SPARC
Building capacity for ageing and disability-related research

Professor Peter Lansley
Director SPARC
Overview

- Recent history of research to enable inclusion
- SPARC
- The crucial role of Social Inclusion
- The future
Ageing and disability-related research

• EQUAL (EPSRC) - a voyage of discovery (especially 1996-2001)
  • Multidisciplinary, collaborative, user-engaged approach
  • Housing, urban design, accessibility, product design and more
  • Physical, sensory and cognitive impairment and ageing with/without disability
  • Especially important contributions in relation to vision, stroke recovery and dementia

– Many projects, several large consortia
Ageing and disability research

• A significant contribution
  – Major impact on British Standards, Building Regulations, Housing Corporation requirements….
  – Influence on best practice in a range of social, health, planning and design professions
  – Disproportionate contribution made by the design perspective
Evolution of I’DGO

• 1998, 1999 - initial projects
  – A Feasibility Study into Creating Accessible Environments within the Briefing Process
  – Bridging The Gap Between Theory & Implementation in Accessibility - A Best Practice Approach
  – Designing the External Physical Environment To Extend Quality Life For Older People With Dementia

• 2002 - consortia
  – Inclusive Design for Getting Outdoors (I’DGO)

• 2007 - continuation funding
  – Inclusive Design for Getting Outdoors 2 (I’DGO TOO)
Major players in the longest series of EQUAL projects

- Rita Newton
- Marcus Ormerod
- Elizabeth Burton
- Catharine Ward Thompson
- + others

- Accompanied by much influence on practice and policy and personal achievement
So much for the pioneers what about the next generation?

- **2002**
  - considerable concerns in all disciplinary areas about impact of new national policies and loss of momentum and imagination governance of ageing research

- **2003**
  - encouraged by research end-users (professionals and older people) a new approach was proposed
    - bottom-up, community led
    - at the leading edge of science, close to older people

- **2004**
  - of the four relevant research councils EPSRC (Design/Engineering) and BBSRC (Biology) agreed to support this approach

- **2005**
  - a SPARC was ignited
SPARC - a community led initiative

• Early 2005 – late 2008
• EPSRC & BBSRC - £1.6m
  – Design and engineering research
  – Biological research
  – All areas in between -
    • bio-mechanics/ergonomics
    • muscle/bone
    • cognitive/sensory
    • Assistive Technology, etc
  – And some on the sides
• Staffing
  – Two part-time coordinators
  – Two very part-time directors
SPARC – three themes

• Networking through:
  – workshops
  – international activities

• Advocacy

• Capacity Building through:
  – small pump priming awards
Twenty-seven workshops since January 2005

- **Examples of forthcoming workshops**
  - **A Walk a Day Keeps a Fall at Bay**
    - Joint workshop with London Borough of Camden Active Health Team
    - Falls Awareness Day, 26th June 2007
    - Lectures, briefings and practical exercises
    - Largely for older people, their carers and professionals who work with older people
  - **Understanding the ageing brain: linking cognitive and neural change across the lifespan**
    - Joint workshop with Centre for Speech, Language and the Brain, University of Cambridge
    - 26th September 2007
    - Largely for scientists and professionals
Workshops for All

• In one week in March 2007
  – Ageing Research and Occupational Therapy: building partnerships, creating opportunities
    • jointly with British Association of Occupational Therapists
  – Anglo-Japanese Werner's Syndrome Consortium
    • Tokyo
  – Designs for a Caring Society
    • British Polio Fellowship, Caversham Methodist Church Hall
International workshops

• Examples
  – **International Symposium on Werner’s Syndrome**, Sussex, October 2005
  – **Workshop with leading European Experts on Accessibility**, Watford, May 2006
  – **Showcasing the work of young biological gerontologists at AAA conference**, Boston, USA, June 2006
  – **Werner’s Syndrome workshop**, Tokyo, May 2007
  – **Canada meets UK in design and Technology for Quality of Life in Old Age**, Toronto, June 2007
Advocacy

• Making the case that ageing research can and is making a difference

• Lobbying ministers, MPs, policy makers

• Developing a good track record
  – MPs do listen!
    • Two questions in Parliament on, Ageing Research and Older Workers
  – Ministers do listen (but Civil Servants don’t!)

» Royal Patronage

» HRH The Princess Royal participated in *Ageing Research and Occupational Therapy: building partnerships, creating opportunities*
Capacity building awards

• Small awards scheme for newcomers to ageing research

• 185 proposals total value £5.7m were considered in Summer 2005 & Spring 2006

• **34 were funded at total value £1.25m**
  – for superior scientific excellence and capacity building
  – for more information see posters and www.sparc.ac.uk
Awards

- £20,000 - £60,000
- 1 year - 18 months
  - mentoring
  - editorial assistance
  - platform
    - national workshops
    - entree to international networks
  - Lifelong networks
From furniture design to stem cells

• Projects
  – Life in the Home - 3
  – Care Systems - 1
  – The Older Worker - 2
  – Product Design - 2
  – Urban Design - 1
  – Interface Design - 2
  – Transport & Driving - 3
  – Cognition & Communication - 3
  – Vision - 3
  – Activity, Exercise & Nutrition - 3
  – Oxidative Stress & Ageing - 3
  – Fundamental Mechanisms of Normal Ageing - 5
  – Chemical Biology of Ageing - 3

• People
  – 100 investigators and researchers
  – 100 scientific and professional collaborators
  – Largest Research Council activity in ageing in terms of numbers involved but the smallest in terms of funding
The crucial role of Social Inclusion

• At the root of I’DGO and SPARC is the philosophy of Inclusion
  – multidisciplinary, collaborative, user-focused
  – value of confidence engendered through working with users and with industry
  – widely acknowledged success of this approach

• Inclusion philosophy now also operating outside of mainstream ageing research
  – cleverly informing and influencing agendas for change in many areas especially environment, sustainability and regeneration
What must the Social Inclusion research community do?

- Greater public celebration of contribution
  - to independence and quality of life
  - to policy and practice
- Challenge current organisation and aspirations of ageing and disability research

- Remember
  - there is great support from many stakeholders in ageing and disability issues for socially inclusive design!
  - EPSRC is keen to support more in this area.
A peek into the future
The 34 SPARC award holders