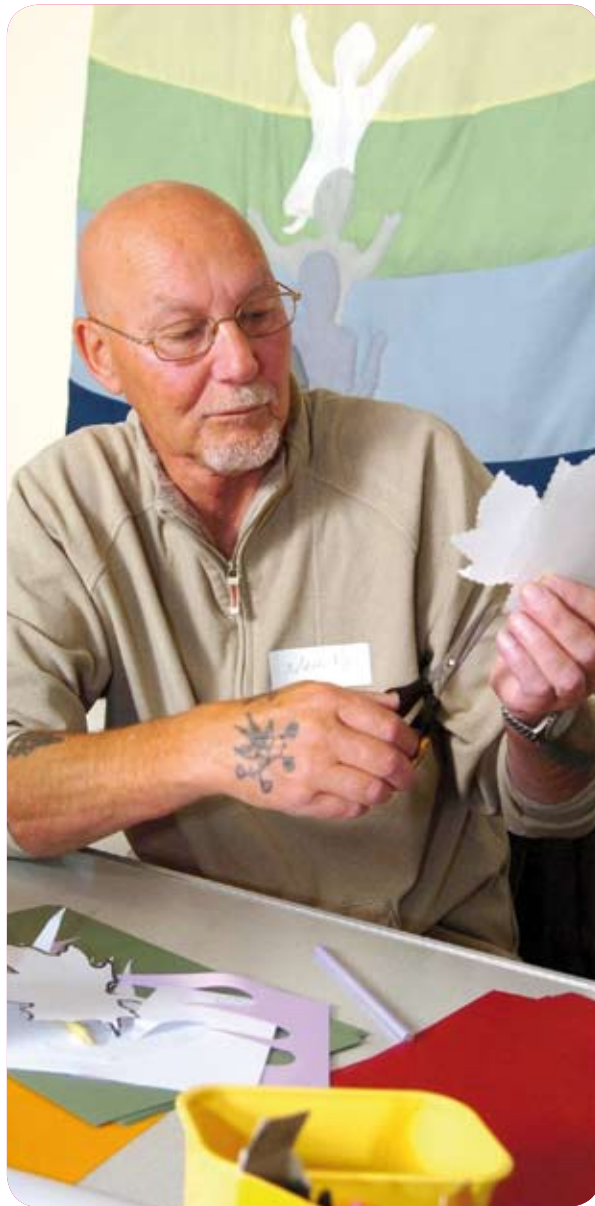
- ▶ The research identified several areas of need for older people where BIG or other funders could potentially make a contribution in the future. These include health and social care, independent living, poverty and social exclusion, employment and education and active citizenship.
- ▶ Specific groups of older people were seen to have particular needs or to be under-represented in funding streams. These include older people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups; older people with a disability; older lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people; those living in a residential home; older prisoners; and people with multiple disadvantages
- ▶ There is considerable support from stakeholders for BIG to continue a model of funding that combines strategic priorities with a responsive approach that allows us to meet needs that are defined by communities.

Introduction

In December 2006, the Big Lottery Fund commissioned the Policy Studies Institute to assess the relevance and impact of our funding programmes on older people, explore opportunities for older people in our current funding programmes and identify areas of need where we could potentially make an effective contribution in the future. For the purpose of the research, we defined older people as being people over the age of 50.

The research addressed the following questions.

- ▶ Have different groups of older people received different levels of benefit from our funding to date?
- ▶ How have organisations concerned with older people benefited from our funding?
- ▶ How have older people been involved in projects? What are their views on the impact of our funding?
- ▶ What has been the degree of fit between our funding directed towards older people and strategic priorities and policies at the national level?
- ▶ What potential is there to direct funding towards older people in our current programmes?
- ▶ What distinctive contribution could the Big Lottery Fund make in the future to improve the lives of older people?



Fieldwork was completed between January and June 2007. The research used several methods including:

- ▶ A review of funding incorporating a quantitative analysis of grants awarded.
- ▶ Interviews with BIG staff, policy experts, grant holders and older people beneficiaries.
- ▶ A policy and literature review related to issues for older people.
- ▶ Case study visits to older people's projects that we have funded.
- ▶ A mapping exercise to identify funding gaps and future directions.

Policy context

The 2001 census estimates that there are over 11 million older people living in the United Kingdom. The number of people aged 60 or over is now larger than the number of the children under 16. It is expected that a third of the population will be over the age of 50 by 2020.

During the past 10 years, Government, commerce and the public have become increasingly interested in the economic and social implications of an ageing population. Issues related to population change and old age are high on the domestic political agenda. These include pension policies and the age of entitlement to statutory old age benefits, the nature and impact of age discrimination in employment, health care and the public-

private split in the funding of long-term care.

Organisations that work with older people benefit less from charitable giving by the public compared to organisations that work with most other groups of people. Only 8 per cent of charitable donations are made specifically for older people. In contrast, 14 per cent of charitable donations are for animals. Health-related causes attract the highest amount of charitable giving, with 40 per cent of people donating to medical research and 25 per cent to hospitals or hospices.

The incidence of health problems is increasing among the oldest people in the UK. Men and women can now expect to live longer in poorer health. The fourth age, which is



Policy context

defined as the retirement years, is characterised by an increased risk of health difficulties associated with degenerative ageing and is often accompanied by a decline in social participation and civic engagement.

The increased awareness of the ageing population has prompted the Government to prepare for the expanding needs of older people. The older population spans a 50-year age range and their needs vary accordingly, but extend to all aspects of life including employment, health, housing, transport, citizenship and leisure.

The Government's agenda for an ageing society is represented by policies such as Opportunity Age from the Department for Work and Pensions and A Sure Start to Later Life from the Social Exclusion Unit. These policies aim to promote active ageing, choice and control over services, social inclusion and well-being. The BIG ethos to support quality of life in diverse communities complements these agendas.

The devolved administrations in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have launched separate policies outlining plans to support their ageing populations. In Northern Ireland, Ageing in an Inclusive Society promotes and supports the inclusion of older people and aims to meet four key objectives relating to the well-being of older people including financial resources, service delivery, equality of opportunity and community environment. The Northern Ireland Assembly also recently announced that it is intending to appoint a Commissioner with responsibilities for older people.

The Scottish Executive's All Our Futures: Planning for a Scotland with an Ageing Population sets out a framework for older people over the next 20 years. The strategy identifies six priority areas including health and well-being, life long learning, housing, transport, care, support and protection, and intergenerational activity.

The Strategy for Older People in Wales outlines the Welsh Assembly Government's approach for older people over four key areas including valuing older people, changing society, living longer and healthier lives and coping with increased dependency on housing, social care and health services. The Welsh Assembly Government will be appointing a Commissioner to ensure that the interests of older people are safeguarded and promoted in Wales.



Impact of past programmes

BIG funding for older people

Projects for older people were funded by both our legacy organisations – the New Opportunities Fund and the Community Fund. Older people were one of the priority groups funded by the Community Fund and they also received grants under a number of strategic programmes funded by the New Opportunities Fund.

The following section details the impact of Community Fund and New Opportunities Fund grants for older people.

Community Fund

The Community Fund's grant decisions were informed by a number of key aims. These included reducing isolation, promoting independent living, minimising the impact of failing health and mitigating the effects of low income. Older people accounted for around one third of grants awarded by the Community Fund. Most of the money distributed to projects for older people fell within the following broad themes: social, recreational, educational, health, advice and transport.

A wide variety of projects were supported by the Community Fund, ranging from one-off events such as Jubilee or D-Day celebrations benefiting entire communities, to longer-term initiatives such as educational opportunities or repairs for community centres. Grants were also awarded to projects providing housing or independent living schemes, respite care, transportation and advocacy services.

The most commonly funded projects were designed to promote social activities or support social centres and events. Many such

Case study

Retired Senior Volunteer Project at Community Service Volunteers – Schools Project

The project recruits active retired people to work as volunteer classroom assistants to schools in Wales. The project recruits volunteers aged over 50 to work in a local primary or secondary school, usually on a regular day each week. Volunteers are Criminal Records Bureau checked and assessed for suitability before being matched with a school that is usually close to their home. The volunteers assist the classroom teacher in tasks as required, including listening to reading, providing one-to-one or small group help for children making slower progress in Maths or English, assisting with trips and outings and providing supplementary activities such as craft or cookery sessions. Increasingly, spin-off activities such as gardening clubs or reminiscence work linked to the history curriculum are being developed.

Volunteers identified a number of benefits from participating in the project including a renewed sense of purpose after early retirement, getting to know people when they had recently moved to the area, and the satisfaction provided by seeing that their work makes a difference, which had contributed to increases in confidence, mental health and general well-being. Volunteers also identified ways in which the young people benefited, not only in terms of academic progress, but also in the positive impact on their confidence, general demeanour and behaviour in class.

Impact of past programmes

grants were used to finance outings, day trips, holidays or luncheon clubs. Projects delivering social activities helped to promote social inclusion and provided the means for older people to meet and remain socially engaged.

Around 1 in 10 Community Fund grants were awarded to projects with a recreational focus delivering activities such as walking, dancing and bowls. These projects featured more prominently than those that were designed to address issues such as poverty, isolation, loneliness and social exclusion.

Visits by the researchers to projects funded by the Community Fund identified several benefits including increased physical and social activity, improved intergenerational contact, enhanced provision of preventative services and an increase in the ability of older people to have a voice in decision-making.

Case study

Age Concern Islington – Voice and Choice project

The Voice and Choice project delivered by Age Concern Islington was set up to help marginalised or isolated older people to develop the confidence and skills to voice their views and help bring about change in their local area. The project was supported by two consecutive grants from the Community Fund from 2003 and is now being funded by the local Primary Care Trust. Many of the people involved in the project are from Black and minority ethnic groups and some have a physical disability. People involved in the project attend workshops on confidence building and communications skills. English conversation and literacy classes are also provided for older refugees. As the project has developed older people have gone on to participate in public consultations and been representatives on steering groups set up by local statutory agencies. Older people are also involved in shaping the project itself as steering group members of Age Concern Islington. The success of the project is indicated by its award of Beacon status in 2006.

Impact of past programmes

New Opportunities Fund

The New Opportunities Fund funded programmes for health, education and the environment. The researchers analysed a dataset of all New Opportunities Fund grants awarded and classified projects that benefited older people under five themes. These were health, lifelong learning, preventative health, environment, and neighbourhood regeneration or 'other'.

The researchers assessed the number of New Opportunities Fund grants awarded for older people and found that around 40 per cent were for environment-related projects. Preventative health projects received the second largest number of grants with 29 per cent delivering activities encouraging healthy lifestyles, well-being and physical activity. Respectively, 16 per cent and 14 per cent of grants were awarded to health and lifelong learning projects.

The monetary value of grants awarded by theme was analysed by the researchers and presents a slightly different picture. Projects that were designed to prevent ill-health received 57 per cent of the funding available for older people. Other common themes for funding were health and lifelong learning which each received 15 per cent of the funding available.

An analysis of New Opportunities Fund grant awards by age group showed that substantially more funding was awarded to projects that targeted young people and people up to age 35 than to projects targeting older people. Similar age distributions of funding were evident for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

A wide variety of health-related programmes were established under the New Opportunities Fund, ranging from advisory services to palliative care. These programmes complemented local and central government health services. Much of the lifelong learning funding available was awarded to libraries that were able to reach a wide variety of people.

Interviews with older people's projects identified a range of impacts on older people who participated in activities. Project workers described important impacts on older people, including reduced isolation because of increased social networks, improved mental health, self-esteem and levels of confidence. Older people themselves described similar benefits from participation in projects and emphasised how much enjoyment they gained from the activities available.



Impact of past programmes

Case study

Lochaber Community Care Forum – Handyperson Scheme

Located in the West Highlands of Scotland, the Lochaber Handyperson Scheme has been supporting older people for over six years. The Community Care Forum is a partnership of organisations and individuals promoting the well-being of people in receipt of care and health services. The project provides small home repairs and safety advice to older people in need of small measures of help. The project employs one handyperson, with a fire service background, to deliver the scheme. Home repairs range from unblocking a leaky gutter to moving furniture to purchasing and fitting a broken part. The home visits also provide an opportunity for the handyperson to advise on home safety such as fitting a smoke detector or fixing a loose carpet that poses a trip hazard or providing information on other sources of help. The project aims to empower clients by mitigating feelings of need, thus enabling them to stay in their own homes rather than move into residential care. The majority of the 435 registered clients are over the age of 75, many of them living alone.



Current programmes

Over 32 new programmes had been launched by BIG at the time of the research. The majority of the new programmes offered few specific opportunities to meet the distinct needs of older people. Around a quarter of our current programmes focus on the needs of the broader community, which could include the interests of older people. There are possibilities for funding to be directed towards older people in the following programmes: Safe and Well, Live and Learn, Community Libraries, Family Learning, Investing in Communities, Awards for All, Parks for People, Reaching Communities, Well-Being, People and Places, Stepping Stones and Primetime.

Many of our programmes reflect aspects of the current policy agenda which is concerned with intergenerational cohesion, lifelong learning, neighbourhood regeneration, social exclusion, multiple deprivation, healthy lifestyles and an improved environment for all. There is considerable scope therefore within BIG's future programme remit to meet many of the most pressing needs of older people in their third and fourth ages. The former is typically defined as the period between age 50 and retirement age, while the latter characterises the retirement age years.

The Primetime programme in Scotland is an example of a particular BIG programme that is specifically for older people. The programme is targeted at people who are over 50 and is currently running in partnership with BBC Scotland. The programme aims to bring about long-term improvements to the lives of older people. Grants will be awarded to projects following public voting by TV viewers in Scotland.

Case study **Oasis Centre – Good Neighbour Project**

The Good Neighbour Project in East Belfast started in autumn 2005. It was recognised that some older residents were experiencing isolation that was exacerbated by changes brought on by regeneration. East Belfast has a higher than average concentration of people over the age of 60. The Good Neighbour Project provides intensive support and works in partnership with statutory agencies that have invested interest in the project. The project reaches people in their homes and addresses practical and emotional needs to help improve older residents' quality of life.

BIG funds a full-time development worker who matches clients with volunteer befrienders. Volunteers are police checked and receive induction training. The project has 15 volunteers who help 37 clients. Volunteers visit their clients once or twice a week and build a relationship of trust and friendship over time. To alleviate loneliness clients are encouraged to become socially active and befrienders accompany them to community activities. Project staff also provide information on housing and benefits and act as advocates to sort out issues. One client was experiencing delays with external repairs to her council flat and problems with antisocial behaviour in the area and the Good Neighbour Project staff have been liaising with the council on her behalf. The Good Neighbour Project is distinct and stands alone in East Belfast for the holistic nature of the services it provides. It is the only befriending project in the area.

Gaps in provision for older people

This section outlines some of the current gaps in provision for older people that were identified by the researchers. The findings are based on the results of a literature review of key policy documents and interviews with stakeholders from organisations working with older people.

Policy makers increasingly acknowledge the importance of a whole-system approach for improving quality of life for older people. The policy agenda relating to older people, which is currently mainly dominated by health and social care, is increasingly shifting toward concerns with a range of additional issues such as: poverty, empowerment, lifelong learning, age discrimination, independent living and the wide range of circumstances between different groups of older people. Attention is also increasingly focussed on a 'preventative' agenda for people in their third age, which is typically defined as the period between age 50 and retirement. Providing support for active ageing, low-level services and preparing for the future are increasingly recognised as the route to a longer, healthier and more independent life.

The statutory sector continues to focus its resources on health and social care for those in their fourth age, which is defined as being the period from retirement onwards. Less attention and support is directed at the low level needs of people in their third age. Older people in their third age would benefit from preventative, low level services, transport, inter-generational work and outreach activities to identify the most socially excluded. The researchers suggest that these initiatives should be delivered by local, community-based organisations that have

local knowledge and understand the particular needs of older members of their communities. This could help to integrate older people in communities and improve their independence.

The researchers suggested that BIG or other funding organisations could potentially assist older people in the following areas:

- **Health and social care**

As the ageing population continues to grow, the demand for care will challenge existing support structures. Mental health, including preventative work aimed at reducing social isolation, is a critical area of concern. There is a need for more funding for projects that deliver preventative support and aim to keep the older population healthy.

- **Independent living**

Low-level support services can enable people to maintain their social networks and remain in their homes for longer. These services can also help to enhance the physical and mental well-being of older people in their later years. This type of provision is currently not widely provided by social services or the NHS.

- **Poverty and social exclusion**

Financial poverty, isolation and social exclusion continue to be an issue for older people. Support for projects that provide benefits advice will remain important for older people over the long term. Additional funding could play a key role in helping to alleviate the impact of poverty and social exclusion among older people through supporting projects that provide multiple services including social and recreational activities, befriending schemes, advisory services and training in information and communication technology.

Gaps in provision for older people

- Employment and education

The challenge of extending people's working lives has created a new need for information and support. Additional funding could support projects that provide help for employment-related transitions for people who lose their jobs in their fifties and for people who retire and subsequently decide to return to work.

- Active citizenship

There is a need for developing community volunteering projects for older people that engage them in areas such as governance. This could help to encourage active citizenship for older people in later life to use their skills. There could be a role for funders in supporting the development of capacity and skills needed for wider participation in the community from isolated or marginalised members of the older population.

- Improving public spaces

The researchers identified a need for increased funding for improving public spaces and infrastructure for older people and the wider community. This could help to facilitate increased provision of social activities suitable for a broader age range. It could also help to encourage older people to become involved in public events and enhance the role of community spaces as a medium for social cohesion.

- Advocacy

Advocacy services require independence from other sources of funding such as local authorities. This is a key area where funders could make a contribution. Advocacy services, along with the provision of Information and advice, are essential for older people. These services could help older people to be more in control of their lives and the services that they use.



Gaps in provision for older people

- Transport

Transport is an area where BIG funding has already made a difference to older people's lives. Access to public transport is a particular issue for older people in rural areas. Further funding could be provided to support services that are currently being delivered by volunteers and rely on charitable funding and grants.

- Crisis services

There is a general lack of crisis services for older people during evenings, weekends and national holidays. The researchers also found a gap in the provision of services that can help older people with the key transitional periods associated with later life such as bereavement, moving house, ill-health, leaving hospital and moving into residential care.

- Inter-generational work

Inter-generational work is an area of growing importance for older people. Projects that deliver inter-generational services can help to build cross-sector support and avoid the divisions that are created by ring-fencing funding for particular groups.

The researchers identified specific sub-populations of older people that have particular needs or are currently under-represented in funding streams. These include older people from Black and minority ethnic groups; older people with a disability; older lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people; people living in a residential home; older prisoners; and those with multiple disadvantages.

- Funding approaches

The open programmes run by BIG were seen by stakeholders as an important source of funding. This includes providing small amounts of money with a less stringent application process through programmes such as Awards for All. These programmes are important for smaller voluntary and community organisations who are less familiar with the grant application process and can sometimes be classified as high risk by other funders.

Most interview respondents were in favour of some targeted funding for older people. This is because older people face a set of problems that require particular solutions. It was acknowledged that there were disadvantages in developing programmes that are based on age alone as they could potentially lead to rigidly defined criteria for funding which may not meet the diverse needs of older people.

The researchers suggest that BIG or other funders could help older people by funding projects that support: preventative, low level services, and transport, education and outreach activities that identify people who are socially excluded. These initiatives could be delivered by local, community-based organisations concerned with meeting the needs of older people.

There is considerable support for BIG to continue a model of funding which combines strategic priorities with a responsive approach allowing it to meet community-defined needs.

What next?



We are currently at the early stages of identifying how our funding will be delivered post 2009. The findings from this research, along with other research and consultation with stakeholders, will be used to inform our decisions about future priorities for funding.

The development of any new programme relating to older people should adhere to the following key principles:

- ▶ Any programme should seek to fund in a way which looks to intervene and change policy and practice.
- ▶ Key stakeholders must be engaged from the outset to ensure BIG funding joins up and influences service delivery.
- ▶ We should place a strong emphasis on evaluation and learning.

Final decisions on whether there should be a programme of funding directly or indirectly targeting older people will be taken within BIG's overall funding framework.

