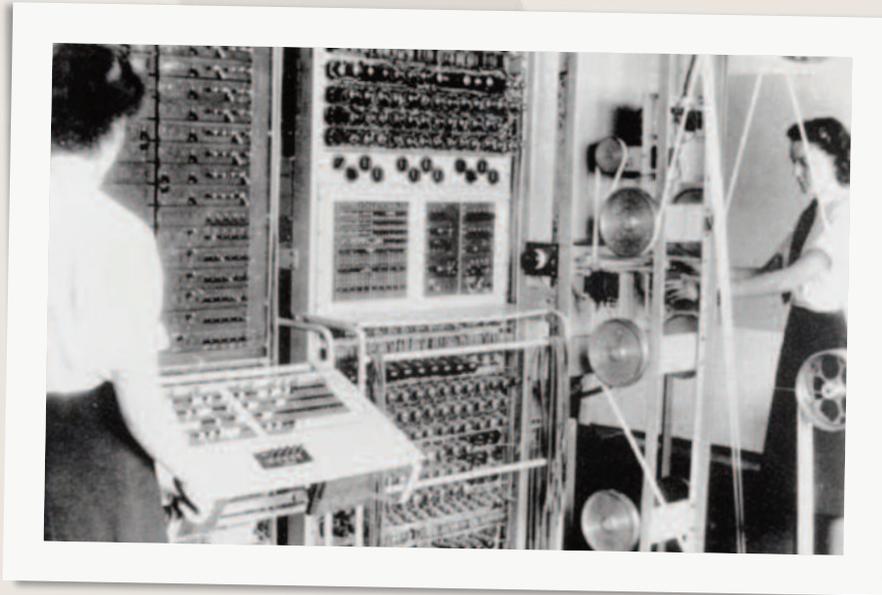


Catch 22:

Improving the Health, Housing and Ageing Evidence Base



The Evidence Dilemma

In an era of unprecedented reductions in public expenditure higher standards of outcome evidence are being demanded.

Faced with difficult choices, service commissioners in particular require robust evidence that demonstrates the cost benefits of services.

However, there has been a lack of investment in high standard academic research into the housing, health and ageing connections, particularly using randomised control trials, and especially in mainstream¹ housing.

This low level of research investment means that the housing sector has primarily used individual case studies to illustrate how their services can save money, which is often rejected as inadequate proof of savings.

The providers of housing services for older people may find themselves in a Catch 22 situation i.e. unable to provide academic standard evidence, services may be decommissioned, further diminishing the opportunity to develop such an evidence base.

¹ Mainstream homes are properties that have been built for anyone to live in, whereas specialist housing for older people has been built specifically for that age group eg. sheltered, extra care, retirement housing.

Breaking the Cycle

Care & Repair England set up its 'Catch 22' initiative in 2014 to tackle this issue of evidence of housing impact, particularly for the practical housing services that help the large majority of older people who live in mainstream housing.

This brochure describes some of the work that has taken place, is in the pipeline, and future opportunities.

The Problem

Most housing service providers do not have the resources, skills or connections to undertake robust research themselves.

Few academic bodies are undertaking general housing research, partly because it has not been a priority area for research council funding.

The resulting lack of independent, quantified evidence about the impact of housing quality and suitability on older people's health and lives jeopardises the future of housing services.

Particularly at risk is the very practical housing help that older and disabled people (including carers) tell us they value so highly i.e. home adaptations, repairs & maintenance, handy person services and home improvement agencies.

Catch 22 Project Aims

It was established to:

- Stimulate interest in undertaking research in the health/housing/ageing field, particularly for mainstream housing adaptations and repairs by
 - *Forging new partnerships between researchers and stakeholders, including housing practitioners*
 - *Encouraging research proposals to include the "voice" of older people themselves*
- Make the case for the need for such evidence to potential funders, including Research Councils, related NGOs, national government and others
- Influence national policy & practice through better application of housing related evidence by
 - *Disseminating findings from relevant research to a broad audience*
 - *Organising events which bring together academic researchers, policy makers, commissioners and practitioners to stimulate innovation and joint working*
 - *Participating in related policy/practice groups and forums to ensure that the value of housing is more widely recognised*

The initial focus has been on home adaptations for disabled people but the scope is being broadened to other aspects of mainstream housing, ageing, health & care interconnections, including small repairs and handy person services.

"Could adaptations help me to stay out of residential care?"

"Do home repairs reduce falls?"

"What are the cost benefits of level access showers?"

Action to Date

This includes:

- **Creating Virtual Research & Practice Network** – this is continuously being expanded as fresh contacts are established with academics across the country. To join just email info@careandrepair-england.org.uk
- **Bringing people together and supported new partnerships, including these events:**
 - *Bletchley Day* – run along the lines of a sandpit, this event stimulated fresh research ideas and resulted in new partnerships to take forward research activity in the field of home adaptations & housing interventions.
 - *Falling Through the Gaps: Connecting Research, Policy and Practice in the Fields of Ageing, Falls Prevention and Housing Interventions* – organised in partnership with the British Society of Gerontology (BSG) to bring together academics, policy makers and stakeholders. 
 - *The Right Prescription and Small but Significant* – joint ventures with BSG and Manchester Institute for Collaborative Research on Ageing (MICRA), these events explored how practical housing interventions can impact on health, especially on use of hospital and NHS services. 
- **Contributing to the Development of Research Projects including:**
 - *Major International Evidence Review of Disabled Adaptations* commissioned by Centre for Ageing Better
 - *Home Adaptations Practitioner and Service User Study* commissioned by Centre for Ageing Better
 - *Effectiveness of Home Adaptations* – development of Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) methodology and major funding bid involving three universities and several local authorities
 - *Impact of Bathing Adaptations on Health and Wellbeing of Older People* – University of Nottingham feasibility study progressing bid for full trial.
 - *Data Driven Research and Innovation Programme* proposal linked to falls prevention with University of Coventry
 - *PhD Studentship – dementia and home adaptations* – at University of Manchester, contributed to bid and will act as mentors for successful applicant

Evidence into Practice

The Catch 22 project has also contributed to research working and advisory groups & networks, including Public Health England, Regional Schools of Public Health, HACT, National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE), Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and genHOME.

[www.](#)

Resulting Publications include:

- *Off the Radar: Housing disrepair and health impact in later life* – this was a joint project with data analysis undertaken by the Building Research Establishment and report production by Care & Repair England
- *Infographic about older people, housing, health and care*
- *The cost benefit to the NHS arising from preventative housing interventions* – innovative work led by the Building Research Establishment after the Bletchley Day

[www.](#)

[www.](#)

[www.](#)

Getting Involved

Care & Repair England continues to work with a wide range of academics and stakeholders to support research projects, facilitate new groups & initiatives, grow the research network and make representations to policy makers, funders and commissioners concerning the importance of new research in this field.

If you are interested in joining the virtual network or have ideas for projects you consider would be relevant to Catch 22 and would benefit from our involvement please contact Martin Hodges, the programme lead.

Contact: Martin Hodges,
Health & Housing Programme Lead

Email: martinhodges@careandrepair-england.org.uk **Mobile:** 0751 654 5586

General email: info@careandrepair-england.org.uk **T:** 0115 950 6500

Thanks are due to the Tudor Trust and John Ellerman Foundation who support the Catch 22 project

The Tudor Trust logo, featuring the text 'the Tudor trust' in a green, sans-serif font.

Published 2017

About Care & Repair England

Care & Repair England is an independent charitable organisation (IPS Reg 25121R, est. 1986) which aims to improve older people's housing. It innovates, develops, promotes and supports practical housing initiatives & related policy and practice which enable older people to live independently in their own homes for as long as they wish, particularly for older people living in poor or unsuitable private sector housing.

www.careandrepair-england.org.uk **email:** info@careandrepair-england.org.uk **Twitter** @cr_england **LinkedIn**