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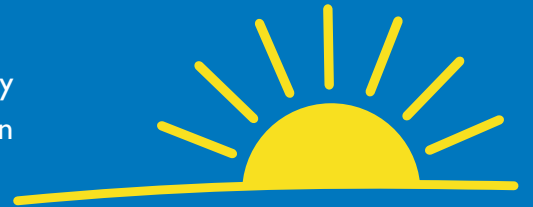
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Growing older in socially deprived areas

Social exclusion in later life

Thomas Scharf, Chris Phillipson, Allison E Smith – Keele University
Paul Kingston – University of Wolverhampton



Help the Aged



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The survey component of fieldwork for this project was a major undertaking. In developing a questionnaire, the research group was able to draw extensively on the earlier work of Gordon et al (2000) in their 1999 survey of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain. In addition, questions were replicated from a range of other social surveys, including earlier work conducted by colleagues at Keele University.

Staff based at the Greater London Authority (formerly London Research Centre) carried out the initial piloting of the questionnaire. CACI Ltd generated a sampling frame for the survey stage of the work reported here. Interviewers recruited and trained by Marketing Sciences Ltd, and capably managed by Eileen Sutherland, undertook the major part of fieldwork for the survey.

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Note

This report has been produced with the advice and financial support of Help the Aged. However, the research contained within it (sometimes referred to as 'our research/findings') has been developed and conducted by a group of researchers based at the Centre for Social Gerontology, Keele University (sometimes referred to as 'we'). The research does not necessarily always reflect the views or policy approach of Help the Aged.

Summary

CHAPTER

1



This report presents research findings from a study investigating the impact of social exclusion on older people living in some of England's most deprived urban areas. It examines the degree to which people living in inner city neighbourhoods experience exclusion from what most people would define as an acceptable old age.

The research was carried out in the most deprived electoral wards of England's three most deprived local authorities: in Liverpool, Manchester and the London Borough of Newham. It included a survey of and face-to-face interviews with 600 people aged 60 and over and a further 130 qualitative, in-depth interviews.

Older people in deprived areas face multiple risks of exclusion.

Multiple risks

Our study demonstrates that older people in deprived areas face multiple risks of exclusion and that these risks are significantly higher than in other areas of Britain.

- Poverty affects nearly half of people aged 60 and over in deprived urban neighbourhoods.
- Older people were found to be disproportionately vulnerable to serious crime.
- A significant minority of older people could be described as being socially isolated and/or severely lonely.
- Many older people could be considered as excluded from involvement in formal social relationships and civic activities within their communities.

Key findings

Deprivation and poverty

Poverty affects nearly half of people aged 60 and over in deprived urban neighbourhoods.

Our research suggests that older people living in deprived areas of England are at least twice as likely to experience poverty as those in Britain as a whole.

- Two-thirds of older people are experiencing either medium or high levels of deprivation. Forty-five per cent are living in poverty.
- Around one-fifth of older people lack seven or more items that the majority of the population would regard as day-to-day necessities.
- Close to one in ten older people in poverty have lived in poverty for most of their lives. Two-thirds of those reporting a poor or very poor quality of life are in poverty.
- More than one in ten older people find it difficult or very difficult to manage on their current incomes – almost half of older people in poverty say they have gone without buying clothes in the previous year. Fifteen per cent of this group have gone without buying food on occasion. Half of those in poverty have gone without a holiday.

- Almost eight out of ten older Somali people and nearly seven out of ten older Pakistani people are living in poverty.
- Older women are much more likely to be multiply deprived than older men.
- The oldest pensioners are significantly more deprived than younger pensioners.

Crime and fear of crime

Older people [are] disproportionately vulnerable to serious crime.

While the majority of older people are not recent victims of crime, there are substantial numbers who have experienced serious types of crime. Not only are older people in deprived areas fearful of crime but the research suggests that they are justified in many of their anxieties.

These findings are in sharp contrast to those reported in national surveys, where the risk of becoming a victim of crime is typically much lower for older than for younger people.

- Forty per cent of older people have been the victim of one or more type of crime in the past year or two.
- Twenty-eight per cent of older people have had recent experience of property crime – 21 per cent have had their homes broken into or reported an attempted break-in during the past two years, 18 per cent have experienced acts of vandalism or damage to property, such as a vehicle or garden shed.
- Fifteen per cent of older people have either experienced an assault or had something that they were carrying stolen from them.

- Around two-fifths of older people worry about having their homes broken into or being the victim of a street robbery or mugging.
- Only 7 per cent of older people would feel very safe when out alone after dark. Most people feel secure in their own homes at night although older women and older Indian, Pakistani and Somali people are rather less likely to feel secure.

Perceptions of neighbourhood

Older people display a considerable degree of attachment to their local areas.

Older people are particularly concerned about the physical appearance of their neighbourhoods, the social problems that accompany profound socio-economic change and the absence of amenities and services that can meet their needs.

Nevertheless, older people display a considerable degree of attachment to their local areas.

- Three-quarters of older people can identify something that they like about their neighbourhood. Just under three-fifths of older people can identify something that they dislike.
- Forty-two per cent of older people comment negatively on the general appearance of their neighbourhood and 39 per cent point to the existence of a range of social problems in the area.
- Over half of older people feel that their neighbourhood is a good place in which to grow old. Almost eight out of ten would expect to receive help from neighbours in an emergency.
- More than two-fifths of older people feel that their neighbourhood has deteriorated over the past two years.

Social integration

A significant minority of older people could be described as being socially isolated and/or severely lonely

While the majority of older people are in regular contact with family, friends and neighbours, a significant minority are prone to social isolation and severe feelings of loneliness.

Our study suggests that there is potentially a relationship between the characteristics of deprived urban areas (in England) and the incidence of loneliness among older people.

Our research also confirms the key supportive role played by informal social relationships in preventing exclusion in old age.

- Around a quarter of older people experience intense social isolation.
- Sixteen per cent of older people experience either severe or very severe loneliness.
- Loneliness appears more prevalent among people who are single and have never married and among those who are separated or divorced.
- Older Pakistani and Somali people are more likely to be lonely than other groups living in these areas.
- More than a third of older people see a child or other relative every day, a further 37 per cent see a child or other relative at least weekly.
- Around a third of older people display a moderate or high level of participation in civic affairs. Just under a quarter have not been involved in any type of civic activity in the past three years.

- A significant minority of older people report that post offices, health and social care or welfare services and local transport services are missing from their neighbourhood. A number of respondents also comment on the absence of a social club or community centre for older people in their neighbourhood.

Policy implications

Regeneration for all

There is a danger that the substantial resources that are currently being invested in urban regeneration will create communities and neighbourhoods that are designed only for the needs of certain social groups, such as younger people or those who are relatively wealthy.

Build on commitment

The policy-making process is missing out on the potentially enormous contribution that older people appear willing to make to influence the development of their neighbourhoods. Our research illustrates the very close attachment to their communities of most older people in deprived neighbourhoods. The policy and planning process should build upon this obvious commitment.

Joined-up policies

There is a clear need for contemporary urban policy to consider the position of older people in deprived areas in terms of their potential vulnerability to poverty and social exclusion. The challenge for urban policy-makers is to develop joined-up policies that take account of the multiple risks faced by older people in deprived neighbourhoods and to address their specific needs.

Key recommendations

Deprivation and poverty

The current Government's attempt to tackle serious financial deprivation among older people, in the form of the Minimum Income Guarantee, often appears to break down before it reaches those experiencing the greatest need.

The failure to deliver an adequate standard of living to a significant minority of older people through a complex range of benefits would tend to lend support to the view that a simpler national system of higher minimum pension might represent a better way of alleviating poverty in later life.

Putting more money into the hands of older people can increase the sustainability of local services and amenities (eg shops, post offices and public transport) as well as having health benefits that might ultimately reduce demand for a range of health care services. In this light, it would be useful to consider the role played by benefit take-up campaigns in terms of their broader impact on local communities.

Many older people appear to be unfamiliar with the workings of the [benefits] system and unsure of their entitlement.

Tackling barriers to the take-up of benefit entitlements is an urgent task for social policy. Many older people who took part in our research appear to be unfamiliar with the workings of the system and unsure of their entitlement to a range of benefits.

For some, barriers to completing application forms for benefits include lack of appropriate language and literacy skills; lack of appropriate official documents such as birth or marriage certificates; the complexities of telephone helplines; and the technical language used by benefits officials.

There is considerable scope for improving both the quantity and quality of welfare advice that is available to older people in deprived communities. This suggests the need for a stable, properly-funded welfare advice presence in deprived neighbourhoods.

Crime and fear of crime

Overall, 40 per cent of respondents in our survey have had experience of one or more types of crime. The respective proportion of those in poverty was 48 per cent compared with 33 per cent of those not in poverty.

This finding is important in terms of social policy. Increasing the incomes of the poorest pensioners is likely to reduce their vulnerability to crime. Assistance with installation of security devices, such as good quality locks and alarm systems, may also reduce the vulnerability of those pensioners in poverty.

Having the confidence to leave one's home at all hours of the day and evening is likely to benefit people's physical and mental health. Sustained attempts must be made to prevent and reduce crime in deprived areas as well as to reassure older people that some of their concerns might not be justified.

Increasing the incomes of the poorest pensioners is likely to reduce their vulnerability to crime.

The role to be played by the neighbourhood or street wardens who operate in some high-crime neighbourhoods is potentially important. Consideration should also be given to changing the physical characteristics of neighbourhoods, for example by improving street lighting or installing surveillance cameras at strategic locations.

The closure of a number of urban post offices in recent years appears to have hit older people in deprived neighbourhoods hardest. Where people have to travel further and longer to reach a post office, they are likely to be even more fearful of becoming a victim of crime.

Neighbourhood and social integration

It is important that architects and urban planners are aware of the potential impact of their designs and plans on the type of low-level social interactions that make neighbourhoods good places to live.

Older people who are already disadvantaged in terms of poverty or ill health are disproportionately affected by the loss of local services.

Resources should be devoted to clearing up litter and graffiti as quickly as possible in order to maintain a sense that the area is being looked after.

Older people who are already disadvantaged in terms of poverty or ill health are disproportionately affected by the loss of local services. Consideration should be given at an early stage to the likely impact on older people of decisions to withdraw such services from deprived neighbourhoods.

Material insecurity, low levels of literacy, language barriers, lack of self-confidence, perceived vulnerability to crime and a lack of opportunities to become involved are among the factors likely to prevent some people from engaging with formal aspects of community life. It would be useful to develop further research that examines these factors in more depth.



Introduction

CHAPTER

2



While tackling social exclusion has become a major area of policy concern in Britain since 1997, much of the public policy and research has focused on children and young families or people of working age cut off from the labour market. Relatively little attention has been paid to the situation of older people.

This report seeks to redress the balance. It draws upon the findings of a major empirical study conducted in nine socially deprived neighbourhoods of three English cities.

The research addresses such key questions as:

- How do current policy and research debates about social exclusion relate to the circumstances and needs of older people?
- To what extent are older people in deprived areas more prone to poverty and social exclusion when compared with older people living in other types of location?
- Are there distinctive problems of access to services and facilities which significantly affect older people in deprived neighbourhoods?
- How do older people manage their daily lives in socially deprived urban environments?
- What type of coping strategies are adopted by older people when responding to potential risks associated with residence in such areas?
- What types of policy would be most appropriate in addressing the specific circumstances of older people living in socially deprived urban neighbourhoods?

The report is divided into four main sections. First, we explore some of the ways in which the idea of social exclusion has been defined and conceptualised. Second, we present an overview of the research methods used in this study.

Third, we highlight some of the key findings to emerge from the research under four themes – deprivation and poverty in later life, older people's experience of crime, older people's perceptions of their neighbourhoods and the social integration of older people. Each themed chapter contains a section on the specific research and policy implications of our findings.

Finally, we present our conclusion where we identify a number of more general policy issues that arise from the research.

Why do we need this research?

The research reported here reflects a major concern that current Government initiatives relating to social exclusion tend to ignore the circumstances and specific needs of older people.

In terms of public policy debates, the focus continues to be on the need to integrate younger people and people of working age into the labour market.

This is evident, for example, in recent work undertaken by the Government's Social Exclusion Unit (see Social Exclusion Unit, 2001a). References to the situation of older people occur relatively infrequently in the published reports of the numerous Policy Action Teams (PATs) established following the Social Exclusion Unit's major report *Bringing Britain Together* (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998).

The tendency of policy to overlook the situation of older people is compounded by a perceived absence of adequate data on the nature of poverty and exclusion experienced by older people (Howarth et al, 1999).

When it comes to academic research on ageing, there is considerable scope for developing a clearer understanding of the ways in which the idea of social exclusion might be applied to old age. Academic debates have tended to match the policy agenda by concentrating more on younger age groups. For example, while the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion at the London School of Economics has a major strand of research exploring child poverty, it has only limited work directly relating to older people.

A broader debate

One crucial, if rather obvious, issue to be addressed by researchers is the need to broaden the scope of current debates on social exclusion. Such debates tend to emphasise the central role played by paid employment in determining whether a person can be regarded as being socially included or excluded (Levitas, 1998:27). This gives rise to a series of questions about the position of older people in society.

In this report, we seek to suggest how contemporary concerns about social exclusion may be best applied to the situation of older people in British society. Our concern is to explore social exclusion in the context of relationships and resources that exist beyond paid employment. More specifically, the report addresses the area-based dimensions of exclusion, looking at what difference living in an area of concentrated poverty makes to quality of life in old age.



Concepts and definitions

CHAPTER

3



In order to develop an understanding of the idea of social exclusion and its specific relation to ageing, it is useful to begin by highlighting some of the ways in which it relates to long-standing concerns about poverty and deprivation in later life.

Poverty and social exclusion

In the 1950s and 1960s, researchers such as Townsend and Wedderburn (1965) identified older people as one of the largest groups living in poverty, with widowed and single older people being especially vulnerable. The concern with poverty was given renewed emphasis with the rise of political economy perspectives on ageing from the late 1970s (Estes, 1979; Walker, 1980; Phillipson, 1982). Here, poverty in old age was linked to the social construction of lifelong inequalities based around class, generation, gender and ethnicity (Minkler and Estes, 1999).

Townsend (1981) developed the idea of growing old as affected by a form of 'structured dependency', produced by the imposition of retirement, poverty and restricted social roles. Walker (1990:243), reviewing a large body of data, concluded that: '...poverty in old age is primarily a function of low economic and social status prior to retirement and the depressed social status of the retired and secondarily, of the relatively low level of state benefits'. This analysis was developed in the 1980s and 1990s with awareness of a widening of inequality between rich and poor of all ages (Hills, 1998) and increasing inequalities developing among different groups of pensioners (Hancock and Weir, 1994; Falkingham, 1998).

When examining the idea of social exclusion, a distinction is often made between the distributional dimension of poverty (ie lack of material resources) and the relational focus of social exclusion (ie lack of social ties) (see, for example, Townsend, 1987; Room, 1995). However, the usefulness of such a clear-cut distinction is questionable, given the obvious point that exclusion is at least related to income. According to Bhalla and Lapeyre (1997), 'adequate levels of income are a necessary though not sufficient means of ensuring access of people to basic human needs'. This is also one of the key points arising from Townsend's (1979) approach, which suggests that exclusion from social participation is directly related to poverty. According to Bauman (1998: 37), 'Poverty means being excluded from whatever passes for a "normal life"'.

Multi-dimensional

The most helpful definitions of social exclusion draw together both distributional and relational elements. For example, the Government has defined social exclusion as:

'... a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown.'
(Social Exclusion Unit, 2001b:10)

Berghman (1997:19) breaks down the idea of exclusion, conceiving it in terms of the non-realisation of citizenship rights within four key societal institutions – the democratic and legal system, the labour market, the welfare system and the family and community system. This approach emphasises the multi-dimensionality of the concept of exclusion, suggesting that it can occur where any of these institutional systems breaks down (Atkinson and Davoudi, 2000). Russell Barter et al (1999) take the distinction made by Room (1995) as intending to recognise:

‘... not only the relative material deprivation of those in poverty but also the broader processes of isolation, detachment and low participation in social, cultural and political life which accompany it. (...) As a concept, it does not seek to diminish the importance of the distributional issues of material resources but serves to focus upon relational issues – of inadequate social participation, lack of social integration and lack of power.’ (p. 85).

Indicators

Following in this tradition, Burchardt et al (1999) have sought to develop an operational definition that encompasses five distinct elements relating to an individual's participation in ‘normal’ activities:

- consumption activity (the ability to consume up to a minimum level the goods and services considered normal for society);
- savings activity (the accumulation of savings, pension entitlements or property ownership);
- production activity (engagement in an economically or socially valued activity);

- political activity (engagement in some collective effort to improve or protect the immediate or wider social or physical environment); and
- social activity (engagement in significant social interaction with family or friends and identifying with a cultural group or community).

Gordon et al (2000) have adopted a similar approach albeit using a different range of indicators – impoverishment, labour market participation, access to services and a range of social relations (p. 54f).

Location

Of particular relevance to this study are approaches that seek to link exclusion to residence in particular types of neighbourhood. Perri 6 (1997:3) emphasises the importance of the geographical dimension of exclusion in the following way:

‘[Social exclusion] is a useful term in societies in which there is a growing polarisation of access and opportunity, so that often quite small areas – a housing estate, an inner or outer urban area – are effectively cut off from life around them.’ (6, 1997:3)

This idea is developed further by Madanipour et al (1998:22) who refer to the multi-dimensionality of social exclusion and its impact upon particular types of location:

‘Social exclusion is defined as a multi-dimensional process, in which various forms of exclusion are combined: participation in decision making and political processes, access to employment and material resources, and integration into common cultural processes. When combined, they create acute forms of exclusion that find a spatial manifestation in particular neighbourhoods.’

Social exclusion and older people

Difficulties arise from the way current debates see exclusion operating. As noted by Levitas (1998) for example, where it is suggested that cohesion is best achieved through integration into occupational roles, this raises questions about people who are not engaged in the labour market. With retirement and early labour market exit in its various guises, this is increasingly the situation in which older people find themselves.

A second problem comes from the emphasis on the dynamic nature of exclusion (Byrne, 1999). There is a range of recent research evidence to show how people move in and out of poverty (and by extension exclusion) as their circumstances change (for example, Leisering and Walker, 1998). The evidence from such studies leads to the conclusion that, as Perri 6 (1997) asserts, '... most people get out of poverty'. Similar arguments are developed in some of the PAT reports prepared for the Social Exclusion Unit, indicating that the boundaries of exclusion are essentially fluid rather than rigid.

However, the situation of older people is likely to be rather different. For those vulnerable to exclusion, the experience may be less prone to change than for younger people. This may affect how exclusion is experienced, leading to different types of questions about the process by which exclusion is handled.

Research themes

Adequate material resources are an important prerequisite for social integration but there are at least three further aspects of the discussion around definitions of social exclusion that should be acknowledged. These are:

- the participation and integration of older people in recognised social roles;
- the ways in which exclusion operates at a spatial level (ie how neighbourhood spaces are organised or perceived); and
- the problems that can arise for older people when institutions disengage or withdraw from particular types of urban location.

Participation and integration

At one level this dimension of social exclusion is fairly straightforward. It concerns issues of access, the involvement of older people in community life, and older people's links within and beyond the local community.

Participation and integration beyond the labour market encompasses a wide range of social relationships and roles fulfilled by older people. The focus can be conceived of in terms of the degree of access that older people have to different forms of social capital – for example, civic participation, expressions of interpersonal trust, the nature of social (support) networks and mutuality or reciprocity (see, for example, the work of Putnam, 1995; Coleman, 1988).

At another level, this dimension of social exclusion is more problematic since the structure of social networks and social capital identified in the literature as sustaining integration is likely to vary according to an individual's situation. For example, while integration in 'weak' networks (composed of people different to oneself) has been shown to be important to unemployed people seeking work, for older people it has been assumed that it is more important to have 'strong' networks (eg family-based networks) (Kruger, 1997: 6).

In respect of the social capital mix, there could be differences between age groups that have yet to be fully explored. In terms of generating interpersonal trust, for example, older people may well regard 'loose ties' (such as being able to say 'hello' to neighbours) as being at least as important as 'close ties' (Phillipson et al, 2001).

Spatial segregation

The spatial dimension of exclusion is particularly significant in this research. The way in which spaces such as inner city neighbourhoods are organised or perceived, plays an important role in generating social cohesion or exclusion (Madanipour et al, 1998: 81). In debates about social exclusion and ageing, it is useful to consider three different forms of spatial segregation.

First, there is a need to examine the way in which older people think about space in psychological terms. This raises questions about the perceptions and fears that older people might have about particular parts of their neighbourhood. For example, while some people may view a local park as a pleasant place to spend an afternoon, others might perceive it to be a place where they are vulnerable to crime.

Second, spaces are often associated with particular memories and histories. However, descriptions of places may differ considerably according to the characteristics of local residents. Here it is useful to examine the degree to which people who live in the same area express similar views about it.

Third, there is the question of whether older people use particular types of space in ways that make them distinctive. Here it can be interesting to investigate older people's use of local shops and amenities and their patterns of movement around the neighbourhood.

Desire for 'sameness'

Such discussions of spatial elements of exclusion as they apply to the situation of older people give rise to at least two paradoxes.

The first concerns issues of difference. Although cities are constructed around the idea of difference, the desire for similarity is a striking feature of the views of older people. For example, research undertaken on two estates in East London by Cattell and Evans (1999) suggests that older people derived an important part of their identity from their similarity with one another. This desire for similarity is understandable. At one level it is about feeling protected by those with similar attributes (illustrated, for example, by Phillipson et al, 1999 with reference to the situation of Bangladeshis in Tower Hamlets). At another level, it is about being surrounded by people with a similar history.

However, in most urban areas the desire for 'sameness' may be difficult to realise. This applies in particular to so-called 'zones of transition', which thrive on a rapid turnover of people and buildings. A similar situation may arise for older people living in what Power (2000: 12) describes as 'non-viable' estates – those unpopular urban neighbourhoods characterised by low housing demand and subsequent abandonment of housing by all but the very poorest or least mobile residents.

Part of the problem here may be that the advantages of the inner city for some (services for minority groups, relatively cheap housing) translate into disadvantages for others (falling house prices in some cases, destruction of familiar landscapes in others).

It is also clear that older people can be highly selective in how they view the consequences of profound urban change. This can often translate into negatively charged perceptions about those around them.

Source of identity

The second paradox is that the marginalisation of particular urban neighbourhoods may go hand in hand with an increased identification of some residents with their neighbourhood. Marcuse (1996) sums up this idea in the following way:

‘Neighbourhood has become more than a source of security, the base of a supportive network, as it has long been; it has become a source of identity, a definition of who a person is and where she or he belongs in society’ (p.202-203).

Thus, the spatial manifestations of exclusion may also concern the way in which older people’s familiar attachments are undermined by the type of changes that characterise many deprived urban areas. One significant result of the rapid change experienced in some urban neighbourhoods might be an undermining of older people’s sense of identification with the local community.

Institutional disengagement

The debate about social exclusion also focuses on how services and agencies withdraw from marginal (urban) areas. Socially deprived neighbourhoods and the people who live in them, may be prone to what Gans (1972) refers to as ‘institutional isolation’.

Lash and Urry (1994) suggest that the situation of people living in deprived areas has deteriorated and is likely to deteriorate further, as they are deserted by a range of both public and private institutional resources.

The resulting isolation of deprived areas reflects the limited power of local residents within the marketplace (Bowring, 2000: 312f), in turn leading to other problems. For example, Speak and Graham’s (2000) study of private sector businesses operating in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne showed that local residents experienced difficulties accessing such basic services as energy, food shops, telephones and banking.

Feeling of loss

For older people with limited incomes or restricted mobility, the loss or absence of local services, including sub-post offices or affordable local shops, can be especially problematic. They can become dependent upon others and/or have to use more costly means of transport. In their study of neighbourhoods in Liverpool, for example, Andersen et al (1999) report on the ‘widespread feeling of loss especially amongst older residents in relation to the closure of shops and workplaces’.

Inaccessibility of services would tend to reinforce an inhibition among some older people to use services in the first place. Kempson and Whyley (1999) found that a considerable proportion of people aged 70 and over belong to a cash-only generation. Limited access to basic health and social care services or to public transport could represent further dimensions of older people’s exclusion from key public and private sector institutions.

Methodology

CHAPTER

4



A variety of research strategies were necessary to address the diverse ways in which the dynamic and multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion affects the lives of older people in deprived areas. This research draws upon a range of methodological approaches.

In a first stage, we identified appropriate study areas in which to conduct a detailed programme of research. We selected neighbourhoods in Liverpool, Manchester and London (Newham). These were the three English local authorities that ranked lowest in the 1998 Index of Local Deprivation (DETR, 1998). This index ranks communities according to their level of deprivation across 12 indicators, including unemployment rates, number of Income Support recipients, standardised mortality rates and number of households lacking basic amenities.

To account for the substantial spatial variation that exists within these cities in relation to the intensity of deprivation, research was concentrated on the three most deprived electoral wards in each city. The study areas are Clubmoor, Granby and Pirrie in Liverpool; Cheetham, Longsight and Moss Side in Manchester; and Park, Plashet and St Stephen's in the London Borough of Newham.

While the areas vary in relation to their proximity to their respective city centres, socio-economic structures and population profiles, they share a range of characteristics associated with intense urban deprivation. This includes, for example, above average rates of unemployment; relatively poor housing conditions; a steady loss of services such as shops and banks; and a high incidence of crime (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998).

Discussion groups

In order to develop an understanding of social exclusion, we started the research by holding a series of discussions with groups of older people in each study area. These gave us the opportunity to raise with older people some of the emerging themes of the project. A central feature of the discussion groups was the attempt to find a form of words that potential participants could identify with. Here, we could consider the degree to which older people identified with such concepts as 'social exclusion', 'standard of living' and 'quality of life'.

We identified seven groups through contacts with relevant local agencies and existing local contacts. The groups ranged from the more formal (a pensioners' forum with an agenda and a structured organisation) to the fully informal (a group of friends meeting in a hired church hall). Colleagues made transcriptions of the tape-recorded discussions, which we used to inform preparations for subsequent stages of data collection.

Survey questionnaire

In particular, the comments of participants in group discussions helped in the development of a questionnaire to be used in a second phase of data collection, involving a survey of 600 people aged 60 and over.

In the questionnaire, we sought to collect a range of data relevant to the understanding of social exclusion outlined above. Here, we were also able to draw upon the recently completed Survey of Poverty and Social Exclusion (Gordon et al, 2000) and upon other major social surveys such as the General Household Survey and the British Household Panel Survey. Our aim in developing the questionnaire was to generate data that could be compared directly with that derived from major national surveys.

Face-to-face interviews

Following two stages of piloting, trained interviewers conducted face-to-face interviews with a random sample of older people drawn from the electoral registers of each ward. We identified potential respondents through a coding classification that places people into particular age bands according to the likelihood that their first name belongs to a specified birth year. This method yielded 501 interviews with predominantly white and English-speaking people.

Interviews with older people from black and minority ethnic groups

These interviews were supplemented by 99 interviews with people belonging to black and minority ethnic groups. We recruited people to this part of the study through a range of community groups and contacts within the study areas. This purposive sampling strategy sought to target older people belonging to the numerically largest minority ethnic groups in each electoral ward. The aim was to generate a sufficiently large sample to facilitate statistical analysis. The differences in numbers of respondents between the study areas largely accounts for variations in the number of interviews with older people belonging to such minority groups.

The number of people interviewed in each city varied between 188 (Newham) and 206 (in both Liverpool and Manchester). The number of respondents interviewed in each ward ranged from 55 people in Pirrie (Liverpool) to 95 people in Granby (Liverpool).

In-depth interviews

A final, qualitative phase of data collection involved conducting 130 semi-structured interviews. Ninety interviews were undertaken with people who had previously taken part in the survey phase of our work. In addition, we conducted 20 interviews with older Somali people in Liverpool and a further 20 with older Pakistani people in Manchester.

These explored in greater detail issues such as older people's experiences of daily life, their strategies for survival in urban areas and the types of social relationships in which they are engaged. The interviews also allowed the research group to explore the meaning of quality of life to older people living in deprived areas and to address variations in the experiences of sub-groups within the older population (for example, ethnic minority groups, lone older people, people living in poverty).

Deprivation and poverty in later life

CHAPTER

5



In this chapter, we address the material dimension of social exclusion. We seek to illustrate the extent to which poverty and deprivation combine to cut off older people living in socially deprived neighbourhoods from what most people would define as an acceptable standard of living.

We explore the following questions:

- To what extent do older people in poor areas show different types of poverty and deprivation when compared with older people drawn from national surveys?
- Are some older people more vulnerable to poverty and deprivation than others?
- How do people cope with living in poverty in later life?

The chapter is in five main sections. We:

- review the extent to which older people experience multiple deprivation;
- present findings relating to the experience of poverty;
- examine the impact of poverty on daily life;
- indicate how older people experiencing poverty seek to manage their finances; and
- highlight a series of policy issues.

Multiple deprivation

The research gathered a range of information about older people's income and material resources that would allow us to construct an index of multiple deprivation. We developed the work of Evandrou (2000) to facilitate a comparison of our data with that drawn from a national sample of older people.

Evandrou's index of multiple deprivation comprises seven items considered of particular importance to older people, for example central heating, use of a telephone, access to a car (see Figure 5.1). This measure allows people to be categorised according to the degree of deprivation they face, ranging from no deprivation (where a person is not disadvantaged on any of the seven characteristics) to high deprivation (disadvantaged on at least five characteristics).

Figure 5.1: Index of multiple deprivation

A person scores 1 for each of the following characteristics:

- Lives in a household without central heating
- Lives in a household without a phone
- Lives in a household without a car

- Lives in local authority or housing association rented accommodation
- Lives in a household with more than one person per room
- Lives in a household where the head of the household receives income support
- Individual has no formal qualifications

No deprivation:

Score 0, not disadvantaged on any of these characteristics

Low deprivation:

Score 1-2, disadvantaged on one or two characteristics only

Medium deprivation:

Score 3-4, disadvantaged on three or four characteristics

High deprivation:

Score 5 or more, disadvantaged on at least five characteristics

Source: Adapted from Evandrou (2000)

We found very high levels of deprivation among older people in deprived urban neighbourhoods. Only a minority of respondents (3 per cent) were not disadvantaged on any of the characteristics of deprivation (see Table 5.1). Almost two-fifths of the sample (37 per cent) experienced low levels of deprivation. The majority of older people interviewed could be classed as experiencing medium levels of deprivation, being disadvantaged on between three and four of the seven characteristics.

Table 5.1: Older people experiencing deprivation

	Frequency	Per cent
No deprivation	20	3
Low deprivation	220	37
Medium deprivation	340	57
High deprivation	20	3
Total	600	100

Deprivation was especially pronounced for a small number of older people, with 3 per cent of respondents falling into the category of high deprivation. Very few of the people interviewed did not report at least some disadvantage and in most cases, this was multiple rather than a single item of deprivation.

Very few of the people interviewed did not report at least some disadvantage and in most cases, this was multiple rather than a single item of deprivation.

Deprivation was spread very unevenly across the sample, varying according to key social characteristics. For ease of analysis, respondents were divided into two groups according to the level of deprivation they faced – those experiencing no or low levels of deprivation and those facing medium or high levels of deprivation (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2: Frequency of deprivation for different groups of older people

	% in no or low deprivation	% in medium or high deprivation
Gender **		
Men	48	52
Women	35	65
Age groups **		
60-74 years	48	52
75 years and above	27	73
Ethnic background **		
White	39	61
Black Caribbean	50	50
Indian	32	68
Pakistani	59	41
Somali	10	90
Household size **		
Lone person	26	74
Two or more persons	51	49
All (Base)(n=600)	40 (n=240)	60 (n=360)

** p<.001

This shows that:

- older women are much more likely to be multiply deprived than older men;
- the oldest pensioners are significantly more deprived than younger pensioners;
- the risk of deprivation varies between ethnic groups; and
- older people who live alone are much more prone to multiple deprivation than those who live in larger households.

Where such individual characteristics are combined, the risk of multiple deprivation increases significantly. So, a Pakistani woman aged 76 who lives alone is much more likely to experience intense deprivation than a 62-year-old man who lives with his wife.

Comparison with national samples

We wanted to assess to what extent older people living in socially deprived areas were more prone to deprivation than national samples of older people and adults in general.

We compared our sample with a study reported by Evandrou (2000), which examined the experience of deprivation among different groups of people aged 60 and over in Great Britain.

In Evandrou's (2000) study, drawn by pooling data from six successive waves of the General Household Survey, the bulk of white respondents were clustered towards the lower end of the deprivation spectrum. Our sample, drawn from some of the most deprived communities in England, reverses this. Almost three-fifths were disadvantaged on at least three of the items in the index (see Table 5.3).

This comparison indicates that older people in deprived communities experience a disproportionate and intense degree of multiple deprivation.

Older people in deprived communities experience a disproportionate and intense degree of multiple deprivation.

Poverty

We used a variety of measures to investigate poverty in old age. We followed researchers such as Mack and Lansley (1985) and more recently Gordon et al (2000) by identifying those respondents who said they were unable to afford what the majority of British people view as basic necessities.

The research has drawn on the results of a national survey of the adult population, which highlighted a range of items and social activities regarded by 50 per cent or more of people as being necessities of daily living (Gordon et al, 2000).

In the survey, we presented people with a similar list of 26 'socially perceived necessities' (see Table 5.4). We asked respondents to identify items that they didn't have or activities that they didn't do.

Table 5.3: Experience of multiple deprivation for white older people in deprived areas of England and in Great Britain (%)

	Deprived areas 2001	Great Britain 1991-96*
No deprivation	3	30
Low deprivation	36	51
Medium deprivation	57	17
High deprivation	4	2
Total	100 (n=416)	100 (n=28,080)

* Note: Data for Great Britain arise from the pooling of six cross-sectional samples of the General Household Survey, as reported by Evandrou (2000: 17)

They were then asked to state whether they lacked the items because they didn't want them or couldn't afford them.

Table 5.4: Older people lacking necessities because they can't afford them (%)

Item	Those in poverty (n=261)	Those not in poverty (n=319)	All respondents (n=580)
Two meals a day	3	0	2
Meat or fish or a vegetarian or ethnic equivalent every other day	7	0	4
Heating to warm the living areas of your home if it's cold	14	0.3	7
Carpets in living rooms and bedrooms in your home	3	0	1
A telephone	10	0	4
A damp-free home	22	2	11
Presents for friends or family once a year	25	0.3	12
A warm waterproof coat	12	0	6
Two pairs of all-weather shoes	12	0	6
Regular savings (of £10 a month) for a rainy day	69	8	36
A roast joint or its vegetarian or ethnic equivalent once a week	16	0	8
Enough money to keep your home in a decent state of decoration	41	1	19
Insurance for the contents of your home	46	1	22
Fresh fruit and vegetables every day	15	0	7
An outfit to wear for social or family occasions such as parties and weddings	12	0	6
A dictionary	7	0	3
Replace any worn out furniture	66	2	31
Replace or repair broken electrical goods such as a refrigerator or washing machine	66	1	30
A small amount of money to spend each week on yourself, not on your family	46	1	21
A hobby or leisure activity	15	0	7
A holiday away from home for one week a year, not staying with relatives in their home	60	10	33
Celebrations on special occasions such as birthdays	31	0	14
Have friends or family round for a meal, snack or drink	21	0	10
Visit friends or family	10	0	5
Attend weddings, funerals and other such occasions	8	0	3
Visit friends or family in hospital or other institutions	6	0	3

Following the approach of the national survey, people lacking two or more of the items because they couldn't afford them were judged to be in poverty. Using this method, we found 45 per cent of older people taking part in the survey to be living in poverty (see Table 5.5).

The research found 45 per cent of older people taking part in the survey to be living in poverty.

Table 5.5: Number of items older people lack because they can't afford them

	Frequency	Per cent
0 items	235	40
1 item	84	15
2 items	52	9
3 items	40	7
4 items	22	4
5 items	22	4
6 items	17	3
7 items	33	6
8 items	15	3
9 items	11	2
10 items	10	2
11 or more items	39	7
Total	580	100

NB Column does not add up to 100 due to rounding

Two-fifths of respondents (40 per cent) lacked none of the 26 items on the list of necessities for reasons of affordability, while a further 15 per cent lacked just one item. It is important to note that some older people lacked and could not afford a substantial number of necessities, suggesting an intense degree of poverty. For 7 per cent of respondents, this meant not being able to afford and going without 11 or more of the items and activities on the list.

Looking at all the respondents, most had access to basics such as two meals a day, meat or fish, fresh fruit, and a home that is warm and free of damp. The overwhelming majority of people taking part in our research were also able to participate in a hobby or leisure pursuits, to pay visits to friends or family and to attend weddings and funerals.

It is when we move beyond such items that we find relatively high proportions of people (more than one in five) struggling to afford what most of us regard as important necessities. Around one in three were unable to make regular savings, to replace worn out furniture, to replace or repair broken electrical goods or to take a holiday away from home for one week a year.

Comparison with national survey

We compared these findings with the national survey outlined earlier (Gordon et al, 2000).

Adopting the same poverty threshold (ie unable to afford two or more necessities) classifies around 28 per cent of the entire adult national survey sample as poor (see Table 5.6). Among older people, the national survey reported a poverty rate of 21 per cent.

In comparison, our survey found 45 per cent of older people in the three deprived areas could be defined as poor. In other words, older people living in deprived areas of England appear to be at least twice as likely to experience poverty as those in Britain as a whole.

Respondents unable to afford basic necessities

Items lacking	Keele Survey (n=580) Adults 60+	Rowntree Survey* (n=1534) Adults 16+
0-1 items	319 (55%)	1109 (72%)
2 or more items	261 (45%)	425 (28%)

For those people classified as being in poverty, there was a similar distribution of responses. However, much higher proportions of those in poverty were unable to achieve certain necessities beyond the basic items. Nearly seven out of ten could not make regular savings; over two-fifths could not keep their home in a decent state of decoration; two-thirds were unable to replace worn out furniture and almost half were unable to find a small amount of money to spend each week either on themselves or their family. This is in marked contrast to the situation of people who are not in poverty. The two most common items lacked by people not in poverty are a holiday away from home and regular savings.

Table 5.6: Comparison of poverty rates for older people in socially deprived areas and in the UK as a whole

The experience of poverty was distributed unevenly across the population of older people in deprived neighbourhoods. We found little evidence to suggest that poverty was significantly related to gender, age or household size (see Table 5.7). This contrasts with the findings reported above in relation to the experience of multiple deprivation, suggesting that poverty and deprivation do not always go hand in hand.

Table 5.7: Frequency of poverty for different groups of older people

	% not in poverty	% in poverty
Gender **		
Men	53	47
Women	56	44
Age groups **		
60-74 years	53	47
75 years and above	57	43
Ethnic background **		
White	62	38
Black Caribbean	44	56
Indian	70	30
Pakistani	33	67
Somali	23	77
Household size **		
Lone person	54	46
Two or more persons	56	44
All (Base)(n=580)	55 (n=319)	45 (n=261)

** p<.001

However, we found a close link between poverty and respondents' ethnic background that mirrors the findings on deprivation. Older people of Indian origin and those describing themselves as white were least likely to be in poverty.

But for older people of Black Caribbean, Pakistani or Somali origin, poverty was particularly pronounced. More than three-quarters of older Somali people interviewed were judged to be living in poverty. Such findings become especially important when linked to the relationship between ethnicity and multiple deprivation outlined above.

For older people of Black Caribbean, Pakistani or Somali origin, poverty was particularly pronounced.

The overwhelming degree of poverty and deprivation faced by geographically concentrated groups – such as is found among Pakistani and Somali people in our research – raises a number of issues for social policy. We discuss these in more detail below.

Lifelong poverty?

These findings raise the usual question about the extent to which we are dealing with lifelong poverty, which becomes more acute in old age or poverty that becomes apparent only when people get older.

We sought to address this issue by adopting a question used in the study of Gordon et al (2000) which asked: *'Looking back over your life, how often have there been times when you have lived in poverty by the standards of that time?'*

Using the necessities list as a measure, Table 5.8 below compares the responses of those people classified as being in poverty and those not in poverty.

Interestingly, around one quarter of older people judged to be in poverty (24 per cent) reported that they had never lived in poverty by the standards of the time. For this group, the experience of poverty was unlikely to have been an ever-present feature of their earlier lives.

However, close to one in ten people in poverty at the time of interview (9 per cent) reported that they felt they had lived in poverty for 'most' of their lives.

Table 5.8: Respondents reporting number of times they have lived in poverty

Looking back over your life, how often have there been times when you have lived in poverty by the standards of that time?	Of those not in poverty %	Of those in poverty %	All respondents %
Never	47	24	37
Rarely	22	14	18
Occasionally	22	36	28
Often	5	18	11
Most of the time	4	9	6
Total	100 (n=317)	100 (n=258)	100 (n=575)

A further 18 per cent stated that they had often lived in poverty. This suggests that more than a quarter of older people currently living in poverty in deprived neighbourhoods perceive that they have been in this situation throughout their lives. Our data also point to a substantial group of older people judged to be in poverty (around half) who feel that they have had at least some experience of poverty during their lives.

More than a quarter of older people currently living in poverty in deprived neighbourhoods perceive that they have been in this situation throughout their lives.

The impact of poverty on daily life

In addition to quantifying the degree to which older people in socially deprived neighbourhoods experience poverty and deprivation, we collected a variety of data that would allow us to illustrate the impact of poverty on people's daily lives.

A first indication of this can be seen in the apparent link between poverty and respondents' self-perceived quality of life (see Table 5.9).

In general what would you say your quality of life was...?	% of those not in poverty	% of those in poverty
Self-rated quality of life**		
(Very) good	66	34
Neither good nor poor	40	60
(Very) poor	34	66
All (Base)(n=580)	55 (n=319)	45 (n=261)

** p<.001

Table 5.9: Relationship between poverty and quality of life

Those people who were not in poverty were much more likely to report a good or very good quality of life than those judged to be in poverty. While two-thirds of those reporting a (very) good quality of life were not in poverty, this situation was reversed for those with a (very) poor quality of life. Two-thirds of those reporting a (very) poor quality of life were in poverty.

Two-thirds of those reporting a (very) poor quality of life were in poverty.

Although other factors such as ill health and the perceived quality of social relationships also represent key components of older people's well being, it can be argued that such factors are themselves related to poverty. A range of evidence exists to support the link between poverty and ill health and to illustrate the negative impact of poverty on the maintenance of stable social relationships.

Going without

Another indication of the impact of poverty on older people's lives is the degree to which those in poverty go without particular items or are restricted from taking part in a range of social activities.

We asked respondents whether they had gone without a variety of items over the past year because money was tight. Not surprisingly, there was a stark contrast between the experience of older people in poverty and those not in poverty (see Table 5.10). Of the 11 items selected, just 28 per cent of those classified as being in poverty had not gone without a single item. Of people not in poverty, 86 per cent had not had to go without any of the items.

The items that older people in poverty were most likely to go without were holidays, new clothes and shoes. However, more worrying were the 15 per cent of older people in poverty who said that they had gone without food in the last year and the 22 per cent who had gone without heating. Only very small numbers of people not experiencing poverty reported going without these basic items.

More worrying were the 15 per cent of older people in poverty who said that they had gone without food in the last year and the 22 per cent who had gone without heating.

Being in poverty also means having to limit one's social interactions. Around one-fifth of people in poverty limited their use of the telephone or going out on social occasions. Again, these types of restrictions were rather less frequent for people who were not in poverty.

Table 5.10: Older people who go without items

Have you gone without any of these items in the last year?	% of those in poverty (n=261)	% of those not in poverty (n=319)	% of all respondents (n=580)
Buying clothes	45	5	23
Buying shoes	36	3	18
Food	15	1	7
Heating	22	1	10
Telephoning friends or family	20	1	9
Going out	23	1	11
Visits to the pub	17	2	9
Visits to a club for older people	10	0.3	5
A day trip with family or friends	15	2	8
A hobby or sport	12	1	6
A holiday	50	8	27
None of these items	28	86	60

Taking a longer time period of five years, our research asked people whether they had used less water, gas or electricity or had used the telephone less often because money was tight. Responses to these questions were consistent with those shown above. It was fairly common for people currently experiencing poverty to report having used less of these utilities (see Table 5.11). Very low proportions of those not in poverty stated that they had used less of any utility.

The service that older people in poverty most frequently used less of was the telephone.

Around two-fifths of people in poverty had used the telephone less often because money was tight. Slightly lower proportions had cut back on using gas and electricity.

Given that water meter coverage is relatively unevenly spread across Britain, the capacity to save money by restricting water usage varies geographically and from household to household. In this context, the fact that 15 per cent of respondents in poverty had used less water points to the lengths to which some older people feel obliged to go in order to manage on a limited income.

Table 5.11: Older people who have used less in the past five years

In the last five years, have you ever used less of the following because money was tight?	% of those in poverty (n=261)	% of those not in poverty (n=319)	% of all respondents (n=580)
Water	15	1	7
Gas	35	4	18
Electricity	35	3	17
Telephone	38	6	20

Managing on a low income

One of the aims of our research was to find out how people cope with daily life under conditions where material resources may be severely limited. We attempted to establish some parameters for this work by indicating the extent to which people do indeed report difficulties managing on a low income.

Two potential indicators of financial problems are the degree to which people are behind in paying household bills and the extent to which they have to borrow money to meet everyday expenses.

We asked respondents whether they had been behind in paying bills during the past year (see Table 5.12). Overall, 84 per cent of people had not fallen behind. However, the experience of older people not in poverty was significantly different from that of people in poverty.

Among the former, relatively few people (3 per cent) had fallen behind. For people in poverty, around three in ten (31 per cent) had been behind in paying their household bills.

For people in poverty, around three in ten (31 per cent) had been behind in paying their household bills.

Of all bills, older people in poverty reported most difficulty paying gas and electricity charges. Seventeen per cent had been behind in paying the gas bill while 15 per cent reported having difficulty paying their electricity bills. More than one in ten people in this group had also been behind in paying their water rates, rent, council tax and telephone bills.

Table 5.12: Older people who are behind in paying bills

Were you behind in paying for these?	% of those in poverty (n=261)	% of those not in poverty (n=319)	% of all respondents (n=580)
Rent	10	1	5
Gas	17	1	8
Electricity	15	0.3	7
Water rates	12	1	6
Council tax	11	2	6
Telephone	10	0.3	5
TV licence	5	1	2
None of these items	69	97	84

Borrowing money

A traditional strategy adopted by people who have difficulty managing on a limited income is to borrow money. We sought to establish the degree to which older people felt obliged to borrow money to meet their day-to-day expenses, rather than for one-off or emergency needs (see Table 5.13).

Overall, more than one in ten people (14 per cent) had borrowed money from one of four possible sources to meet such expenses in the year preceding interview. While 6 per cent of older people not in poverty had borrowed money, this proportion increased to 24 per cent for those in poverty.

While 6 per cent of older people not in poverty had borrowed money, this proportion increased to 24 per cent for those in poverty.

Much less common, though perhaps more worrying, were the people who felt obliged to borrow from either pawnbrokers or moneylenders to meet day-to-day expenses. People become especially vulnerable to the high rates of interest charged on loans and run the risk of entering into a cycle of debt.

Getting by?

Finally, in order to gain a sense of how well older people felt that they were managing on their incomes, we asked the question: 'Taking everything together, how well would you say you (and your husband/wife/partner) are managing financially these days?' (See Table 5.14.)

Table 5.13: Older people who have borrowed money for day-to-day expenses

Over the past year, have you had to borrow money... in order to pay for your day-to-day needs?	% of those in poverty (n=261)	% of those not in poverty (n=319)	% of all respondents (n=580)
Friends	16	1	8
Family	18	4	10
Pawnbroker	2	0.3	1
Moneylender	4	1	3

The most common source of financial support for people who had to borrow money was the family, closely followed by friends. Of those in poverty, 18 per cent had borrowed money from family members and 16 per cent had borrowed from friends.

Just 15 per cent of all respondents reported that they were 'living comfortably'. A further 31 per cent indicated that they were 'doing all right' on their incomes. Around two-fifths (41 per cent) said that they were 'just about getting by' and 13 per cent were finding things 'quite' or 'very' difficult.

Around two-fifths (41 per cent) said that they were 'just about getting by' and 13 per cent were finding things 'quite' or 'very' difficult.

Table 5.14: Perceived financial adequacy

How well would you say you (and your partner) are managing financially these days?	% of those not in poverty	% of those in poverty	% all
Living comfortably	25	3	15
Doing all right	42	17	31
Just about getting by	29	57	41
Finding it quite/very difficult	4	23	13
Total	100 (n=319)	100 (n=260)	100 (n=579)

$p < 0.001$

As might be anticipated, there is a marked contrast in responses to this question according to whether older people are classified as being in poverty or not. While two-thirds of those not in poverty describe themselves as either living comfortably or doing all right, this applies to only one-fifth of people in poverty. At the other end of the spectrum, just 4 per cent of those not in poverty suggest that they are finding it quite or very difficult to manage financially compared with 23 per cent of people in poverty.

This pattern is repeated if respondents are grouped into quintiles according to equalised net income of the older person/couple (though it should be noted that we have income data for only 439 or 73 per cent of our respondents). Here, the research finds those having difficulties 'getting by' clustering at the bottom 20 per cent of the income distribution, while those reporting 'living comfortably' are much more likely to be encountered in the top 20 per cent (see Table 5.15).

Table 5.15: Perceived financial adequacy – by quintiles of equalised income (%)

How well would you say you (and your partner) are managing financially these days?	Bottom fifth	Next fifth	Middle fifth	Next fifth	Top fifth	Total
Living comfortably	7	11	14	25	42	100
Doing all right	13	27	21	17	22	100
Just about getting by	17	30	19	22	13	100
Finding it quite/very difficult	31	34	9	11	14	100
Total	(n=71)	(n=117)	(n=75)	(n=86)	(n=90)	(n=439)

$p < 0.001$

Case studies

While it is important to quantify the degree to which older people in deprived areas are vulnerable to poverty, statistics tell us little about the impact of poverty on individuals' day-to-day lives.

Something of what it means to experience poverty in old age is illustrated here with data drawn from in-depth interviews with older people. In these interviews, we were able to listen to older people's accounts of their daily routines and to examine the degree to which poverty influenced their capacity to participate in mainstream life.

The three case studies presented here represent very individual experiences. However, they have been selected to highlight more general patterns that characterise the situation of older people who are living on a low income. In each case, pseudonyms have been used to protect the identities of respondents.

The first case study (Maud Fields) shows a person who has adapted reasonably well to living on a low income. She manages her finances well but only by making a conscious effort to save and to limit even modest outgoings.

In the second case study (Ali Hassan), we can see the impact of lifelong inequality on an older person's ability to manage his finances. In this case, managing on a limited income involves cutting back on essentials, such as food, and severely restricting social activities.

The third case study (Zafar Saddiq) illustrates the difficulty experienced by a man who is coming to terms with a retirement income that is less than that of his working life. It shows a situation in which limited income is compounded by problems negotiating a path through the benefits system.



Case study 1: Maud Fields

Maud Fields is 68 and lives by herself in a terraced house in London's East End. She has lived in this part of London for almost 30 years and in her present accommodation for more than 15 years. Miss Fields has never been married and has no children. At least once a week she sees her closest surviving relative, a sister who lives locally.

Affected by a long-term disability, Miss Fields took early retirement at the age of 52. Her weekly income is about £110.00, comprising a small occupational pension, the basic state pension and attendance allowance. She also receives a rebate on her council tax bill.

Living on such a modest income, Miss Fields manages her finances in a very strategic way. She puts money aside for each of ten different categories of possible expenses – council tax, phone, vet's bills, gas, electricity, Christmas shopping, other shopping (eg items for the house), food, milkman and a crossword that she sends off for every week.

A different proportion of her income is set aside for each type of expense. For example, between 30p and 40p per week each is set aside for occasional shopping items, vet's bills and her crossword. Miss Fields recognises that these sums are very small but says saving like this is very effective as it 'all adds up': *'I mean I had for instance a £200 vet bill this year ... [it] didn't come as a surprise. I've got it saved.'*

While Miss Fields has developed the habit of saving and admits that she is very frugal with her money, there are some things that she feels obliged to pay more for than she would like to. She is unable to carry heavy items such as food and milk because of her disability, so she has these delivered to her door. Although this costs more, she doesn't have an alternative: *'[It's] very much dearer, but I can't carry that from the supermarket. I mean, you pay in the supermarket something like 27 [pence] and we pay something like 45 [pence] for the same pint.'* Occasionally, a local authority home help or friend will do some shopping for her.

To compensate for the extra costs associated with home deliveries, Miss Fields looks for other ways to cut down on her outgoings. When paying her bills, for example, rather than incur additional Post Office or postage charges, she will seek out ways of paying that are free of charge. This usually involves the inconvenience of paying bills at her bank.

When asked how her financial situation affects her quality of life, Miss Fields responded by saying *'I am quite happy.'*

Case study 2: Ali Hassan

Ali Hassan is in his mid-60s and lives with his wife in a traditional terraced house in Liverpool. Born in Somalia, he migrated to Britain in the early 1950s in search of work. Alternating between employment in the merchant navy and the steel industry, he moved from London to Yorkshire before settling in Liverpool in the mid-1960s. He has three children – one daughter lives next door to him while another daughter and son live elsewhere in Liverpool.

Despite having worked when he was younger, Mr Hassan was unemployed for the substantial part of his working life because of a disability incurred in the 1950s when working as a seaman. From the middle of the 1960s he found it increasingly difficult to find work: *'I used to go to the port every day looking for a job, any kind of a job. I never got a job – five years, six years, seven years – when I was in Liverpool. I never got a job, only got a job two weeks, which I did at Christmas time.'*

As a result, managing the household finances from day to day became a constant struggle: *'You get money from the dole ... you can manage. I don't smoke, I don't drink, I don't go to entertainment, I don't go nowhere ... I'd got three kids at the time and a wife. Forty odd pound a week. You have to eat ... I have to feed the kids, so we only had one meal a day.'*

Given his willingness to work and the great effort he invested in looking for a job, Mr Hassan's inability to find employment has made him very bitter and frustrated with 'the system'. He feels that his disability should not have prevented him from securing work since he felt both physically and mentally healthy.

In particular, he felt that he would have benefited from a training programme: *'I used to be working at the docks, I can manage, ... I can manage like a fit man. ... But you see a lot of people, cripples, no hand, no arm, they take them somewhere to teach them something and they become something ... they don't give me something to learn, nobody send me.'* Even though he was once enrolled on a two-month training scheme, developing a range of practical and machine skills, he still could not find work. Now in retirement and with deteriorating health, Mr Hassan sees little chance to improve his situation: *'I am sick now. I got a stroke, I've got diabetes. I am just hopeless now.'*

Unable to find any stable form of employment for almost 40 years is having significant financial consequences in retirement. In an effort to keep up with the household bills, which he treats as a priority, Mr Hassan and his wife manage on only one meal a day: *'So never mind my food, I have to pay gas – £8.10 – and then electric – I pay £4.10 – which comes to £50 a month. I pay that first. You see, if I don't pay it now, nobody going to help me.'*

He does not want to borrow money from his children, as he would be unable to pay it back. When he is short of money to pay the household bills, Mr Hassan and his wife cut down on food: *'So food, I have to stop eating. You see if I borrow now for tomorrow ... what am I going to eat tomorrow? I just have to manage with my pension that's all.'*

For Mr Hassan, surviving on a low income also involves going without or limiting the social activities that he feels are important for a person's quality of life. He commented that he felt unable to go out and have a cup of tea and 'mix with people' or to go into town: *'When you are poor, you can't go nothing, you don't do nothing, you have to stay and be satisfied, that's all.'*

Case study 3: Zafar Saddiq

Zafar Saddiq is in his mid-80s. He lives with his wife in a terraced house in central Manchester. He was born in what is now Pakistan, leaving the country at the age of 14 to find work. His quest for employment took him first to Africa and then on to a number of Middle Eastern countries. He ultimately settled in Britain in the mid-1940s. For most of his working life in Britain, Mr Saddiq ran a small shop, only giving this up when ill health set in. He has two daughters, both of whom are married with children and living in Pakistan.

In his retirement, Mr Saddiq and his wife find it very difficult to manage on their pension. For example, when they need to buy something for the house, they have to find some way of cutting back on other things in order to save up: *'If you need something then you have to go without things to get it. For example, this sofa I have just bought – I had to go without little things such as food and cut down in other areas to come up with £150. It might not seem a lot to some, but for me and my wife it is everything as for us every penny counts.'*

At the time of interview, Mr Saddiq was particularly concerned with saving for his funeral: *'Now I have to think about when I die. I have started to save up money to pay for my grave when I die ... I don't want to be a burden to anyone.'* Having worked most of his adult life in Britain he feels that economically he has little to show for it.

His situation is made more difficult by a lack of knowledge of his benefit entitlement. Perhaps because of this he is unhappy with the system, saying: *'The more you lie, the more benefits you get – and people like me who have worked all their life and always tell the truth lose out on what we should be entitled to.'* Despite their financial hardship, Mr Saddiq said that he *'would rather starve than lie to get any extra money'*.

Longing to visit his daughters in Pakistan, Mr Saddiq is constrained not only by limited financial resources but also by restrictions placed on his access to state benefits. *'By the time you pay for your tickets and transport fees you have no money left to live on ... On top of this, you cannot stay away for more than four weeks or your benefit will be stopped, so that when you come back you are left to face bills and have no money left to pay for essential materials to keep you going.'*

For the trip to be financially worthwhile, Mr Saddiq feels he would have to stay longer than four weeks, as the cost of living in Pakistan is lower than in Britain. This situation prevents him from being able to visit his daughters in Pakistan. He believes this *'rule should be revised and taken into consideration for us elderly people'*.

Research and policy implications

Poverty and deprivation in later life represented core themes in social policy debates relating to the circumstances of older people for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

These themes are of continuing relevance and play a key role in contemporary debates on social exclusion. The issues raised in this report point to the importance of broadening discussions about poverty and deprivation to embrace concerns about access to socially valued goods and opportunities to engage within society as a whole.

Our research examines these questions by focusing on communities characterised (on the basis of official indicators) by severe economic and social deprivation. The evidence outlined here suggests that older people living in such communities experience levels of poverty substantially in excess of those found in nationally representative studies.

Poverty and multiple deprivation appear as significant elements in the problems facing long-established urban communities in the UK (Phillipson et al, 2001). Of course, not all older people in these areas are poor. Understanding the pathways that place some people in deep and enduring poverty and lift others beyond deprivation is an important theme that warrants further analysis. This report, however, provides some initial evidence – not least in the case studies – to show that an individual's relationship with the labour market during their working life is a major factor influencing material circumstances in old age.

Particular disadvantage

Our research raises broader questions about the difficulties that arise when the poverty and deprivation experienced by individuals is combined with that of a neighbourhood as a whole.

Essentially we are asking whether older people who live in poverty and who belong to social networks that are also characterised by poverty and (multiple) deprivation face particular types of disadvantage. In such circumstances, there are likely to be relatively limited opportunities for individuals and groups to improve their material conditions without significant social policy intervention.

This situation is likely to be of particular relevance to older people belonging to the most marginalised minority ethnic groups. Policies designed to regenerate Britain's major towns and cities through the investment of substantial public funds should take account of the multiple risks faced by people who experience such forms of disadvantage.

Our research also has important social policy implications. Here we highlight two major concerns.

Alleviate poverty

First, since poverty and multiple deprivation are much more pronounced among older people living in deprived urban areas of England than in the nation as a whole, there is scope for adopting specific measures to alleviate poverty among this group. Care should be taken to develop such measures in a way that complements the broader social policy instruments that exist to reduce poverty and deprivation within the older population as a whole, rather than adding to the existing complexities of the welfare system.

The data we report here point to the lack of affordability for many people of key essentials of daily life. For some this includes lack of access to such basics as fresh food and heating for the home. Such problems can be compounded by the additional expenses faced by many older people in deprived areas, especially when their health starts to fail, like having to pay for the delivery of shopping or other forms of help.

Higher pensions

In this context, the current Government's attempt to tackle serious financial deprivation among older people, in the form of the Minimum Income Guarantee, often appears to break down before it reaches those experiencing the greatest need. The failure to deliver an adequate standard of living to a significant minority of older people through a complex range of benefits would tend to lend support to the view that a simpler national system of higher minimum pension might represent a better way of alleviating poverty in later life.

Benefit take-up

Second, our research shows that opportunities clearly exist to develop effective work around improving the take-up of state benefits. Many older people who took part in our research appeared to be unfamiliar with the workings of the system and unsure of their entitlement to a range of benefits. While this situation applied across the board, it was especially evident among older people belonging to minority ethnic groups.

Many older people ... appeared to be unfamiliar with the workings of the system and unsure of their entitlement to a range of benefits.

In-depth interviews provided many examples of barriers that appear to limit the uptake of benefits among this group. For some this included lacking the appropriate official documents such as birth or marriage certificates that are required before a benefit claim can be submitted.

Many people, even those who had lived in Britain for a considerable period of time, lacked the appropriate language and literacy skills that would allow them to complete application forms for benefits. Where people are unable to complete the forms themselves they become dependent on others to do this for them. At this point, older people belonging to minority ethnic groups can easily lose their way within the complexities of the current benefits and advice system. While some will seek informal help with form filling (from family members, neighbours or community leaders), others will attempt to negotiate their own path through the system. Still others will seek help from a range of community and voluntary advice schemes.

Some older people just give up their claim to receive benefits, seeing the system as impenetrable. It is not surprising then that many older Pakistani and Somali people we asked simply did not know whether they were receiving the right amount of benefits.

Tackling barriers

Relatively few people from minority ethnic groups found existing telephone helplines to be of use. They particularly disliked the menu-based automated systems that many large organisations now operate. Official responses to benefits applications were frequently couched in legal terms and tended to generate additional demands for assistance. In some cases, access to benefit entitlements could ultimately be secured only through the legal process.

While these examples arise from interviews with people belonging to minority ethnic groups, they also apply more generally to the situation of older people as a whole in deprived areas. Tackling such barriers to the uptake of benefit entitlements is an urgent task for social policy.

Tackling barriers to the uptake of benefit entitlements is an urgent task for social policy.

Welfare advice

Following on from this, there is considerable scope for improving both the quantity and quality of welfare advice that is available to older people in deprived communities. The high density of poverty among older people in such areas shows that there are likely to be considerable merits in concentrating efforts to give effective advice on this group. At the very least, it is important to ensure that such advice allows older people to receive their full benefit entitlement.

This suggests the need for a stable, properly-funded welfare advice presence in deprived neighbourhoods. Advice workers should be active in seeking out people who are less likely to claim benefits or who have become lost in the benefits system. Advice and information dissemination should be sensitive to low literacy, particularly among older people from minority ethnic communities and to those who lack the confidence or skills to be proactive in taking up benefits or services.

This suggests the need for a stable, properly-funded welfare advice presence in deprived neighbourhoods.

In the past, resources set aside to provide welfare advice to people from minority ethnic groups in the language spoken by potential claimants have been subject to considerable financial and organisational insecurity. Such resources should be secured to guarantee the development of a more stable welfare advice system. Focusing welfare advice and take-up campaigns on deprived areas is likely to yield significant benefits in terms of alleviating poverty among older people.

Older people's experience of crime

CHAPTER

6



The experience of crime and concern about becoming a victim of crime was a recurring theme in conversations with older people living in socially deprived neighbourhoods. When asked what they disliked about where they live, many older people spontaneously referred to how crime affects their everyday life and their neighbourhood.

In this chapter, we present a range of evidence to illustrate the impact of crime on older people's lives in some of England's most deprived urban neighbourhoods.

We have two broad aims. First, to quantify the degree to which older people experience crime and to which their lives are affected by crime and perceptions of risk. We compare data from deprived areas with that collected for nationally representative crime surveys. This provides an indication of the degree to which older people living in deprived neighbourhoods might be more vulnerable to crime than those living in other environments.

Second, drawing on case studies and the comments of people who took part in our research, we hope to illustrate the extent to which crime affects older people's daily lives. We explore how far crime is a barrier to older people's participation in what might be regarded as normal daily activities – taking a walk in the park, visiting friends or neighbours, enjoying a relaxing evening in front of the television.

Our research provides evidence in relation to four themes:

- the extent of older people's actual experience of different types of crime;
- the extent to which older people living in socially deprived urban neighbourhoods are worried about particular types of crime;
- personal safety issues and the degree to which older people feel safe in their neighbourhood and homes; and
- whether older people are active in trying to counter the risk of becoming a victim of crime.

Experience of crime

We asked respondents whether they had experienced one or more of a range of seven different types of crime in the previous year or two. It is important to note that we were not measuring the number of times a particular type of crime was experienced but the incidence of a range of types of crime. Our data may therefore represent an underestimation of older people's experience of crime.

The majority of older people taking part in our survey – three-fifths of respondents – had no recent experience of crime (see Table 6.1). However, two-fifths of respondents (40 per cent) had been victims of one or more types of crime. Moreover, a minority of people had multiple experiences of crime, with 6 per cent reporting having experienced three or more different types of crime in the two years preceding interview.

Two-fifths of respondents (40 per cent) had been victims of one or more types of crime.

We also sought information about the range of different types of crime (see Table 6.2). While 242 people had experience of one or more types of crime, cumulatively there were at least 401 crime incidents reported by respondents.

The most common type of crime was linked to property. Around one-fifth of respondents (21 per cent) had had their homes broken into or reported an attempted break-in during the two years preceding interview. Also relatively common were acts of vandalism or damage to property, such as a garden shed or vehicle, reported by 18 per cent of older people. Taken together, 170 people (28 per cent of the sample) had recent experience of one or both of these types of property crime.

Table 6.1: Experience of crime

Number of crimes experienced	Frequency	Per cent
No crime	357	60
One type of crime	133	22
Two types of crime	74	12
Three or more types of crime	35	6
Total	599	100

Table 6.2: Experience of different types of crime

Type of crime	Frequency	% of respondents experiencing crime in two years preceding interview (n=600)
Break-in or attempted break-in of home	125	21
Deliberate damage to or vandalism of home	106	18
Theft of something being carried - out of hands, pockets or bag	68	11
Physical attack because of colour, ethnic origin or religion	18	3
Physical attack for any other reason	26	4
Defrauding or cheating out of money, possessions or property	35	6
Selling of a product or service at doorstep that respondent later regretted buying	23	4

Ninety-one respondents (15 per cent of the survey sample) had experienced crimes against their person. This broad category of crime includes street thefts, experienced by just over one in ten respondents (11 per cent) and physical assaults. Eighteen older people (3 per cent) reported having been assaulted as a result of their colour, ethnic origin or religion while 26 people (4 per cent) had been assaulted for some other reason.

Our survey data also show that some older people were vulnerable to financial crime. Thirty-five people (6 per cent) had been defrauded or cheated out of money, possessions or property in the two years preceding interview. During the same period, 23 people (4 per cent) had been sold a product or service at their doorstep, such as building work, that they subsequently regretted purchasing.

Comparison with national survey

A comparison with data from the British Crime Survey illustrates the stark contrast that exists between the situation of older people living in socially deprived neighbourhoods in England and that of older people in England and Wales as a whole. While crime surveys repeatedly show that older people are relatively unlikely to be victims of crime, our study qualifies such a view.

For example, the 2001 British Crime Survey showed that 3.4 per cent of households in England and Wales had experienced a burglary in 2000. This proportion rose to 5.4 per cent of households in inner city areas and to 7.9 per cent in areas characterised by 'high levels of physical disorder'.

Where the head of household was 60 or older, a below average burglary rate of 2.2 per cent was reported (Kershaw et al, 2001:56). Even though our survey asked about the incidence of such crimes in the last year or two rather than the last year, the comparable figure was almost ten times greater (21 per cent).

A similar pattern emerges in relation to crimes against the person. The 2001 British Crime Survey emphasised that older people were much less likely to experience physical assaults than people in other age groups. Just 1 per cent of adults living in households headed by a person aged 60 and over had been a victim of violence in 1999 and 2000, compared with a figure of 3.9 per cent for all households (Kershaw et al, 2001:63). Our survey reports a significantly higher level of risk, with 15 per cent of respondents having either experienced an assault or had something that they were carrying stolen from them.

Fifteen per cent of respondents had either experienced an assault or had something that they were carrying stolen from them.

Who experiences crime?

Our research shows that the actual experience of crime is a feature of the lives of many older people living in England's most socially deprived urban areas.

Moreover, this experience does not vary significantly according to a range of individual characteristics (see Table 6.3). For example, there was no difference between the incidence of crime for men or women, for older people belonging to different age groups or for those who had lived in their neighbourhoods for different periods of time.

Though not statistically significant and with relatively small numbers of respondents, there is evidence to suggest that older people belonging to certain minority ethnic groups were more vulnerable to crime than others. Indian, Pakistani and Somali older people were rather more likely to have had recent experience of crime than those who were white or Black Caribbean.

Despite the relatively small numbers of respondents, these findings are broadly consistent with evidence collected in the 2000 British Crime Survey, where a large 'booster sample' of people belonging to Britain's principal minority ethnic groups was studied. The survey for England and Wales showed that people belonging to minority groups were more vulnerable than others to particular types of household crime, including burglary. Risks in relation to personal crime were less marked or less consistent (Clancy et al, 2001:11f.).

There is evidence to suggest that older people belonging to certain minority ethnic groups were more vulnerable to crime than others.

Table 6.3: Experience of crime related to individual characteristics

Based on responses to questions seeking experiences of seven different types of crime in the last year or two	No experience of crime %	Experience of one or more types of crime %
Gender **		
Men	60	40
Women	59	41
Age groups **		
60-74 years	60	40
75 years and above	58	42
Ethnic background **		
White	61	39
Black Caribbean	66	34
Indian	44	56
Pakistani	41	59
Somali	51	49
Poverty **		
Not in poverty	67	33
In poverty	52	48
All (Base)(n=599)	60 (n=357)	40 (n=242)

** p<.001

Poverty and crime

A key feature of our research has been the attempt to understand the impact of poverty upon older people's lives. This is also potentially important in relation to crime.

Lack of material resources can limit people's capacity to protect themselves against the risk of different types of crime.

Lack of material resources can limit people's capacity to protect themselves against the risk of different types of crime. For example, people with limited income may be unable to afford to install security devices such as burglar alarms or secure locks. Where such devices are fitted, they may represent a significant cost to the individual. When asked how safe she felt in her home during the day, one older Pakistani woman in Manchester commented:

'I don't worry too much because I have good neighbours and they are always there for me. I don't have an alarm but I can't afford to have one installed and the locks I do have aren't too good either. I had new ones fitted in lately but they cost a lot you know. It's too much for an old woman like me to have to worry about.'

In addition, the inability to afford buildings or home contents insurance can make it more difficult for people to replace items that have been stolen or damaged.

When examining the link between poverty and the experience of crime, our data lend weight to the view that people living in poverty are more susceptible to crime than those who are not poor. Overall, 40 per cent of respondents in our survey had experienced one or more type of crime.

The respective proportion of those in poverty was 48 per cent compared with 33 per cent of those not in poverty. This finding is important in terms of social policy. Increasing the incomes of the poorest pensioners is likely to reduce their vulnerability to crime.

Increasing the incomes of the poorest pensioners is likely to reduce their vulnerability to crime.

The impact of crime

There are a number of ways in which the experience of crime impacts upon older people's everyday lives. As might be anticipated, the experience of crime is closely related to older people's self-rated quality of life (see Table 6.4). While those people who had not been the victim of crime tended to describe themselves as having a good or very good quality of life, the pattern was reversed for those with such experiences.

In our survey, 67 per cent of respondents who described their quality of life as being either good or very good had no experience of crime. Of those who reported their quality of life as being poor or very poor, almost two-fifths (57 per cent) had experienced at least one type of crime.

Experience of crime also affected people's perceptions of the place in which they live. Not surprisingly, levels of satisfaction with the neighbourhood were considerably lower among older people who reported having been the victim of one or more crime in recent years. Overall, 19 per cent of respondents in our survey were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their neighbourhood. Of this group, 56 per cent had experience of crime. The corresponding figure for those who were either satisfied or very satisfied with their neighbourhood was 33 per cent.

Table 6.4: Impact of crime

Based on responses to questions seeking experiences of seven different types of crime in the last year or two	No experience of crime %	Experience of one or more types of crime %
Self-rated quality of life**		
(Very) good	67	33
Neither good nor poor	52	48
(Very) poor	43	57
Satisfaction with neighbourhood		
(Very) satisfied	67	33
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	46	54
(Very) dissatisfied	44	56
All (Base)(n=599)	60 (n=357)	40 (n=242)

** p<.001

As we show later in this report, neighbourhood satisfaction is important in terms of its impact upon older people's sense of identity. When people become dissatisfied with the place in which they live, this can potentially translate into a loss of identity and a reduced quality of life.

Case studies

Behind these figures lie the experiences of individuals. They may have been in the minority in our survey but for those who have been the victims of crime, the impact on their daily lives can be considerable.

In the in-depth interviews in particular, we were able to listen to older people's accounts of their experiences and examine the degree to which these had affected their lives. While the two case studies reported here represent very individual experiences, they have been selected to highlight a more general pattern that characterises the situation of older people who have been victims of crime. In each case, pseudonyms have been used to protect respondents' identities.



Case study 1: Dorothy Bales

Dorothy Bales is 82 and has lived alone for two years following the death of her husband. She has lived in her current neighbourhood in London's East End for over 50 years, occupying her present accommodation – a flat in a high-rise tower block – for more than 30 years. Mrs Bales gets on well with her neighbours who are diverse in terms of age and ethnic background. Her only child, a son, lives 20 miles away and visits every month. She is in daily contact with a nephew and his wife who live in the same tower block a couple of floors down.

A year and a half ago, Mrs Bales was mugged while out for a Sunday afternoon walk near her home. At first, she tried to fend off her attacker but during the struggle became aware that he might be carrying a knife. Commenting on the terrifying nature of the assault, she said: *'You should have seen the sweat off me, the pains ... my legs went.'*

Immediately afterwards, she was impressed by the reaction of both police and her neighbours: *'The police were very good ... the ambulance they came and sorted me out and the porters downstairs were very good.'*

But after the mugging, Mrs Bales felt that her mental health suffered greatly. The independence that she had once enjoyed had taken a severe knock: *'I used to go up [to the shops] about three times a week ... on my own, talk to anyone, but I can't go now.'*

Since the assault, she has been nervous and suffered from panic attacks. Her GP prescribed what Mrs Bales refers to as 'stress tablets' to help calm her. Her nephew described his aunt as being *'frightened all the time'*.

There is little doubt that the mugging continues to have an impact on Mrs Bales's day-to-day life, even 18 months after the incident. She never goes out alone and if she does go out, she likes to be home well before dark, usually by around 1:30 pm. She never carries a bag when she goes shopping, preferring to strap a small purse to her waist over which she wears a coat. She carries just enough money to cover her purchases for that day.

Mrs Bales feels that crime in her neighbourhood has become much worse over the past few years. She commented on the absence of police foot patrols. When she does see police officers, they are usually in their cars. Reflecting a sense of helplessness, Mrs Bales also said that she could not see a solution to current crime problems in her area.

Living in a security-regulated building makes Mrs Bales no less fearful of crime. An entrance code is needed to gain access to the building and the reception is staffed until midnight. Despite this she has had her front door reinforced and now has three locks and a security chain. All three locks are on when she is in the house alone. Whether it is day or night, she never answers the door unless she knows in advance who is coming. *'Nobody knows what it's like ... it's frightening.'*

Case study 2: Muriel Allen

Muriel Allen is 69 and lives alone in Moss Side, Manchester, keeping a small dog for company. Mrs Allen moved from a neighbouring part of Manchester to her current home, a traditional semi-detached house on a council estate, less than a year ago. Since moving in, her life has been blighted by the unruly behaviour of a group of local children.

Mrs Allen described one particularly disturbing occasion when the children had broken into her home while she was out visiting friends: *'They [the children] burgled me and they wrecked everything. They tipped out all the drawers, all the cupboards, everything, even tipped the mattresses off my bed. ... They'd put a pile of paper on the floor, in the middle of the floor, and they'd poured a bottle of turps over it. I'd got a painting on the easel that I'd been doing for a present for my son and they'd thrown eggs at it and I mean they were prepared to set the house on fire with a little dog in it.'*

When she returned, Mrs Allen realised that her home had been broken into and that those responsible were still inside. Feeling afraid to confront the group, she sought help from neighbours: *'I went to a couple of houses to ask them to phone the police and none of them would open the door. It's only about six o'clock at night you know, not in the middle of the night. Then the old man next door but one phoned the police.'*

The same group of children had subsequently terrorised neighbours. While Mrs Allen's daughter has encouraged her to move house again, she was not sure that this would be sensible: *'My daughter wants me to move but it's better the devil you know isn't it? ... My daughter lives in [suburb of Manchester] ... they own the house and it's of an Edwardian type – a three-storey house you know – and she's been burgled several times.'*

Justifying her decision to stay put, she commented: *'I've only had the one burglary. So really, you know, I might as well stay here.'*

Fear of crime

'There used to be a lot of shootings around here. I think it may have stopped now.'
(67-year-old man, Manchester)

'All the shootings and stabbings you hear about – I haven't seen any, but you always hear about them.'
(72-year-old woman, Liverpool)

'I worry a lot in case someone might try to break in and attack us while we are asleep. But you just continue the way you do because there is nothing that you can really do.'
(Pakistani man in his mid-60s, Manchester)

'If I go away, I'd be afraid they would wreck the place. Well, I don't like the gangs of rough kids playing about. They give such cheek. They don't seem to know right from wrong. They seem out of control. My neighbour next door is lovely, but her kids and their friends worry me.'
(73-year-old woman, Liverpool)

Having found that older people living in socially deprived areas of England are more likely to be victims of crime than those living in other types of neighbourhoods, it is appropriate to examine the degree to which this translates into fear of crime. We looked at the extent to which people adapt to living in high-crime neighbourhoods.

Respondents were asked to state the degree to which they were worried about four different types of crime (see Table 6.5). Most concern was expressed about two types – having their home broken into and being the victim of a street crime. In each case, around three-fifths of respondents were either very worried or fairly worried about being the victim of such crime. Around one quarter of respondents expressed concern about being physically assaulted or being conned or cheated at the doorstep.

Table 6.5: Fear of crime (%)

How worried are you about the following?	Very worried	Fairly worried	Not very worried	Not at all worried	Total (n)
Having your home broken into and something stolen	26	34	33	7	(n=599)
Being mugged or robbed	26	32	34	8	(n=598)
Being physically attacked because of your colour, ethnic origin or religion	12	14	49	25	(n=599)
Being conned or cheated at your doorstep	10	15	46	29	(n=598)

Fear of crime varies according to the specific type of crime and to an individual's characteristics. For example, while there was little variation between older men and women in concerns about burglary, women were much more likely than men to be worried about street robbery. Almost one-third of women (31 per cent) were very worried about being mugged or robbed, compared with just under one-fifth (19 per cent) of men. Women were also more likely to worry about being conned or cheated at their doorsteps, with 29 per cent either worried or very worried about such crime, compared with 20 per cent of men.

Comparison with national survey

Our findings are in contrast with those of the 2001 British Crime Survey (Kershaw et al, 2001:72). In this survey, using identical questions, 13 per cent of men and 18 per cent of women aged 60 and over were very worried about being burgled. In relation to mugging, the respective proportions were 12 per cent and 22 per cent. The difference in responses is not that surprising. It is likely that the higher degree of worry expressed by older people in our survey reflects this group's increased vulnerability to crime in socially deprived areas.

The higher degree of worry expressed by older people in our survey reflects this group's increased vulnerability to crime...

As might be expected, there was significant variation in terms of ethnicity in relation to concern about being a victim of physical assaults arising from colour, ethnic origin or religion. While 26 per cent of all respondents were either very worried or fairly worried about such crime, this applied to 40 per cent of Indian and 49 per cent of Somali respondents.

Older Black Caribbean people were least likely to be concerned about this type of crime – 18 per cent expressed worry about being physically assaulted on the basis of their colour, ethnic origin or religion.

People who have recently experienced at least one type of crime were significantly more likely to be worried about having their homes broken into or being mugged or robbed than those who had not. However, the experience of crime did not appear to influence older people's worries about being a victim of a physical assault related to their colour, ethnic origin or religion or to being cheated or conned at the doorstep.

Personal safety

'This is a high crime area. We've had umpteen shootings! ... I wouldn't go out at night on my own!'
(67-year-old woman, Manchester)

'I think it's very dangerous in this area. I wouldn't feel safe going out. ... Well at ... about six o'clock one night the meter reader from the electricity came and I refused to answer the door to him. I said no, come back in the daylight.'
(73-year-old woman, Newham)

Concern about becoming a victim of crime is also reflected in the degree to which people feel secure within the neighbourhood. This was addressed in our survey with questions that sought to measure older people's feelings of security when moving about in their neighbourhood after dark and when in their homes at night.

Out alone after dark

We found that the majority of older people would feel unsafe if they had to go out alone in their neighbourhood after dark (see Table 6.6a). Two-thirds of respondents would feel either a bit unsafe or very unsafe under these circumstances. Very few people (7 per cent) would feel very safe when out alone after dark.

The majority of older people would feel unsafe if they had to go out alone in their neighbourhood after dark.

Feelings of insecurity were much more pronounced among women than men. Fifty-six per cent of women would feel very unsafe alone in their neighbourhood after dark, compared with 28 per cent of men. In the 2001 British Crime Survey the respective proportions were 33 per cent of women and 9 per cent of men in the same age group (Kershaw et al, 2001: 75). In our survey, relatively few women indicated that they would feel either very safe or fairly safe under such circumstances (24 per cent) compared with half of male respondents (50 per cent).

Table 6.6a: Neighbourhood safety (%)

How safe would you feel if you had to go out in this neighbourhood after dark?	Very safe	Fairly safe	A bit unsafe	Very unsafe
Gender **				
Men	10	40	22	28
Women	5	18	20	56
Age groups **				
60-74 years	8	33	21	38
75 years and above	6	19	19	57
Ethnic background **				
White	7	24	18	51
Black Caribbean	15	37	22	26
Indian	4	48	20	28
Pakistani	0	28	38	35
Somali	0	28	36	36
Experience of crime **				
No experience of crime	10	29	21	40
Experience of crime	3	24	21	52
All (Base)(n=592)	7 (n=42)	27 (n=162)	21 (n=123)	45 (n=265)

** p<.001

Concern about personal safety when out alone after dark was more evident among people aged 75 and over than among those aged 60 to 74 years. White, Pakistani and Somali older people were rather more likely than Black Caribbean or Indian people to feel unsafe when out after dark.

Recent experience of crime also influenced people's perceptions of the safety of their neighbourhood. People who had not recently experienced one of the seven types of crime referred to above were much more likely to feel safe when leaving their home after dark than people who had been victims of crime.

The majority of older people who are concerned about their safety when out alone in the evening simply tend to avoid leaving home after dark.

The majority of older people who are concerned about their safety when out alone in the evening simply tend to avoid leaving home after dark.

At home at night

It is important to note that older people in deprived areas tend to feel much more secure when they are in their own homes at night (see Table 6.6b). Overall, 46 per cent of respondents felt very safe and a further 41 per cent felt fairly safe in their own homes at night. Four per cent of people indicated that they felt very unsafe in their homes at night.

While responses to this question did not significantly vary according to a person's gender or age, there was a difference in relation to the most marked feelings of insecurity. While 1 per cent of men indicated feeling very unsafe in their homes at night, the figure was 5 per cent for women. In the 2001 British Crime Survey, the respective proportions were broadly comparable, with 1 per cent of men and 3 per cent of women over the age of 60 feeling very unsafe (Kershaw et al, 2001: 75).

Table 6.6b: Neighbourhood safety (%)

How safe do you feel when you are in your own home at night?	Very safe	Fairly safe	A bit unsafe	Very unsafe
Gender **				
Men	48	42	9	1
Women	44	40	11	5
Age groups **				
60-74 years	48	40	10	3
75 years and above	45	44	9	3
Ethnic background **				
White	50	39	9	2
Black Caribbean	57	38	4	1
Indian	24	52	12	12
Pakistani	14	52	24	10
Somali	8	57	26	10
Experience of crime **				
No experience of crime	54	38	6	3
Experience of crime	34	45	15	5
All (Base)(n=592)	46 (n=272)	41 (n=242)	10 (n=62)	4 (n=21)

** p<.001

Responses to this question varied more according to ethnicity. Indian, Pakistani and Somali older people were rather less likely to feel secure in their own homes after dark than people describing themselves as white or Black Caribbean. Very low proportions of older Somali and Pakistani respondents felt very secure in their homes: *'I'm always scared, but what can I do? It's much more scary during the night. Things seem to be getting worse. You hear of all the muggings, killings and drug dealings that are happening here. Then how can you feel safe?'* (Pakistani woman, Manchester)

Very low proportions of older Somali and Pakistani respondents felt very secure in their homes.

People who had recent personal experience of crime were significantly more likely than those who had not, to feel insecure in their own homes after dark. While more than half of respondents (54 per cent) who had not experienced a crime in recent months felt very safe in their own homes, this applied to just 34 per cent of those who had such an experience.

Preventing crime

It would be misleading to suggest that older people are simply the passive victims of crime. Indeed, in the interviews conducted during both the survey and in-depth phases of our research, we came across many examples of ways in which people sought to deal with the perceived risk of crime. Some of these are reported here, presenting further evidence of the impact of crime on older people's daily lives.

It would be misleading to suggest that older people are simply the passive victims of crime.

Those who could afford to, installed security devices in their homes. These ranged from low-level items such as good quality window and door locks, door chains and peepholes to more expensive items, including burglar alarms and security cameras. A number of people who participated in our study have sought to prevent burglary by fitting grilles or bars to potential access points to the home.

'The children come in the entry at night. They get drunk, climb on the roof, break bottles. I've bought bars for the back door and windows. I think they'd get in otherwise.'
(81-year-old woman, Liverpool)

'I have been burgled about five times. I have recently discovered big footprints at the side of the house. I have reinforced bars on my windows at the back of the house.'
(81-year-old woman, Liverpool)

A sense of control

Some older people also kept an eye out for potential risks to their homes and those of their neighbours. For example, a Black Caribbean woman in Manchester described how she would confront people who appeared out of place in her small cul-de-sac: *'If I see a car out there and the car is there for a good while, I will go out and say "Who you come visit for" or something. ... I will say "Who you looking for?" I say "You here maybe about half an hour, an hour", and you know I will find out.'*

For this woman and others, such a response reflected the importance attached to maintaining a sense of control over the area immediately surrounding her home and those of her neighbours.

Some people varied their behaviour, collecting their pension on different days of the week.

Outside the home, the perceived risk of street robbery was handled in different ways. Many older women took particular precautions when collecting their pension from the post office. There was a commonly held belief that criminals know when older people collect their pensions. Some people varied their behaviour, collecting their pension on different days of the week or at different times during the day.

'...for a fact I know they [criminals] know their post office day. They [pensioners] have to be careful when they go to the post office for their pensions, they go a different day. Like if their pension is Mondays, Monday they go they may get knocked over the head and then their money taken away. They go a different day like Wednesday because the crooked ones, they know when it is pension day don't they?'
(65-year-old woman, Newham)

Other people were cautious not to draw attention to themselves on pension day.

'I'm very careful. In my coat I've got a pocket with a button and I put my pension and the money in there. I don't carry no bag when I go and get my pension.'
(76-year-old woman, Newham)

One Manchester woman who had recently been mugged, commented on how she would now leave the house with her handbag only on special occasions: *'I'm all right if I'm in a car – I'll take my handbag. But if I'm going shopping, it's always in the bottom of my trolley, you know.'*

Neighbourhood Watch

Finally, in a number of areas, older people were involved in Neighbourhood Watch schemes that, among other things, allowed them to express their views on crime and safety issues to local councillors and police officers. For example, a 63-year-old woman in Liverpool reported how every two months she would attend the Neighbourhood Watch meetings that took place in her area: *'We just get a leaflet through the door telling us when the meeting's going to be held, you know. We just go down and listen to what they've got to say and air our views.'*

However, this woman lacked the confidence to make her own views more widely known: *'I'm a coward. I just sit and listen. I do a lot of moaning to the woman next to me, but I don't really stand up and say. I mean it's a bit scary, because if you don't like Mr So-and-So's children, and then you stand up and say he leaves his children out to annoy you, I mean you get retaliation, couldn't you? And it's not nice.'*

Research and policy implications

The range of evidence presented in this report provides a comprehensive view of the degree to which the lives of older people in socially deprived urban neighbourhoods are affected by crime.

While the majority of older people are not recent victims of crime, there are substantial numbers who have experienced serious types of crime. Our research points to the fact that not only are older people fearful of crime in deprived areas but that they are justified in many of their anxieties. These findings are in sharp contrast to those reported in national surveys, where the risk of becoming a victim of crime is typically much lower for older than younger people.

... not only are older people fearful of crime in deprived areas but that they are justified in many of their anxieties.

It is unclear from our research whether criminals operating in these areas are specifically singling out older people. Nevertheless, many older people report feeling vulnerable to crime and their day-to-day lives are clearly affected by their perceptions of crime risk. This is evident in the variety of strategies taken by older people to avoid becoming a victim of crime.

Tackling crime

Our research emphasises the overwhelming importance of tackling crime in deprived neighbourhoods. Given the impact of crime on older people's everyday lives, in particular the way in which crime inhibits participation in what would be regarded as normal social activities, there are a range of benefits to be associated with crime reduction strategies. Improving community safety in high-crime areas is likely to enhance significantly the quality of older people's lives. Having the confidence to leave one's home at all hours of the day and evening is likely to benefit people's physical and mental health.

Improving community safety in high-crime areas is likely to enhance significantly the quality of older people's lives.

Our research suggests that sustained attempts must be made to prevent and reduce crime in deprived areas as well as to reassure old people that some of their concerns might not be justified. This is a task that will involve co-operation between all those charged with tackling crime and providing security to the residents of deprived urban areas – the police, neighbourhood and street wardens, community support officers, crime prevention officers and local crime and disorder partnerships.

Improve security

Since susceptibility to crime is greater for people on low incomes, measures should be taken to lessen the vulnerability of those pensioners who lack adequate financial resources. Our research lends weight to policy strategies that set aside resources to improve the security of this group. Within the home, this typically might include help with the installation of security devices, such as good quality locks and alarm systems.

While a number of local authorities have developed good schemes that provide such devices to low-income pensioners, knowledge about the schemes appears to be relatively limited.

Also potentially important is the role to be played by the neighbourhood or street wardens who operate in some high-crime neighbourhoods. Such a presence, especially when linked to home visits to people who feel vulnerable, can help to reduce anxiety about crime.

Outside the home, consideration should be given to changing the physical characteristics of neighbourhoods, for example by improving street lighting or installing surveillance cameras at strategic locations.

Involve older people

The policy process might also usefully build upon the willingness of some older people in deprived areas to become more directly involved in neighbourhood forums, where issues relating to crime can be raised.

... build upon the willingness of some older people in deprived areas to become more directly involved in neighbourhood forums.

Access to post offices

Finally, our research confirms the importance to many older people of a local post office. Many older people in deprived areas lack access to alternative financial services, making the post office the favoured way of accessing money, safeguarding it and spending it.

Some of those who participated in our study expressed anxieties about their potential vulnerability when visiting a post office to collect their pensions or to pay bills, varying the day on which they made such visits.

The closure of a number of urban post offices in recent years appears to have hit deprived neighbourhoods hardest. With further closures anticipated, it is important to emphasise the likely impact of such a strategy on the daily lives of many older people. Where people have to travel further and longer to reach a post office, they are likely to become even more fearful of becoming a victim of crime. It might be anticipated that such anxieties will be greater among those who are least mobile, including older people who lack adequate financial resources or have health problems.

Where people have to travel further and longer to reach a post office, they are likely to become even more fearful of becoming a victim of crime.



Older people's perceptions of their neighbourhood

CHAPTER

7



In this chapter, we focus on the attitudes, thoughts and feelings about their neighbourhoods of older people living in socially deprived urban areas.

Such neighbourhoods represent key targets for Government regeneration efforts, especially in inner city areas (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001b). This reflects a concern about the growing gap between Britain's poorest neighbourhoods and the mainstream of society (Glennister et al, 1999; Hills, 1998; Lupton, 2001).

What is a neighbourhood?

Sense of identity

Neighbourhoods are important places that contribute greatly to shaping the identities of those who live in them (Marcuse, 1996). For a variety of reasons, the neighbourhood may represent a more important element of older people's sense of identity than would be the case for younger people. Many older people will have spent a substantial period of their lives in a particular neighbourhood, deriving a strong sense of emotional investment both in their home and in the surrounding community (Young and Willmott, 1957; Phillipson et al, 2001). However, the role of the neighbourhood in shaping identity cannot be attributed to length of residence alone. Rowles (1978) suggests that:

'Selective intensification of feelings about spaces may be far more than merely the coincidental outcome of lengthy residence in a single setting. It is postulated that it represents a universal strategy employed by older people to facilitate maintaining a sense of identity within a changing environment.' (p. 200).

Quality of life

The neighbourhood is also likely to have an important effect on older people's well being and quality of life (Smith, 2000). The potential for a negative impact is likely to be greater in neighbourhoods characterised by poverty and intense levels of social deprivation. This can in part be attributed to the relatively high rates of both personal and property crime that characterise many socially deprived neighbourhoods. The experience of crime and the fear of being a victim of crime act as direct barriers to the maintenance of a 'normal' daily life for many older people.

As a result, older people may be less likely – for example in inner city areas – to leave their homes after dark (Raphael et al, 1999; Phillipson et al, 2001). This type of limitation was summed up by a participant in one of the discussion groups conducted for this research: 'Quality of life ends at half past six. Once it's half past six, pensioners don't want to go out.'

There are also parts of some neighbourhoods, such as parks and cemeteries, that are effectively out of bounds to older people even during daylight hours (Scharf et al, 2001).

These experiences are compounded by health problems, with disability and long-term illness placing limits on the extent to which people can move beyond their immediate neighbourhood. Where these are threatened, through depopulation and urban decay, there may be significant repercussions for the quality of people's lives (Rogers and Power, 2000).

The neighbourhood is ... likely to have an important effect on older people's well being and quality of life.

Exploring views

Against this background, it becomes important to explore the views that people have about their neighbourhood and the impact these have on their well being and quality of life. Older people's perceptions of the impact of urban change may translate into negative views about the neighbourhood and its residents. Potentially this could also result in dissatisfaction with the neighbourhood, as demonstrated in Burrows and Rhodes' (1998) study *Unpopular Places*. Our study examines these issues by focusing on older people living in areas characterised by acute social deprivation.

It is useful to summarise our approach to examining neighbourhoods. While the study areas are defined in relation to administrative boundaries (electoral wards), such geographical units are often meaningless to local residents. To address this point, we asked respondents in our survey to tell us what they perceived their neighbourhood to be. This generated 47 names that older people felt described their neighbourhood. For example, in Pirrie (Liverpool), people variously described their neighbourhood as being Norris Green, Walton, West Derby, Anfield, Aintree and Fazakerly. Not one person mentioned the name Pirrie.

Subsequent questions related to the neighbourhood that respondents identified with. They covered:

- what older people liked about their neighbourhood;
- what they disliked about their neighbourhood;
- general attitudes towards the neighbourhood; and
- levels of satisfaction with the neighbourhood.

What older people liked about their neighbourhood

Overall, three-quarters of respondents (75 per cent) could identify something that they liked about their neighbourhood (see Table 7.1).

This proportion varied only slightly across the three cities, ranging from 72 per cent in Manchester to 79 per cent in Liverpool. At neighbourhood or ward level, there was greater variation but not a statistically significant one.

The degree of satisfaction varied relatively little according to age, gender, ethnicity or health status of respondents. Interestingly, this also applied when comparing the perceptions of long-term residents (those who had lived in the neighbourhood for 40 years or more) with those who had lived in the community for a shorter period of time.

Table 7.1: People identifying positive aspects of their neighbourhood

Thinking about this neighbourhood, is there anything you particularly like about living here?

	Yes	No
Gender		
Men	72	28
Women	77	23
Age groups		
60-74 years	77	23
75 years and above	70	30
Ethnic background		
White	73	27
Black Caribbean	83	17
Indian	72	27
Pakistani	69	31
Somali	87	13
Years resident in neighbourhood		
0-19 years	67	33
20-39 years	52	48
40 years and above	76	24
Satisfaction with neighbourhood**		
(Very) satisfied	87	13
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	68	32
(Very) dissatisfied	40	60
Recent experience of crime**		
No crime	80	20
One crime	70	30
Two or more crimes	58	42
Self-rated quality of life**		
(Very) good	82	18
Neither good nor poor	68	32
(Very) poor	61	39
All (Base)(n=599)	75 (n=450)	25 (n=149)

** p<.001
Help the Aged

The likelihood of an older person commenting favourably on some aspect of the local area was closely related to the degree to which they were satisfied with their neighbourhood and, more generally, with their self-rated quality of life. Positive aspects of the neighbourhood were much more likely to be identified by people who had no recent experience of crime than those who had experienced multiple types of crime.

Three-quarters of respondents (75 per cent) could identify something that they liked about their neighbourhood.

The features of the neighbourhood regarded as positive were broadly similar across the study areas (see Table 7.2). More than half (53 per cent) of people who could identify something that they liked about their neighbourhood commented on the presence of good neighbours, friends and family. The local availability of and access to amenities was ranked second, with 42 per cent of people identifying this as a positive feature of their neighbourhood. Almost a quarter (24 per cent) of respondents gave positive descriptions of their local area.

Table 7.2: Positive characteristics of the neighbourhood identified by older people

Thinking about this neighbourhood, is there anything you particularly like about living here?

	Per cent	Frequency
Family/neighbours/friends	53	235
Presence of amenities	42	186
Positive description of neighbourhood	24	107
Length of residence	14	64
Location of neighbourhood	9	39

NB Percentages refer to proportion of people identifying something they like about the neighbourhood (multiple responses to open-ended question).

Neighbours, family and friends

In all areas, older people commented positively on the general friendliness of their neighbourhood and the presence of good neighbours, along with family and friends close by. Familiarity with neighbours provides many older people with a sense of security. Older women were significantly more likely than men to refer positively to the presence of local family, friends and neighbours.

Typical comments included:

'Good neighbours. If you're not well they will get you a message and keep a house key for you for security.' (Liverpool)

'I know all the people in the street. All my friends live here.' (Manchester)

'We are all longstanding neighbours. People look out for us.' (Newham)

'Good neighbours from Bangladesh.' (Newham)

Access to shops and amenities

Easy access to shops and amenities also featured prominently as characteristics of the neighbourhood that older people viewed favourably.

There was some variation across the study areas. Older Pakistani and Somali people, for example, were more likely to refer to the presence of amenities in a positive way than people belonging to other ethnic groups. In particular, Pakistani and Somali people living in Liverpool and Manchester emphasised the importance of the local mosques.

Typical comments included:

'Close to local shops and bus ride to town.'
(Manchester)

'It's convenient to everywhere. It's easy to get down town on bus routes and it's got shops and everything. We like it here. Where we go socially, it's only a couple of pounds in a taxi.'
(Liverpool)

'It's very handy and convenient for me to get around. nine bus stops, one station and loads of shops.' (Newham)

In all areas, older people commented positively on the general friendliness of their neighbourhood and the presence of good neighbours...

Positive descriptions

The third most important category of responses to this question involved positive descriptions of the neighbourhood. Some people also mentioned the impact on the local community of recent regeneration initiatives.

Typical comments included:

'It's got the park. The kids play in there, so we don't get bothered by football.' (Liverpool)

'They are tidying up new roads, new buildings. They are trying to make it look nice.' (Newham)

'Since they have remodelled the place, I'm very happy with it. The place is clean now.'
(Manchester)

Given popular perceptions of socially deprived urban areas, it is perhaps surprising to note here that a number of older people said they liked the peace and quiet of their neighbourhood:

'It's very quiet. It's lovely.' (Manchester)

'It's peaceful and we can live quietly.'
(Newham)

'It's pretty quiet. Not much traffic.'
(Liverpool)

Finally, it is clear that some respondents' favourable views were heavily influenced by negative perceptions of other areas or streets. In particular, several people commented on the absence in their neighbourhood of a range of potential social problems.

Typical comments included:

'Quiet. Not much burglary. This street is good. Maybe on other streets around here, but not on this street - it used to be bad but it isn't any more.' (Manchester)

'Quiet, not a lot of children shouting and bad language.' (Manchester)

'It's quiet, good neighbours. Easy access to transport to go into town, the shops. We're away from the corporation estates.' (Liverpool)

What older people disliked about their neighbourhood

Overall, 58 per cent of older people could identify something that they disliked about their neighbourhood (see Table 7.3). This figure is substantially lower than the proportion of those identifying positive aspects.

There were considerable variations in responses across the three cities, from 67 per cent in Liverpool to 48 per cent in Manchester. These were also reflected at neighbourhood or ward level.

Table 7.3: People identifying negative aspects of their neighbourhood

Thinking about this neighbourhood, is there anything you particularly dislike about living here?

	Yes	No
Gender		
Men	58	42
Women	58	42
Age groups		
60-74 years	56	44
75 years and above	61	39
Ethnic background		
White	62	38
Black Caribbean	46	54
Indian	24	76
Pakistani	24	76
Somali	82	18
Years resident in neighbourhood		
0-19 years	51	49
20-39 years	55	45
40 years and above	62	38
Satisfaction with neighbourhood**		
(Very) satisfied	44	56
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	83	17
(Very) dissatisfied	89	11
Recent experience of crime**		
No crime	54	46
One crime	70	30
Two or more crimes	56	44
Self-rated quality of life**		
(Very) good	60	40
Neither good nor poor	53	47
(Very) poor	57	43
All (Base)(n=598)	58 (n=345)	42 (n=253)

** p<.001

The identification of elements people disliked did not vary according to age or gender. However, older Somali people and older white respondents were significantly more likely to identify dislikes than people who belonged to other ethnic groups. Over four-fifths of Somali people (82 per cent) and around three-fifths of white people (62 per cent) could highlight at least one feature of their neighbourhood that they disliked, compared to around one quarter of Indian and Pakistani respondents (24 per cent in each case).

As might be expected, there was a close relationship between older people expressing dislikes and their levels of satisfaction with the neighbourhood. In relation to people's experience of crime, the evidence is contradictory

There was substantial variation in responses across the study areas concerning people's dislikes, as outlined below.

Overall, 58 per cent of older people could identify something that they disliked about their neighbourhood. Forty-two per cent commented negatively on the general appearance of their area, 39 per cent mentioned local people and a further 39 per cent pointed to the existence of a range of social problems in the area (see Table 7.4).

Relatively few people (10 per cent) made direct reference to the absence of local amenities or services.

Negative descriptions

Negative descriptions of the local area and references to the way in which the neighbourhood had apparently deteriorated in recent years figured prominently in older people's comments (42 per cent). These included concerns about the general dilapidation of the area, the apparent lack of maintenance of buildings and public spaces, and environmental problems such as traffic noise.

Typical comments included:

'It's gone from a residential area to a run-down area.' (Manchester)

'The council seems to forget this area when they have renovation going on, ie windows, walls, driveways. So the area doesn't look as good as others close by.' (Liverpool)

'General area very noisy and filthy. Littered with rubbish. Streets are not kept clean. Mattresses, beds, fridges, TVs, wood, some of which is there for a very long time. Generally run down (...) Alleyway opposite used as toilet. Cyclists on pavement.' (Newham)

Table 7.4: Negative characteristics of the neighbourhood identified by older people

Thinking about this neighbourhood, is there anything you particularly dislike about living here?

	Per cent	Frequency
Negative description of neighbourhood	42	156
Local people/community	39	136
Social problems	39	135
Negative references to ethnic minorities	16	57
Absence of amenities	10	33
Location of neighbourhood	2	7

NB Percentages refer to proportion of people identifying something they dislike about the neighbourhood (multiple responses to open-ended question).

Local people

A second category of dislikes about the neighbourhood identified other people as being in some way problematic (39 per cent). A broad range of groups and individuals were mentioned in responses, including neighbours, people belonging to other ethnic groups, young people, students, drug addicts and beggars.

It is the balance between these dislikes that accounts for significant variation in responses between neighbourhoods. For example, young people involved in drug-related activities appeared to present more of a concern to older residents of the Liverpool wards, while the presence of students was regarded by some Manchester respondents as being problematic.

Typical comments included:

'Children, vandals, kids playing football in the street hitting your windows with balls and running in and out of the gardens. Never used to be like that. Used to be a really nice area.' (Liverpool)

'A certain atmosphere with what we call "druggies", a little pocket of drug dealers, the police are not doing anything about it.' (Liverpool)

'Area has gone down a lot due to students. They make a mess, a noise and don't respect where they live.' (Manchester)

'Council putting in problem people in empty property. Nuisance people. Not clean, making noise, vandals. The area has gone down - not good at all.' (Manchester)

Negative references to people belonging to minority ethnic groups were taken as a separate, albeit related, category in our analysis. Sixteen per cent of people who could identify something that they disliked about their area made such comments.

Although isolated comments of this type occurred in almost all wards, the proportions were highest in Newham. In St Stephen's ward, nearly half of older people (49 per cent) identifying a dislike about the neighbourhood commented negatively on the presence of people from minority ethnic groups.

... references to the way in which the neighbourhood had apparently deteriorated in recent years figured prominently ...

Social problems

A third category of older people's dislikes included a range of perceived social problems in the neighbourhood. In particular, frequent references were made to the incidence of various types of crime and forms of anti-social behaviour.

Typical comments included:

'All the shootings and stabbings you hear about. I haven't seen any, but you always hear about them.' (Liverpool)

'A lot of empty houses now and vandals come and break into them. The park opposite is a dumping ground for old cars which they torch.' (Liverpool)

'Crime and vandalism and the kids – school kids – playing football and causing problems.' (Manchester)

'People break in a lot. I have lost all my electrical goods.' (Newham)

'We have a lovely park nearby, which I used to love to visit. But when I last visited a large group of black boys and white girls were fighting and swearing, so now I am too frightened to go back.' (Newham)

Earlier times

Many people compared current aspects of the neighbourhood unfavourably with earlier times. This may reflect in part the difficulties some older people face in coming to terms with the consequences of profound urban change. This appears to be the case particularly for older people who have lived in the area for a long time and developed a strong attachment to their neighbourhood. For them, there is a gap between the contemporary reality of the neighbourhood they live in and that which they feel they belong to and on which they base their sense of identity. Some evidence for this is provided in the case studies below. In part, this might help to explain some (white) people's concerns about living side by side with people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

More generally, negative perceptions of the neighbourhood were frequently associated with the loss of particular neighbours and friends (either through death or migration) or with younger family members moving away. Some people commented on the absence of people of similar age:

'People come and go that quickly, you don't get a chance to know them.' (Manchester)

'There's only about two pensioners left around here.' (Liverpool)

'It's gone downhill. We haven't got nice neighbours. The nice ones have all died or moved and with some of the houses being corporation, they seem to have moved in quite a lot of families and the kids are unruly ... ' (Liverpool)

'The people are not the same, not as friendly as it used to be. The community spirit has gone.' (Newham)

Attitudes towards the neighbourhood

Older people's perceptions of their neighbourhood are likely to influence the extent to which they feel it is suited to their needs. We sought to address this by examining the degree to which respondents either agreed or disagreed with six statements (see Table 7.5).

I believe my neighbours would help me in an emergency

The overwhelming majority of respondents in our survey indicated that they would expect to receive help from neighbours in an emergency (78 per cent).

I frequently stop and talk with people in my neighbourhood

Seventy-one per cent stated that they frequently stopped and talked with people in the neighbourhood.

I like to think of myself as similar to the people who live in this neighbourhood

Sixty-nine per cent regarded themselves as being similar to other people in the neighbourhood.

I feel I can trust the people in my neighbourhood

There was less certainty about the degree to which people felt they could trust others in the neighbourhood. Almost three-fifths of respondents agreed with the statement (58 per cent) while around one-fifth disagreed (21 per cent). A further fifth were undecided (21 per cent). There was little variation in responses to this statement between the study areas.

This neighbourhood is a good place to grow old in

Just over half of respondents (52 per cent) felt that their neighbourhood represented a good place in which to grow old. Positive responses to this question varied across the study areas.

In particular, in Longsight, Manchester, an area associated with a range of high profile, drug-related crimes in recent years, 20 per cent of older people strongly disagreed with this particular statement.

Table 7.5: Attitudes towards the neighbourhood: proportion of older people agreeing or disagreeing with statements relating to neighbourhood (%)

Statement	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
I believe my neighbours would help me in an emergency	78	10	12
I frequently stop and talk with people in my neighbourhood	71	11	18
I like to think of myself as similar to the people who live in this neighbourhood	69	12	19
I feel I can trust the people in my neighbourhood	58	21	21
This neighbourhood is a good place to grow old in	52	17	31
During the last two years my neighbourhood has got better as a place to live in	30	27	43

My neighbourhood has got better as a place to live

Only a minority of people (30 per cent) shared the view that their neighbourhood had improved as a place to live in the previous two years. More than two-fifths of older people (43 per cent) either strongly disagreed or disagreed with this view.

Satisfaction with the neighbourhood

In a final question, we sought to assess the degree to which older people were satisfied with their neighbourhoods. We asked people to judge the level of their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the neighbourhood on a simple five-point scale (see Table 7.6).

Overall, around two-thirds of respondents (68 per cent) expressed some degree of satisfaction with their neighbourhood as a place to live. Around one-fifth (19 per cent) were either slightly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their neighbourhoods.

Table 7.6: Satisfaction with neighbourhood – five-point scale

In general, how satisfied are you with this neighbourhood as a place to live in?

	Frequency	Per cent
Very satisfied	130	21.7
Fairly satisfied	279	46.5
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	77	12.8
Slightly dissatisfied	55	9.2
Very dissatisfied	59	9.8
Total	600	100.0

There was little variation in responses to this question according to respondents' gender, age or length of residence in the neighbourhood. However, ethnicity appeared to influence the degree to which older people were satisfied with their neighbourhood (see Table 7.7). Black Caribbean and Indian respondents were significantly more likely to be satisfied with their neighbourhood than older Somali or Pakistani people.

While four-fifths of people from the first two groups expressed satisfaction with the neighbourhood, this applied to only around two-fifths of people from the Somali and Pakistani groups. The highest rates of dissatisfaction were found amongst older Somali people living in the Granby area of Liverpool.

Table 7.7: Satisfaction with neighbourhood – proportion of older people expressing satisfaction/dissatisfaction

In general, how satisfied are you with this neighbourhood as a place to live?	(Very) satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	(Very) dissatisfied
Gender			
Men	65	13	21
Women	70	12	18
Age groups			
60-74 years	70	13	17
75 years and above	67	13	21
Ethnic background**			
White	69	11	20
Black Caribbean	80	11	9
Indian	80	8	12
Pakistani	45	34	21
Somali	41	31	28
Years resident in neighbourhood			
0 -19 years	66	13	21
20 -39 years	71	13	17
40 years and above	67	13	20
Recent experience of crime**			
No crime	74	11	15
One crime	56	17	27
Two or more crimes	58	17	25
Self-rated quality of life**			
(Very) good	76	10	14
Neither good nor poor	57	18	25
(Very) poor	55	17	18
All (Base)(n=598)	68 (n=409)	13 (n=77)	19 (n=114)

** p<.001

Help the Aged

Overall, around two-thirds of respondents (68 per cent) expressed some degree of satisfaction with their neighbourhood as a place to live.

Satisfaction with the neighbourhood was also significantly related to other relevant variables. We draw particular attention to two of these.

First, satisfaction with the neighbourhood was closely linked to a person's experience of crime. Older people who had not experienced a recent crime were significantly more likely to express satisfaction with the neighbourhood than those who had.

Second, there was a relationship between self-rated quality of life and neighbourhood satisfaction. The highest rates of satisfaction were found among those who rate their quality of life as either good or very good.

Case studies

While the case studies presented here represent very individual experiences, they have been selected to highlight more general patterns that characterise the situation of older people living in deprived neighbourhoods. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identities of respondents.

Case study 1: Edward and Maureen Brown

Edward and Maureen Brown are in their mid-70s. Both have lived in the East End of London for most of their lives. They have lived in the same accommodation for more than 30 years, on the same housing estate as Mrs Brown's sister and nephew. They have three children, all of whom live in the London area.

Mr and Mrs Brown have witnessed great changes to their neighbourhood although they don't regard many of them as positive. Mrs Brown talked about how neighbours have changed over the years: *'We have a lot of strangers round here. The old fashioned neighbours have gone now. We don't speak to them, we don't get to know the new people coming in 'cause they don't want to be bothered with old people.'*

They have a sense of loss of 'community'. Mr Brown commented on how he lacked the familiarity of knowing parents and their children: *'You can't say oh that is Mrs So-and-So's boy or that is So-and-So. You don't know them, they are absolutely strangers to us. So you haven't got a community where we know each other.'*

The negative feelings that the Browns have about their neighbourhood have been made worse by their recent experience with gangs of local children. Mrs Brown said: *'We've had a terrible time last summer. The children they overrun us, they ran all over, they smashed all the windows next door, the place was empty but we used to keep an eye on the place ... and the other house, they set fire to.'*

She described one particularly frightening evening when she and her husband went outside to investigate some loud noises: *'We went out and there was two boys about 12 with hammers.'*

The house was empty and they were smashing, trying to smash the tiles on the doorstep and we went round and told them to clear off and stop it and what did he [one of the boys] say? He said "I'll stab you."

The community has changed in other ways. Commenting on the absence of occasions when people get together, Mrs Brown drew parallels with the events surrounding the Queen's Silver Jubilee: *'In 1977 was the last time that we had the Silver Jubilee, the Queen's Jubilee ... 25 years and all that on the Green. It was beautiful. We've had nothing like it since, we've got nobody that would do that.'*

The Browns also feel disconnected from local services. Many local shops that they once used have closed down and the current ones don't cater fully for their needs. Mrs Brown said: *'If it were not for my sister I would just have to shop local round the shops. We cannot get the things, I cannot do a week's shopping local because they don't stock the food that I buy.'*

Mr Brown mentioned several shops that have now closed: *'There used to be an English butcher there and a greengrocers, that's gone, butchers gone, the bakers has gone. Half the shops are closed round there now, derelict.'*

There is an evident sense of despair and disconnection in the way in which Mr and Mrs Brown describe the changes that have occurred in their neighbourhood. Mr Brown in particular expressed a wish to live anywhere but in his current neighbourhood: *'I was born and brought up in what was supposed to have been in those days the worst place in London. Everybody talked about the Limehouse, Chinatown, Stepney Water. I would sooner live there now than I would in any of these places round here.'*

Case study 2: Muriel Gates

Muriel Gates is 65 years old and has been widowed for two years. She has lived in her semi-detached house in Manchester for the past 30 years. Mrs Gates shares her home with a daughter and has a son who lives further away.

Religion plays an important part in her life. She attends church almost daily and, as a member of her church's charity mission, she often visits sick people in their homes. On two afternoons a week, Mrs Gates takes bridge lessons at the local college. She finds this *'very, very relaxing and it's good for me ... because you just forget everything.'*

In the time that she has lived in her neighbourhood, Mrs Gates has noticed a number of changes: *'There's more of a transient population now. There's a lot of flat dwellers who don't seem to stay.'* She wishes that more families would move into the area as she feels this would create a 'better' and more stable community. She finds it difficult to cope with the perceived instability of the neighbourhood and the loss of a number of friends: *'It doesn't encourage me to have any pride in the environment that I live in now ... gradually my friends have moved out or have died, you know the people that I really knew well.'*

Mrs Gates feels that the community spirit that once characterised her neighbourhood has been lost. She would regard very few local residents as being in some way 'community-minded'. She mentioned that when speaking to her neighbours many express a desire to live 'somewhere else'. This perceived absence of community mindedness is in contrast to the past: *'There used to be a clutch of people that felt as if they belonged here and tried to work together to keep the streets clean. Or if you saw anybody else's bin at night you'd push it through the gate and things like that ... anybody in trouble you'd go and see.'*

Mrs Gates's way of coping is to *'do little things that make it better for yourself'*. She felt that people could make it better for themselves by going out and meeting people: *'Go out and meet people yourself, talk to people and you might find that maybe they're only too glad to talk to you.'*

Research and policy implications

In drawing these findings together, it is useful to highlight three issues:

- older people's attachment to their neighbourhood;
- variation between areas; and
- the impact of place on older people's quality of daily life.

Attachment

On the first issue, our analysis supports the findings of earlier studies concerning the importance of community to older people (Young and Willmott, 1957; Phillipson et al, 2001). Our data illustrate the existence of a close attachment between older people and the places in which they live – an attachment that is found in the most socially deprived neighbourhoods of England. It is expressed in positive as well as negative views about local areas and in relatively high levels of satisfaction with the neighbourhood.

An important finding from our research is that very few older people appear indifferent to their surroundings. Indeed, many are extremely positive about the neighbourhood in which they live. For many, this reflects an often lengthy period of residence in a community in which they have raised their families, maintain regular contacts with family, friends and neighbours, use local shops and amenities and are familiar with the local landmarks.

Very few older people appear indifferent to their surroundings.

Of course, the negative views were extremely important and, as we have noted, certainly more common in some areas than others. But such feelings – often expressed with considerable force by older residents – also reflect the emotional investment people had made in their locality and their sense of frustration that the changes affecting it were beyond their control.

Involve older people

This aspect of our research raises a number of issues for policy makers and planners involved in urban regeneration schemes. The long-standing commitment of many older people to their communities suggests that there is considerable scope for involving this group in different aspects of community redevelopment. Older people have much to offer in this respect as well as a stake in ensuring that urban regeneration delivers enduring benefits to the community as a whole.

However, in our research we found little evidence that the range of initiatives currently underway in the studied neighbourhoods took account of the views of older people. This mirrors the findings of an earlier review of older people's involvement in the regeneration process, which suggested that:

'... older people's organisations have had to work hard to be included and they are often missing from partnerships.' (Riseborough and Sribjlanin, 2000:6).

By involving older people more directly in the policy and planning process, it might also be possible to begin to counterbalance some of the more negative views expressed in relation to other groups within the neighbourhood. Such a strategy could assist in easing some of the tensions that exist between different age groups and between people with different ethnic backgrounds.

The challenge for policy makers and planners is to come up with an effective way of ensuring older people's involvement in urban regeneration plans. This includes the need to consider views that reflect the diversity of older people in deprived areas in relation to age, gender, health status and ethnic background.

There is considerable scope for involving [older people] in different aspects of community redevelopment.

Variations

The second issue concerns the reported variations when comparing different areas and wards. Clearly, perceptions about local conditions can vary greatly between economically deprived communities. This is significant insofar as it raises the issue of whether a mix of local variables (for example those associated with community-based social networks) can influence how people experience change within their area. Alternatively, industrial and economic factors may vary in how they are expressed within localities and in terms of their outcomes for older people.

Whatever the factors involved, our research suggests that older people are highly sensitive to the changes around them, an aspect which may have become more pronounced given the greater 'geographical concentration' of poverty (Glennister et al, 1999).

Older people are highly sensitive to the changes around them.

In policy terms, such local variations can pose difficulties, since off-the-peg solutions are unlikely to succeed in all cases. Instead, policies should be developed that are sensitive to the differences that exist between deprived urban neighbourhoods. Here, there is scope to build upon the knowledge of community workers and local neighbourhood organisations.

The impact of place

On the third issue, our research underlines the value of taking account of place and locality when exploring quality of life issues in old age. In this context, Powell and his colleagues (2001:247) draw an important distinction between 'people poverty' and 'place poverty':

[The former] '...occurs where low-income people occupy certain parts of a city by virtue of their low income, but their money incomes are not low because of where they live. On the other hand, place poverty emerges when other benefits or penalties compound the advantages or disadvantages of particular groups by virtue of where they live.'

Following this, we need to know much more about how place-related inequalities influence daily life in old age. This type of deprivation will be related directly to welfare provision in various forms (eg social housing, health and social care services). There could be scope for different types of community intervention, including contributions from older people themselves.

We need to know much more about how place-related inequalities influence daily life in old age.

An important agenda

The issues discussed in this report point to an important research and policy agenda arising from the focus on neighbourhood and locality. The former concerns the importance of developing research that explores the interaction between structural processes and the way these are shaped and influenced by local communities. The latter reflects the need to insert issues affecting older people within policies concerned with combating area-based social exclusion.

Our research suggests that older people are particularly exercised by the physical appearance of their neighbourhoods, by the social problems that accompany profound socio-economic change and by the absence of amenities and services that can meet their needs. There are a number of practical policy measures that could begin to address some of these concerns.

Practical measures

In relation to the physical appearance of the neighbourhood, it is important to devote resources to clearing up litter and graffiti as quickly as possible in order to maintain a sense that the area is being looked after. Concerns about problems posed to older residents by some young people suggest the need to provide adequate recreation facilities and supervised meeting places for young people so that they do not disturb other residents.

Social networks

It is telling that the most commonly reported deficit related to the absence of places for older people to meet, suggesting a lack of opportunities for local residents to get to know one another. Community centres, and other types of meeting place – such as public parks, shopping centres, bus stops – are useful in encouraging the development of the kind of social networks that some older people felt were lacking in their neighbourhood. Where such meeting places already exist, it is necessary to ensure that older people feel secure when visiting them.

[Encourage] the development of the kind of social networks that some older people felt were lacking in their neighbourhood.

In this context, it is important that architects and urban planners are aware of the potential impact of their designs and plans on the type of low-level social interactions that make neighbourhoods good places in which to live. It is also important that the meeting places that exist or are created reflect the needs and interests of diverse groups of older people in deprived neighbourhoods.

All of these issues are of crucial importance in the redevelopment of our urban neighbourhoods. It is necessary for all aspects of the planning and policy process to take account of these types of question in seeking to create local environments in which people can get to know one another and which can develop as healthy, safe and supportive communities.

Social integration of older people

CHAPTER

8



Concern about the degree to which older people are involved in different types of social relationship is a long-standing theme in research on ageing.

In examining the social integration of older people who live in socially deprived neighbourhoods in England, this chapter highlights the extent to which older people are engaged in a variety of informal and formal social relationships.

Such relationships assume particular importance within the context of current policy and research debates about the nature of social exclusion. As an idea, social exclusion is usually considered in relation to the ways in which individuals, groups of people and particular types of location are cut off from the mainstream of society. In policy terms, it remains unclear how debates on social exclusion relate to the situation of older people.

For people of working age, for example, it is assumed that participation in the labour market is a key factor in determining whether an individual is socially included or excluded. Seen in this light, policy can respond to reduce the risk of social exclusion among younger people by providing them with a range of employment and training opportunities. Organisation of the labour market can also be seen as representing a central feature of contemporary urban regeneration policies that seek to address spatial aspects of social exclusion (such as concentrations of unemployment and high rates of deprivation and crime).

But to date, there is little evidence that current policy on social exclusion encompasses a clear understanding of the needs of older people, most of whom have left the labour market (Scharf et al, 2001).

Here we provide evidence about older people's integration in both informal and formal social relationships. When discussing older people's informal relationships with family, friends and neighbours, we also address social isolation and loneliness.

In terms of the formal relationships that older people are engaged in, we report on participation in the labour market and in community groups, address the extent of involvement in aspects of civic life, and examine older people's use of services.

We have made use of a number of case studies throughout this chapter, drawn from the in-depth interview phase of our research. While these case studies represent very individual experiences, they have been selected to highlight more general patterns that characterise the situation of older people living in deprived neighbourhoods. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identities of respondents.

Informal relationships

When asked what they liked about their neighbourhood, many older people taking part in our survey referred to the presence of family and friends and good contacts with neighbours.

Such relationships can be of considerable importance in later life, giving meaning to people's lives and providing older people who experience difficulties through ill health or physical frailty with a source of emotional and practical support and potentially of care.

Where older people lack contact with family, friends or neighbours, they may be prone to social isolation or to feelings of loneliness. In deprived areas, the question arises of the degree to which characteristics of the local neighbourhood, such as poverty or crime, inhibit the maintenance of a range of informal social relationships.

Household size

Household sizes provide an initial indication of the extent to which older people might engage in regular social interaction. Household size ranged between one and ten people, with a mean size of 1.96 people. While over two-fifths of respondents (44 per cent) lived alone, the majority shared a household with at least one other person.

Household size is closely related to marital status. In our sample, 81 per cent of people who had never married, 71 per cent of widows and 78 per cent of people who had divorced or separated, lived alone. Only 3 per cent of married people taking part in the survey lived alone. The fact that women are significantly more likely to be widowed accounts for a significant difference between men and women in relation to household size. While 36 per cent of male respondents lived alone, this applied to 50 per cent of women.

Household structure

There is considerable diversity in the structure of older people's households in socially deprived neighbourhoods. The trend in modern society has been for the generations to move apart, while in many cases maintaining close contacts.

In our survey, one-fifth of older people (20 per cent) shared a household with their children. Six per cent of respondents lived in a household with grandchildren.

Other types of household occurred less frequently – 2 per cent of older people shared a household with either a brother or sister, while a further 2 per cent lived with other relatives (such as a niece or nephew, aunt or uncle).

The presence of children, grandchildren and other relatives in the households of a significant minority of older people provides an initial indication of the closeness of some families.

Many older people ... referred to the presence of family and friends and good contacts with neighbours.

Family

Further questions sought to establish the proximity of older people to their children and other relatives. Just over four-fifths of older people (81 per cent) had a son or daughter who were still living at the time of interview. Of this group, 23 per cent were sharing a house with at least one son or daughter and a further 23 per cent had a son or daughter living within one mile of their home. For 24 per cent of older people who had children, the nearest child lived between one and five miles away.

Taking these three categories together, around seven out of ten respondents (71 per cent) had at least one son or daughter living in fairly close proximity to their homes. Relatively small proportions of older people had their nearest son or daughter living further away. Many respondents without children or whose children lived further away, had other relatives living close by. For example, 41 per cent of those who had siblings (76 per cent of the entire sample) had a brother or sister living within five miles of their home.

The proximity of older people to members of their family has a significant influence on the frequency of family contacts.

We asked respondents to indicate how often they saw any of their children or other relatives. More than a third of older people (35 per cent) saw a relative every day and a further 37 per cent saw a relative at least weekly. For around seven out of ten older people in deprived areas, therefore, there is a regular and fairly intense level of family contact.

Where older people lack contact with family, friends or neighbours, they may be prone to social isolation or to feelings of loneliness.

A minority maintained less frequent contacts with family members. While 12 per cent indicated that they saw a member of their family on a fortnightly or monthly basis, 14 per cent reported seeing relatives less often. Two per cent of respondents reported never seeing their relatives.

Friends and neighbours

Many older people in deprived areas maintain relationships with friends and neighbours. More than three-quarters of respondents (78 per cent) indicated that they had at least one friend in their community or neighbourhood. Of those people with local friends, almost half (47 per cent) had a chat or did something with a friend every day. A further 29 per cent got together with friends two or three times a week and 17 per cent saw friends at least once a week.

Eight per cent of those who indicated that they had friends saw a friend less often than this. Contacts with neighbours were slightly less frequent than with friends but also fairly common. Two-fifths of older people (40 per cent) saw a neighbour to have a chat with or do something with every day and 26 per cent saw a neighbour two or three times a week. Seventeen per cent of respondents lacked contact with neighbours altogether or saw their neighbours infrequently (less than once a month).

Case study 1: Marva Collins

Marva Collins is 63 and has been widowed for just over a year. Black Caribbean in origin, she has lived in her neighbourhood for over 40 years. She shares a terraced house on the edge of Manchester city centre with her youngest child, a son aged 35. She has seven other children, five of whom live in other parts of England, while two live abroad.

Mrs Collins is very active in both social and physical terms. Describing a typical day in her life, she suggested that this would almost certainly include a visit to a friend's house. She would take with her the bread that she had baked that morning: *'I've got a blind friend that lives the other side of town and you know the good friends you have you need to keep in touch with – and I try to do my best ... if I don't visit I do phone ... if she's down or whatever she always phone me and we have a talk and she's feeling better.'* She usually catches a bus to see her friends but occasionally her friends come to visit her.

As an active member of her local church, Mrs Collins also visits members of the congregation who are in hospital. Once a week, she hosts a prayer support group, where friends get together and talk about anything that is troubling them.

Her daily routine also involves keeping physically and mentally fit. Two mornings a week, Mrs Collins and her neighbour go to keep-fit classes at the local gym. On other mornings she will take a walk around the neighbourhood, usually visiting the local park.

Mrs Collins has also enrolled on a number of classes at an adult education centre, only five minutes walk from her house. On a Tuesday afternoon she takes a computer class so that she can *'e-mail friends all over the world'*. It is important to her to know how her friends are and what is happening in their lives.

On Thursday mornings she is back at the education centre taking aromatherapy classes: *'We do massages and we learn to give massage ...we learn the different uses of different oils and it's very interesting. I do like that you know, I like to know things.'*

In the spring and summer months, Mrs Collins looks after her allotment. However, since this is some distance from her home, she has to rely on either public transport or her son to drive her there: *'I've got a lovely big area which I tend to and I was able to get a lot of fresh produce in the summer ... You know it feel so nice when you're there because it's like being on a holiday somewhere you know, it's really, really good ...it keep me really busy and really happy.'*

Such social and physical activity contributes greatly to what Mrs Collins feels is a sense of well being. She defines the quality of her life as being able to *'go where you want when you want', and as having 'a good support system, good set of friends who will be there for you and vice versa you'll be there for them'*.

Two-fifths of older people (40 per cent) saw a neighbour to have a chat with or do something with every day.

Social isolation

Not all older people are able to maintain frequent contacts with family, friends and neighbours. By looking more closely at responses to questions about informal social relationships, it is possible to judge the extent to which older people are prone to social isolation. Those people who live alone, who have no children or other relatives living close by, who have infrequent contacts with their children or other relatives or with friends and neighbours, risk being socially isolated.

In this research, we combined seven relevant indicators to generate an 'index of social isolation' (see Figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1: Index of social isolation

A person scores 1 for each of the following characteristics:

- Lives alone
- Has no (living) children or nearest child lives more than 50 miles away
- Has no relatives or nearest relative lives more than 50 miles away
- Sees a child or other relative less than once a month

- Has no friends in neighbourhood
- Has a chat or does something with a friend less than once a month
- Has a chat or does something with a neighbour less than once a month

No isolation:

Score 0, not isolated on any of these characteristics.

Low isolation:

Score 1, isolated on one characteristic only.

Medium isolation:

Score 2, isolated on two characteristics.

High isolation:

Score 3 or more, isolated on at least three characteristics.

According to this measure, around one-quarter of respondents (26 per cent) were not isolated on any of the individual items in the index (see Table 8.1). The same proportion (26 per cent) experienced isolation on just one indicator while around one-fifth (21 per cent) were isolated on two indicators. Respondents who were isolated on three or more indicators can be perceived as being particularly prone to social isolation. This applied to 27 per cent of people in our survey.

Table 8.1: Older people experiencing social isolation

	Frequency	Per cent
No isolation	155	26
Low isolation	158	26
Medium isolation	127	21
High isolation	160	27
Total	600	100

The experience of isolation does not vary according to a person's gender but it is influenced by both age and ethnic background (see Table 8.2). People aged 75 and over were significantly more likely to be socially isolated than those aged 60 to 74.

While Pakistani and Indian older people were least likely to experience isolation, a substantial proportion of older Somali people lacked the social ties that prevent isolation.

Twenty-seven per cent can be perceived as being particularly prone to social isolation.

Table 8.2: Frequency of social isolation for different groups of older people

	No isolation	Low isolation	Medium isolation	High isolation
Gender				
Men	30	21	21	28
Women	23	30	21	26
Age groups				
60-74 years	31	24	22	23
75 years and above	18	31	18	33
Ethnic background**				
White	22	27	23	28
Black Caribbean	36	21	16	28
Indian	44	8	24	24
Pakistani	45	38	7	10
Somali	18	33	21	28
Quality of life				
(Very) good	27	27	21	25
Neither good nor poor	27	25	22	26
(Very) poor	20	26	20	35
All (Base)(n=600)	26 (n=155)	26 (n=158)	21 (n=127)	27 (n=160)

** p<.001

Our research also provides evidence to suggest that social isolation does not necessarily go hand in hand with a poor quality of life. There is no clear relationship between the degree of isolation and respondents' self-reported life quality. In this respect, it is apparent that many older people are able to adapt themselves psychologically to the objective conditions of their social relationships (for example, living alone, being without children, lacking contact with friends).

Assessing the degree to which people experience feelings of loneliness provides a rather better subjective measure of the quality of a person's social relationships.

Loneliness

In past research, loneliness has been perceived to represent a multi-dimensional phenomenon comprising several different strands.

According to de Jong Gierveld (1998:74), the first and most salient element of loneliness is a 'deprivation' component that relates to 'the feelings associated with the absence of an intimate attachment, feelings of emptiness or abandonment'. A second element concerns the extent to which the state of being lonely might change over time. A third element incorporates a range of emotional aspects of loneliness such as sadness, guilt, frustration and desperation (de Jong Gierveld, 1998:74).

Our interest in this research is in identifying the extent to which older people living in socially deprived areas experience loneliness. It is also useful to compare our findings with those of other studies.

Sixteen per cent of older people experienced either severe or very severe loneliness.

There are several reasons for suggesting that the characteristics of deprived neighbourhoods might be associated with higher rates of loneliness. The high population turnover, intense poverty, perceived low levels of interpersonal trust and relatively high rates of crime that characterise many deprived urban neighbourhoods potentially inhibit the formation and maintenance of stable social relationships that could mitigate against loneliness.

In our study, we measured loneliness using the de Jong Gierveld Loneliness Scale (de Jong Gierveld and Kamphuis, 1985). This measure is based on the categorisation of responses to 11 items that reflect the multi-dimensional nature of loneliness (see Figure 8.2).

Figure 8.2: Loneliness measure

Items included in the de Jong Gierveld Loneliness Scale:

- There is always someone I can talk to about my day-to-day problems
- I miss having a really close friend
- I experience a general sense of emptiness
- There are plenty of people I can lean on when I have problems
- I miss the pleasure of the company of others
- I find my circle of friends and acquaintances too limited
- There are many people I can trust completely
- There are enough people I feel close to

- I miss having people around
- I often feel rejected
- I can call on my friends whenever I need them

Given that loneliness is stigmatised in western societies, none of the items included in the scale explicitly refers to loneliness. Adopting the categories suggested by the scale’s authors as our measure of the intensity of loneliness (de Jong Gierveld and van Tilburg, 1999), two-fifths of the sample (40 per cent) were found to be not lonely (lonely on fewer than three scale items) (see Table 8.3). Just over two-fifths (44 per cent) could be described as moderately lonely. Sixteen per cent of older people in our sample experienced either severe or very severe loneliness (lonely on nine or more of the 11 items in the scale).

Table 8.3: Prevalence and intensity of loneliness

	Frequency	Per cent
Not lonely	239	40
Moderately lonely	259	44
Severely lonely	66	11
Very severely lonely	31	5
Total	595	100

Comparisons with other studies

We are not aware of other studies conducted in the UK that have used the same measure of loneliness, so any comparisons should be treated cautiously. Nevertheless, when comparing the findings from different empirical studies of loneliness among people aged 65 and over, Victor et al (2000) identified a variation in the rates of those described as ‘often or very lonely’ of between 5 per cent and 16 per cent. This compares with a proportion of 15 per cent for the same age group in the present study.

... there is potentially a relationship between the characteristics of deprived urban areas (in England) and the incidence of loneliness among older people.

Interestingly, the highest rate of loneliness recorded in past research among older people in Britain was 16 per cent. This was found in a study conducted in the socially deprived inner London Borough of Hackney (Bowling et al, 1991). This suggests that there is potentially a relationship between the characteristics of deprived urban areas (in England) and the incidence of loneliness among older people.

The relationship between loneliness and socio-demographic variables is ambiguous. In our survey, there was no clear relationship between loneliness and a person’s gender or age group. However, significant differences were found between loneliness and marital status and ethnicity (see Table 8.4).

Table 8.4: Loneliness among older people

	No loneliness %	Moderate loneliness %	(Very) severe loneliness %
Gender			
Men	41	41	18
Women	40	45	15
Age groups			
60-74 years	44	41	15
75 years and above	36	47	17
Marital status**			
Single, never married	38	38	25
Married or cohabiting	49	40	11
Widowed	33	50	17
Separated or divorced	37	39	25
Ethnic background**			
White	42	44	14
Black Caribbean	47	41	12
Indian	27	55	18
Pakistani	24	28	48
Somali	16	61	24
Quality of life**			
(Very) good	52	39	9
Neither good nor poor	29	50	21
(Very) poor	12	52	36
All (Base)(n=595)	40 (n=239)	44 (n=259)	16 (n=97)

** p<.001

Loneliness was more prevalent among people who were single and had never married and among those who were separated or divorced. Loneliness is less common among married people (though the rate was still higher in our study than in other research).

People belonging to some minority ethnic groups appeared to be much more prone to feelings of loneliness than others. Pakistani and Somali older people were significantly more likely to be lonely than Black Caribbean or white people. However, such findings should be treated with some caution since they are potentially linked to our study's methodology – the scale items might not translate accurately into the relevant languages of the minority groups.

People belonging to some minority ethnic groups appeared to be much more prone to feelings of loneliness than others.

As might be expected, and in contrast to our findings on social isolation, there is a close relationship between older people's self-reported quality of life and loneliness. People who are (severely) lonely are much more likely to report a poor quality of life than those who are not lonely.

Case study 2: Doreen Burrows

Doreen Burrows is 77 and lives in a flat in London's East End. She has five children, most of whom live in and around London. Mrs Burrows receives visits from her children at least once a week, with one daughter visiting three times a week.

Recently widowed, Mrs Burrows spoke of how this had come as such a shock: *'Just died suddenly, we were out Christmas Eve and we had a good time, 5th of March he was dead ... it was such a shock. I couldn't believe it, I just could not believe it.'*

She talked about how in the initial months after her husband's death, and still now, she finds it lonely at times. She copes with her loneliness by keeping socially active. Every morning she takes a trip up to the local shopping centre: *'I shop every day. I don't go and buy a great big lot, I buy what I want each day. So I go out every day, don't I, it passes the time ... that's exercise as well, keeps your body working, doesn't it ... I don't want to sit in here all day, I'd go mad.'*

Mrs Burrows follows a set route when she goes shopping. First she buys her food for that day, then she has a look in some of the other shops, usually not buying anything but just to 'pass the time'. Then she will find a bench in the shopping centre to have what she describes as *'a rest, a fag and a chat'*. Mrs Burrows says she will normally start a conversation with whoever happens to be sitting next to her, usually another older person. She has met a lot of people this way.

On three evenings a week, she and three friends meet up to play bingo. Mrs Burrows enjoys these social occasions very much. Her friends usually call round in a taxi in the early evening to pick her up and they return by taxi just before midnight. Weekends are normally reserved for family activities. On Saturdays, her daughters and sometimes her grandchildren come to visit her at home. On Sundays, her son picks her up and they usually go shopping and out for a meal.

Mrs Burrows feels that she has been lucky: *'I'm quite happy actually. As I say, I am probably one of the more fortunate ones, 'cause I know a lot of people that are not as fortunate as me.'*

However, she did feel that people were in part responsible for their own loneliness: *'I don't feel I ought to be lonely ... I know people contribute a lot toward making your life but I do think you've got to try and make a life for yourself as well. I mean I for one would not sit here for three weeks on my own with no one to talk to. I would get on a bus 'cause I've got a free bus pass and I would go to Stratford or go to the Saver Centre, or I'd go ASDA, one of the big places 'cause there is always somebody that if you sit down have a cup of tea, there is somebody there that will talk to you. I would not make myself a hermit more or less or be sorry for myself 'cause I've got nobody. I think you've got to make, I mean it is different if you are ill or you are, you know, a cripple or something like that, but even then, they come out in wheelchairs, they come out in them buggy things. You've got to make a life for yourself.'*

Formal relationships

Alongside participation in informal relationships of one kind or another, older people also participate in a range of more formal types of social activity. It is useful to examine the degree to which people living in socially deprived neighbourhoods make use of any opportunities that are available to them to take part in public life.

Labour market

One of the key ways in which younger people are integrated within society is through participation in the labour market. Retirement, in particular the trend towards early retirement, reduces older people's involvement in the labour market. In the areas where this research was conducted, many older people will have left the labour market involuntarily, either through redundancy or for reasons of ill health or long-term disability.

The integration of older people into aspects of formal community life is not primarily served by the labour market.

This is reflected in our survey of people aged 60 and over, with just 5 per cent of respondents being in either full, or part-time employment at the time of interview. A further 2 per cent described themselves as being unemployed. The proportion of people still economically active was higher among the 161 respondents aged 60 to 65 years. In this age group, 16 per cent were still employed in some capacity (15 per cent of men, 16 per cent of women). While 14 per cent of men aged between 60 and 65 years described themselves as unemployed, the respective proportion for women was just 2 per cent. While 71 per cent of women of this age regarded themselves as having retired, this applied to 47 per cent of men.

In deprived neighbourhoods, the integration of older people into aspects of formal community life is not primarily served by the labour market.

The extent of older people's participation in other aspects of the local neighbourhood can be judged with reference to a range of indicators.

Religious and community groups

For some, involvement in religious activities is important. In our survey, just over a quarter of respondents (27 per cent) frequently attended religious meetings. A further 14 per cent occasionally attended such meetings. Attendance at religious meetings was more pronounced among people aged 60 to 74 than for those aged 75 and over, with 31 per cent of the former and 20 per cent of the latter group, attending frequently. This can be attributed to the onset of health and mobility problems among the older age group.

Higher rates of participation in religious activities were also evident among people belonging to minority ethnic groups. For example, 71 per cent of Somali and 68 per cent of Indian respondents frequently attended religious meetings, while this applied to 13 per cent of those who described themselves as white.

The proportion of people attending meetings of community, neighbourhood or social groups (such as an old people's club) was somewhat lower than for religious meetings. Overall, 17 per cent of respondents frequently attended such meetings, while 16 per cent attended occasionally.

Just over a quarter of respondents (27 per cent) frequently attended religious meetings.

Frequent participation in such activities was more common among women than men. While 12 per cent of men frequently attended meetings, this applied to 19 per cent of women. Men were much more likely to participate occasionally in this type of activity – 21 per cent of men and 13 per cent of women occasionally attended such meetings. There were no differences in the frequency of participation between age groups.

While our survey shows a high level of variation according to respondents' ethnic background, this finding is influenced by the method of recruiting people from minority groups to the research – in part through established community organisations.

Civic activities

Through a series of questions, we sought to address the degree to which older people in deprived areas took part in other aspects of civic life, contributing to the social and political fabric of their communities.

Table 8.5: Participation in civic activities in the past three years (%)

Type of activity	% having done activity	% not having done activity
Presented views to a local councillor or MP	13	87
Written a letter to an editor	3	97
Urged someone outside the family to vote	13	87
Urged someone to get in touch with a local councillor or MP	12	88
Made a speech before an organised group	8	92
Been an officer of an organisation or club	8	92
Stood for public office	1	99
Taken an active part in a political campaign	3	97
Helped on fundraising drives	16	84
Voted in the last general election	68	32
Voted in the last local election	66	34

Respondents were asked whether, during the previous three years, they had done any of 11 types of activity (see Table 8.5). The most common activity was taking part in elections. Around two-thirds of respondents had taken part in a general election (68 per cent) or in a local election (66 per cent). Other types of activity were rather less common, though significant minorities had helped on fundraising drives (16 per cent), had presented their views to a local councillor or MP (13 per cent) or urged someone outside the family to vote (13 per cent).

A broader indication of the extent of older people's civic involvement is provided in Table 8.6. Here responses relating to the 11 types of civic activity are combined to ascertain an individual's overall level of participation.

Table 8.6: Degree of participation in civic activities in the past three years

	% not taking part in any activity	% taking part in one or two activities	% taking part in three or more activities
Gender			
Men	16	44	40
Women	29	45	26
Age groups			
60-74 years	23	42	35
75 years and above	22	51	27
Ethnic background**			
White	24	46	29
Black Caribbean	11	46	43
Indian	16	48	36
Pakistani	35	38	28
Somali	49	15	36
Marital status**			
Single, never married	23	51	26
Married or cohabiting	16	42	42
Widowed	32	47	31
Separated or divorced	28	40	33
Household size**			
Lone person	31	47	22
Two or more persons	18	43	39
All (Base)(n=600)	24 (n=144)	44 (n=266)	32 (n=190)

** p<.001

This shows that around a quarter of respondents (24 per cent) did not undertake any type of activity in the three years preceding interview. Over two-fifths of respondents (44 per cent) took part in one or two of the 11 activities and could be viewed as having a limited degree of participation. Around one-third (32 per cent), participated in three or more activities and could be perceived as displaying a moderate or high level of participation.

Around two-thirds of respondents had taken part in a general election (68 per cent) or in a local election (66 per cent).

The level of participation in civic activities varied significantly according to a range of individual and household characteristics. Men were much more likely to be engaged in such activities than women. While two-fifths of men (40 per cent) were involved in three or more activities, this applied to just over a quarter of women (26 per cent). While 29 per cent of female respondents were not involved in any of the mentioned activities, the respective proportion for men was 16 per cent.

There was little variation according to respondents' age group but ethnic background played an important role. Though the numbers of respondents belonging to minority groups were relatively small, there were large differences between groups. Older Black Caribbean (43 per cent), Indian (36 per cent) and Somali (36 per cent) people were most likely to have taken part in three or more of the 11 activities.

While the first two of these groups also recorded the lowest proportions of people not taking part in any activity, this pattern was not repeated in the Somali group.

Almost half of Somali respondents (49 per cent) had not done any of the listed activities in the three years leading up to interview. This divergence is almost entirely explained by the limited involvement of older Somali women in civic activities and by the relatively high rate of involvement by older Somali men, in turn reflecting differences in migration histories of men and women with this ethnic background.

Participation also varied significantly according to respondents' marital status and the composition of their household. Older people who were married or cohabiting were much more likely to be involved in civic activities than those who were widowed, separated or divorced. People who lived alone tended to participate in such activities rather less often than those living in households with other people.

[there was] ... limited involvement of older Somali women in civic activities ...

Case study 3: Betty Wilson

Betty Wilson is 64 and lives with her partner and her mother of 91 in a semi-detached council house in Manchester. Mrs Wilson has two children from a previous marriage, one living locally and the other elsewhere in England. Mrs Wilson took early retirement in her late 50s, in part 'to enjoy life while still young'.

Involved with efforts to improve her community, Mrs Wilson is an active member of a number of local groups – a tenants' association, a forum on regeneration and a committee set up to assist with the rejuvenation of local parks that have been neglected or abused.

A couple of years ago she got together with other residents on her small estate to form a tenants' association. The aim was to tackle a range of problems that residents felt were reducing the quality of their lives. Their first priority was to get rid of some abandoned shops: *'There was a row of burnt out shops and I mean burnt out. They were full of drug addicts, there was needles, there was everything because everybody used to come for miles just to go in there.'*

Removing the shops has created a play area for children. Mrs Wilson takes considerable pleasure in the fact that the neighbourhood children often come to see her when anything needs fixing in the play area: *'If anything goes wrong on the play area, I've got a stream of kids at the door, Betty somebody's broken the swing, Betty somebody's done this, Betty somebody's done that ... and I think oh God.'*

The tenants' association has now turned its attention to tackling the perceived anti-social behaviour of some young people in the neighbourhood.

According to Mrs Wilson, part of the cause of this behaviour is that young people appear to lack self-respect. To help rectify this, the association has taken the lead in sponsoring a child to prove that he can put his football talents to creative use: *'Now this kid was going right down the wrong path ... but hopefully through the sport ... it'll change his life ... and he'll start to have some respect for himself.'*

Through the tenants' association and current initiatives in the area, coupled with what Mrs Wilson sees as an increase in employment opportunities for residents, she feels her neighbourhood has improved over the last couple of years: *'There was a terrible decline ... 10, 15 years – but it's getting a little better.'* She also senses that parents feel more accountable for their children's activities: *'I think suddenly people are starting to maybe chastise their children a little bit more than they were, that you know they know zero tolerance has been reached. We [tenants' association] put out a newsletter you see every two months and we don't beat about the bush you know.'*

Mrs Wilson appears to play a leading role within her community. Having been active on the tenants' association, she finds that she becomes involved in many other activities – not least because other residents suggest her name whenever something needs to be done: *'Somebody mentions my name I think and says oh get Betty she'll do that or whatever. But I love doing it because I like being involved ... I love my fellow human beings and so all these things are to do with being with people.'*

Use of local services

Another obvious way in which older people are engaged within their communities is through the use of local services. In our survey, we asked respondents about the types of services they used and the frequency with which they used them (see Table 8.7).

Post office

The most commonly used service was that provided by the post office. Almost seven out of ten respondents (69 per cent) had used this service in the week preceding interview, with a further 16 per cent having visited a post office in the past month. The majority of older people were also regular users of commercial services such as medium to large supermarkets, corner shops or newsagents and local chemists.

Public transport

For some, public transport – buses or, where available, trains, trams and (in London) the Underground was also very important. Seventy per cent of those interviewed had used some form of public transport in the month preceding interview. More than half of respondents (52 per cent) had used a bus in the week preceding interview and a further 16 per cent had used one in the past month. Only around one-fifth of older people (22 per cent) had not used a bus at all in the previous year.

Table 8.7: Use of different types of local service (%)

Type of service	Used in last week	Used in last month	Used less often but within last year	Not used within last year	Total (Base n=600)
Post office	69	16	4	11	100
Bank or building society	25	25	11	39	100
Supermarket	67	16	4	12	100
Corner shop or newsagent	65	13	6	17	100
Chemist	42	38	9	11	100
Bus service	53	16	8	22	100
Train, tram or tube	12	13	19	57	100
Library	8	11	8	73	100
Cinema or theatre	3	4	8	85	100
Sports facility	4	2	5	90	100
Day or evening classes	5	1	3	91	100

Banks

Financial services such as banks or building societies were used rather less frequently, with a significant minority of respondents (39 per cent) not having visited one of these institutions in the 12 months preceding interview. This reflects variations in the way in which older people in deprived neighbourhoods manage their finances. In our survey, 36 per cent of respondents and, where appropriate, their spouses or partners, did not have a bank or building society account.

The most commonly used service was that provided by the post office.

Table 8.8: Services for older people considered to be lacking in the neighbourhood (%).

Type of service lacking	Proportion thinking service is lacking	Proportion not mentioning service is lacking
Places for older people to meet/community centre	34	66
Post office	20	80
Health, social care or welfare service	18	82
Transport/mobility service	15	85
Shops, home delivery, or commercial service	13	88
Culture or leisure service	9	91
Bank or financial service	9	91
Policing or security service	8	92
General neighbourhood facility or service (eg public toilets or street cleaning)	6	95

Leisure

Used infrequently, though potentially important for a larger proportion of older people, were cultural and sporting services or facilities. While almost one in five people interviewed (19 per cent) had used a library within the month preceding interview, rather low proportions of respondents had made use of sporting facilities, day or evening classes or the cinema or theatre. Taking the four types of cultural or sporting facility together, almost one in three older people (29 per cent) had used at least one of these types of service in the previous month.

Use of a particular service or facility is closely linked to its availability. We sought to identify whether respondents felt that there were particular types of services for older people that were missing in their neighbourhood (see Table 8.8).

What's missing?

Almost one-third of respondents (32 per cent) felt that there were specific services lacking for older people. If we look more closely at the responses of the 184 people who identified a gap in service provision, the most commonly reported deficit was the absence of places for older people to meet – 34 per cent noted the absence of a social club or community centre for older people in their neighbourhood. Significant minorities also felt that a local post office, health and social care or welfare services and local transport services were missing.

The most commonly reported deficit was the absence of places for older people to meet – 34 per cent noted the absence of a social club or community centre.

Loss of services

A key issue facing many residents of deprived neighbourhoods is the apparent loss of a range of public and commercial services. Withdrawal of such services can occur for a number of reasons, including their lack of commercial viability or the difficulty of maintaining a service in a high crime area.

We sought to explore this issue by asking respondents the following question: 'Are there any types of service that you used in the past but are now absent from this neighbourhood?' Just over one in five people (21 per cent) could identify services that were now missing. Of the 125 people indicating that services had withdrawn, 35 per cent reported that the main service that had been lost was a post office. Twenty-three per cent reported that local shops or home delivery services, such as milk or newspaper deliveries, had gone (see Table 8.9). Relatively small numbers of people suggested that a range of other types of service were now absent from the neighbourhood.

Of the 125 people indicating that services had withdrawn, 35 per cent reported that the main service that had been lost was a post office.

Table 8.9: Services that were once used and are now considered to be lacking in the neighbourhood (%)

Type of service once used and now absent	Proportion thinking service is now absent	Proportion not mentioning service is now absent
Places for older people to meet/community centre	12	88
Post office	35	65
Health, social care or welfare service	6	94
Transport/mobility service	7	93
Shops, home delivery, or commercial service	23	77
Culture or leisure service	16	84
Bank or financial service	14	86
Policing or security service	8	92
General neighbourhood facility or service (e.g. public toilets or street cleaning)	6	94

Health and social services

Availability of and access to primary health care services and services offered by local social services departments are of particular importance to older people. In this respect, respondents were asked about the frequency of their visits to a GP during the month preceding interview in order to discuss their own health.

Around one-third of older people taking part in the survey (34 per cent) had not visited their GP during this period. Over half (53 per cent) had made one or two visits to their family doctor while 12 per cent had been in regular contact with a GP, having been in contact three or more times in the previous month.

Just 13 per cent of respondents reported receipt of a [social] service.

Less frequent use was made of services, such as a home help, provided by the local social services department. Just 13 per cent of respondents reported receipt of such a service. As might be expected, use of these types of services varied according to the age of respondents, with 23 per cent of those aged 75 and over receiving such a service compared with 7 per cent of those aged 60 to 74.

Case study 4: Aamina Hasan

Aamina Hasan is in her mid-60s and lives with her husband in a terraced house in Manchester. She came to Britain from Pakistan in the late 1960s to join her husband who was working here at the time. Originally planning to 'make some money and then ... go back to Pakistan', after more than 30 years in Manchester, Mrs Hasan, her husband and their seven children have all now settled permanently in Britain.

The whole family lives in the same neighbourhood. While four of the children and their families live a 'few doors away or just around the corner', three daughters are still living at home. Mrs Hasan and her husband see each of their children several times a day.

Mrs Hasan feels that community life for her and her family has been enhanced over the years by the development of an Asian community. She says that when she first arrived in Manchester, there were hardly any Asian families in her neighbourhood. In particular she missed the company of other Asian women. The migration of more Asian families to the neighbourhood in subsequent years has coincided with the development of a range of commercial services for the Asian community.

Commenting on the variety of shops, Mrs Hasan says: *'It's very good. You have all the Asian shops here that you can get everything from, like halal meat. You also have the Asian clothes shops, matti shops and we also have our own tailor who can sew my children's and my clothes for me. What else can you ask for?'* The mosque her husband goes to is also close by.

Overall Mrs Hasan is very pleased with the services available locally but she feels the area still lacks a place where older people can get together. She feels that the mosque provides a place for the men to meet but she is particularly concerned that there is nothing in the community for older Asian women like her.

Mrs Hasan also refers to problems accessing information on benefits. She believes that older people in her neighbourhood would be helped by the provision of welfare advice services. These could help people to fill in their benefit claims forms and offer useful information on entitlement. Mrs Hasan says that she finds such forms very confusing and repetitive. In some cases the forms demand documentation that people don't have, which *'means we lose out on money'*.

Research and policy implications

The research presented here is important in examining the ways in which older people living in deprived neighbourhoods are either integrated into or excluded from different types of both formal and informal social relationships. It suggests that there is a need to develop a broader understanding of the condition of social exclusion and of the processes that can lead to exclusion in later life.

For older people, the labour market ceases to provide the central mechanism through which they become integrated into society. In this context, the research presented here confirms the key supportive role played by informal social relationships in preventing exclusion in old age. While the majority of older people in our study were in regular contact with family, friends and neighbours, a significant minority were prone to social isolation and severe feelings of loneliness.

[This research] confirms the key supportive role played by informal social relationships in preventing exclusion in old age.

Findings in relation to participation in formal social relationships were more mixed. While many older people are involved in more formal aspects of community life in deprived neighbourhoods, a considerable proportion do not participate in this type of activity. However, older people are frequent users of a range of local services and as such significantly help to sustain the infrastructure of deprived neighbourhoods.

Against this background, the research raises a number of issues for policy and practice.

Encourage informal social networks

First, the research emphasises the importance of informal social relationships in older people's daily lives and the need to develop policies in ways that can facilitate and sustain such relationships. It is necessary to consider the physical and psychological barriers that inhibit the development and maintenance of highly valued, low-level social interactions in deprived neighbourhoods (such as being able to chat to people in the street or visit them in their homes).

There is a need to design and plan urban areas in ways that are conducive to the development of such relationships and interactions. Housing schemes with pleasant and secure public spaces, shopping areas that provide places to sit and community centres are all important in this context. While urban regeneration programmes typically invest large sums in altering the physical environment of deprived areas, resources should also be devoted to measures that foster informal social networks.

Resources should be devoted to measures that foster informal social networks.

One way of achieving this goal would be to develop the role of community workers in inner cities. Such workers could assist older people in making contact with others in the neighbourhood and co-operate with existing community organisations to develop opportunities for older people to meet.

In a previous chapter, we have drawn attention to the negative impact of crime and the fear of crime on social relationships. Measures that succeed in reducing neighbourhood crime are likely to have a positive impact on older people's social integration. They would help to remove some of the psychological barriers that prevent older people from participating in a range of outdoor activities.

Benefits of community involvement

Second, with regard to integration within formal spheres of community life, participation in civic activities often can be of great personal benefit to retired older people. Community engagement not only represents a route by which individuals can remain valued and effective but also has been shown to rebound positively on older people's mental and physical health.

Most older people in deprived areas displayed a commitment to public involvement – around two-thirds of respondents in our survey participated in different types of election and a significant minority engaged in other civic activities. Around one-quarter were not involved in any of the activities we assessed. This suggests that there is potential for increasing the level of involvement of older people.

Most older people in deprived areas displayed a commitment to public involvement.

It would be useful to develop further research that examines the reasons why some older people are more likely to participate than others. Material insecurity, low levels of literacy, language barriers, lack of self-confidence, perceived vulnerability to crime and a lack of opportunities to become involved are among the factors likely to prevent some people from engaging with such formal aspects of community life.

Local services

Finally, our research has highlighted the enduring importance to older people in deprived areas of such basic services as a local post office, shops and public transport. In addition, many older people are in frequent contact with primary health care services.

Older people who are already disadvantaged in terms of poverty or ill health are disproportionately affected by the loss of local services.

It is important that public policy recognises the need to maintain access to a good service infrastructure in deprived urban neighbourhoods. Such areas are especially vulnerable to the withdrawal of both public and commercial services. Older people who are already disadvantaged in terms of poverty or ill health are disproportionately affected by the loss of local services. Consideration should be given at an early stage to the likely impact on older people of decisions to withdraw such services from deprived neighbourhoods.

Conclusion

CHAPTER

9



Social exclusion of older people in deprived areas

From the range of data presented here, it is possible to make a number of observations about the degree to which older people in deprived areas of England are affected by the condition and process of social exclusion.

In terms of our understanding of the multi-dimensionality of social exclusion, we have been able to demonstrate that older people in deprived areas face multiple risks of exclusion and that these risks are significantly higher than in other areas of Britain.

Poverty and deprivation

For example, the risk of poverty affects approaching half of people aged 60 and over in deprived urban neighbourhoods. Only a small proportion of older people are not affected in some way by deprivation, with three-fifths experiencing moderate or high levels of multiple deprivation.

Informal relationships

When examining the social roles that older people engage in (beyond the labour market), our research emphasises the fundamental importance of informal relationships with family, friends and neighbours. While the majority of older people maintain active relationships with such people, there are some who are prone to social isolation and loneliness. A quarter of people in our study could be described as being socially isolated while around one in six were severely lonely.

Formal relationships

Older people in deprived areas are less likely to be involved in formal social relationships within their communities. However, the proportion of those who can be perceived as being disengaged from relevant activities amounts to around one-quarter. This is the proportion that was not involved in any type of civic activity in the three years preceding interview.

Perceptions of neighbourhood

Our research also emphasises the importance to older people in deprived areas of the neighbourhood in which they live. The overwhelming majority could identify positive aspects of their neighbourhood. The proportion identifying negative features was somewhat lower. However, only a handful of people could be described as being indifferent to their local neighbourhood.

This does not mean that older people in deprived areas are entirely happy with the condition of their neighbourhoods and the ways in which these have changed in recent years. Many people taking part in our research commented on the physical deterioration of their localities and relatively few felt that their neighbourhoods had been improving.

Crime and fear of crime

A particular concern relates to social problems, of which crime occupies a central place in older people's thoughts. The research presented here found older people in deprived areas to be disproportionately vulnerable to serious crime. This also translated into fears about leaving home after dark and contributed to a certain degree of 'houseboundness' for many. As a result, many older people can be judged to experience exclusion in the form of mental restrictions that limit their participation in what most people in Britain would regard as normal social activities, for example going out after dark.

Multi-dimensional

The approach adopted in this study confirms the usefulness of addressing social exclusion as a multi-dimensional concept. While most older people taking part in our research could be classed as being excluded on at least one dimension (with multiple deprivation being particularly acute), it is likely that only a small proportion will be excluded on all dimensions. So it is possible for someone to be excluded on the grounds of a lack of material resources and at the same time to be included in terms of their access to informal social relationships.

In future analysis, we will be able to draw upon the wealth of data collected in this research to examine the degree to which older people experience exclusion across a range of dimensions and to explore the mechanisms that act to produce or inhibit social exclusion.

Research and policy implications

In addition to the specific implications noted in the four main themed chapters of this report, the research presented here has a number of more general implications for both policy and research.

First, there is a clear need for contemporary urban policy to consider the position of older people in deprived areas in terms of their potential vulnerability to poverty and social exclusion.

The socio-economic changes experienced by Britain's major cities in recent decades affect the lives of older people both as individuals and as a group in distinctive ways. For example, in cities such as Liverpool and Manchester, which experienced significant loss of employment in traditional manufacturing industries during the 1970s and 1980s, many older people will have experienced unemployment or risked becoming unemployed.

Many of them will have experience of poor housing. Poor health associated with employment in manual occupations is also a feature.

Joined-up policies

Arising from this, the challenge for urban policy-makers is to develop joined-up policies that take account of the multiple risks faced by older people in deprived neighbourhoods and to address their specific needs.

Such a strategy potentially can yield significant benefits for older people and for society as a whole.

Knock-on effects

For example, effective measures that succeed in alleviating the intense poverty and multiple deprivation experienced by some older people in these areas are likely to have a range of positive knock-on effects.

Putting more money into the hands of older people can increase the sustainability of local services and amenities (eg shops, post offices and public transport) as well as having health benefits that might ultimately reduce demand for a range of health care services. In this light, it would be useful to consider the role played by benefit take-up campaigns in terms of their broader impact on local communities.

Overlooking needs

Second, our research has implications for urban regeneration policies. One of the starting points for this research was a concern that contemporary policies relating to social exclusion and urban renewal appeared to overlook the needs and interests of older people. This initial concern appears to be justified.

For example, in relation to the array of policies designed to redevelop some of Britain's most deprived inner cities, our research tends to confirm the view of Riseborough and Sribjlanin (2000) that older people play only a marginal role in this process.

Cities such as Manchester and, to a lesser extent, Liverpool have witnessed a rapid regeneration of their city centres, driven to a large extent by investment in cultural, sporting and retail developments. However, in most cases, very little attention has been paid to the specific needs of groups such as older people who, as a result, may feel uninvolved in such developments. This type of regeneration strategy is problematic for two reasons.

Contemporary policies relating to social exclusion and urban renewal appeared to overlook the needs and interests of older people.

Regeneration for all

First, there is a danger that the substantial resources that are currently being invested in urban regeneration will create communities and neighbourhoods that are designed only for the needs of certain social groups, such as younger people or those who are relatively wealthy.

Build on commitment

Second, the policy-making process is missing out on the potentially enormous contribution that older people appear willing to make to influence the development of their neighbourhoods. Our research has illustrated the very close attachment to their communities of most older people in deprived neighbourhoods. The policy and planning process should build upon this obvious commitment to the local area.

Future research

In terms of future research, our study also raises important issues concerning the measurement of different dimensions of social exclusion. Above all, there is clearly a need for existing measures of poverty and deprivation to take better account of the situation of older people.

Measuring deprivation

While our survey drew upon a range of measures that have previously been used to assess the degree to which people experience poverty and deprivation, few measures appeared sensitive to the situation of older people, especially those living in deprived areas.

For example, while recognising the importance of using readily available indicators, we feel that Evandrou's Index of Multiple Deprivation may not be best suited to the circumstances of people in deprived areas. An index that judges people to be deprived, for example, on the basis of receipt of Income Support benefits fails to take account of the situation of those unable to negotiate their way through the benefits system.

While recognising that there is merit in developing robust measures that can be used with national population samples, one answer to such difficulties might be to develop measures that better reflect the circumstances of older people in deprived areas. This is a task that we will seek to address in future research that builds on this report.

Measuring poverty

There is also scope to develop poverty measures that reach beyond the circumstances of people of working age or of children. Following in the tradition of Gordon et al (2000), it would be useful to construct, on the basis of a national survey, a list of items that represents what older people themselves regard as everyday necessities. Such a list would probably look rather different from that which has been used in this study as our measure of poverty.

It would be useful to conduct studies similar to that reported here in other parts of the United Kingdom.

Similar studies

Finally, it would be useful to conduct studies similar to that reported here in other parts of the United Kingdom. Our research has focused on the most deprived neighbourhoods of England's most deprived local authority areas. Given that this research has reported considerable variation across the study areas, particularly in relation to older people's perceptions of their neighbourhoods, it is important to conduct further research. This should be carried out in other parts of England as well as in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to address more fully the causes of such variation.

There is also scope for developing comparable research in rural areas and other locations prone to rapid de-industrialisation. Only by developing a more substantial body of research relating to environmental aspects of ageing will it become possible to examine more systematically the impact of locally and regionally distinct policies on the everyday lives of older people.

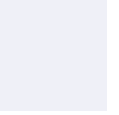
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Resources

Website of Keele University's Centre
for Social Gerontology:

www.keele.ac.uk/depts/so/csg/index.htm

Website of the ESRC Growing Older
Programme:

www.shef.ac.uk/uni/projects/gop/

Website of Help the Aged:

www.helptheaged.org.uk

Contributors



Contributors

Thomas Scharf is Senior Lecturer in Social Gerontology in the School of Social Relations, Keele University. In addition to his research on poverty and social exclusion in later life, he has interests in the comparative study of ageing populations and in issues relating to rural ageing.

Chris Phillipson is Professor of Social Gerontology and Applied Social Studies at Keele University. He is also Director of the University's Centre for Social Gerontology. As well as researching issues facing older people in deprived areas, he is involved in a study of changing patterns of work and retirement and questions relating to the impact of globalisation on population ageing.

Allison E Smith is Research Assistant in the School of Social Relations, Keele University. She is currently developing a PhD, which seeks to compare the experience of older people living in deprived neighbourhoods of cities in Canada and England.

Paul Kingston is Professor of Primary Health Care at the University of Wolverhampton. In addition to his work on ageing in deprived communities, he has interests in the delivery of primary care services and the protection of vulnerable adults from abuse.

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Notes



Notes





Older people living in inner city neighbourhoods are frequently lonely, isolated and poor. Using a survey and interviews with 600 older people living in some of England's most deprived areas, this report presents first-hand evidence that a great many older people are living in conditions and circumstances that most of us would define as totally unacceptable. Older people are excluded from the rest of society by poverty and deprivation; fear of crime; their local environments; a lack of services; and the social structures around them. This is a failure of our society but specifically it is a failure of our government, our planners and our policy-makers. The report's authors call for:

- urban regeneration that creates neighbourhoods for all
- more money for older people through higher pensions and benefit take-up
- better urban planning and design to make our streets safer and encourage social integration

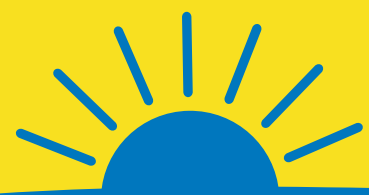
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