

# SCIENCE AND USER ENGAGEMENT – A CASE STUDY

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new dynamics of ageing  
a cross-council research programme

Third FLARE Summer School, San Lorenzo Del Escorial,  
Madrid, Spain, 7 September

# SCIENCE AND USER ENGAGEMENT – A CASE STUDY

- The Pressure for User Engagement
- The New Dynamics of Ageing Programme
- Engaging Users in the NDA
- The Special Case of Older People's Involvement

# THE PRESSURE FOR USER ENGAGEMENT

- Top Down: from governments and research councils emphasising **impact**
- Bottom Up: from a wide range of organisations (business, NGOs) emphasising **knowledge exchange**
- Bottom Up: from older people emphasising **democracy** and **human rights**
- Largely reactive change in research culture resulting in a continuum of practices from tokenism to integration



# THE NEW DYNAMICS OF AGEING RESEARCH PROGRAMME

The NDA is a multidisciplinary research collaboration to both investigate the new dynamics of ageing and the various influences shaping them; and to show how their consequences can be managed to achieve the maximum benefits for older people and society

- ESRC, EPSRC, BBSRC, MRC, AHRC
- Budget = £22 million
- 2005 – 2012
- 35 projects, 136 senior researchers, 35 post docs, 24 PhD students
- 128 others e.g. Advisory, partners, admin teams



Arts & Humanities  
Research Council



BBSRC  
bioscience for the future



E·S·R·C  
ECONOMIC  
& SOCIAL  
RESEARCH  
COUNCIL



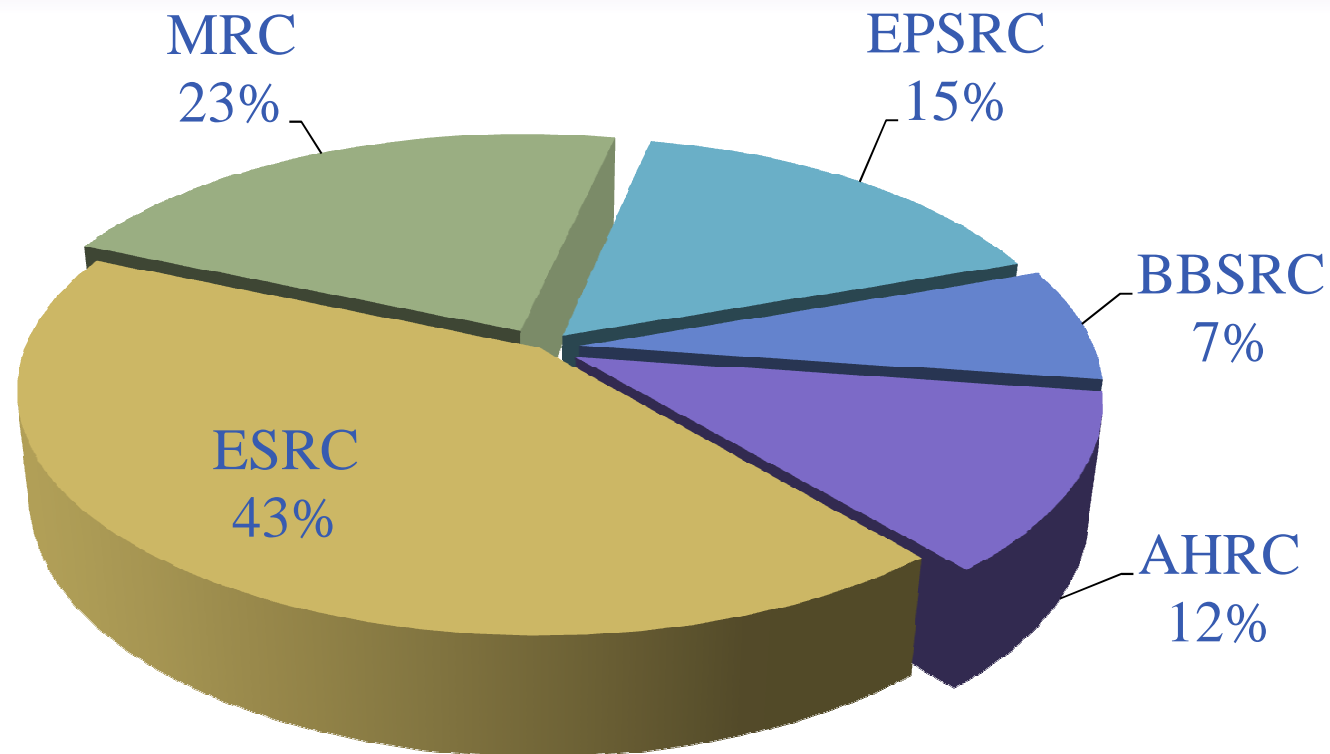
Medical  
Research  
Council



Engineering and Physical Sciences  
Research Council

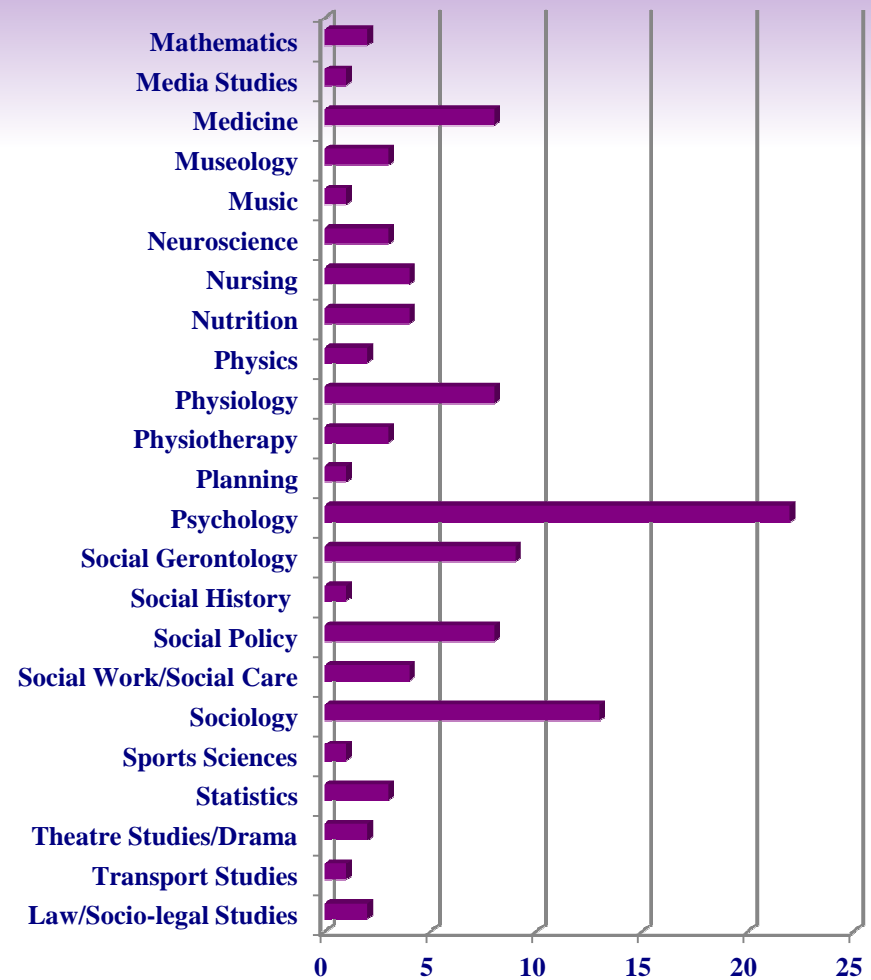
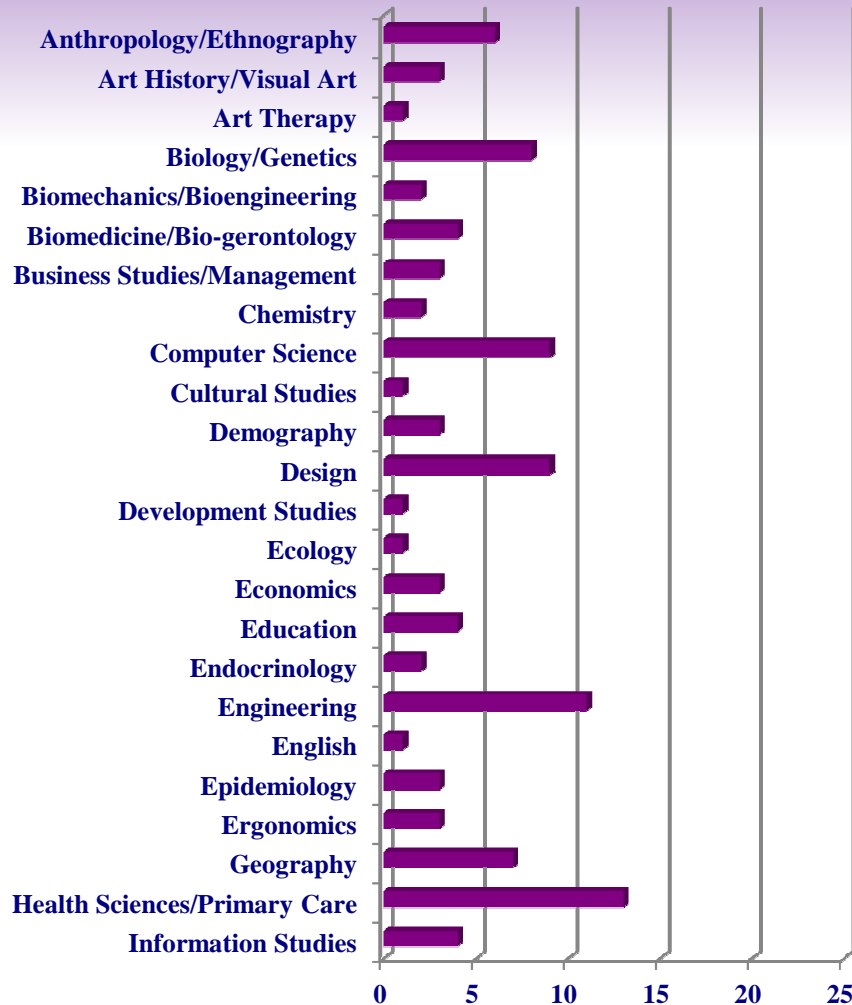
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# NDA DISCIPLINARY REPRESENTATION



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# THE NEW DYNAMICS OF AGEING RESEARCH PROGRAMME

## PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

- Generate new knowledge: life course influences, changes and increasing diversity in meaning and experience of ageing
- To encourage and support the development of new multi- and interdisciplinary perspectives on ageing
- To encourage comparative research and provide new opportunities for UK science to link with other countries
- To support a new generation of multidisciplinary researchers
- To provide a sound evidence base for policy, practice and product development so that research contributes to well-being and quality of life



# THE NEW DYNAMICS OF AGEING RESEARCH PROGRAMME

## RESEARCH THEMES

### 1. Ageing Well Across the Life course

- i) Active Ageing
- ii) Autonomy and Independence
- iii) Later Life Transitions
- iv) The Oldest Old

### 2. Ageing and its Environments

- i) Resources for Ageing
- ii) Locality, Place and Participation
- iii) The Built and Technological Environments
- iv) The Global Dynamics of Ageing

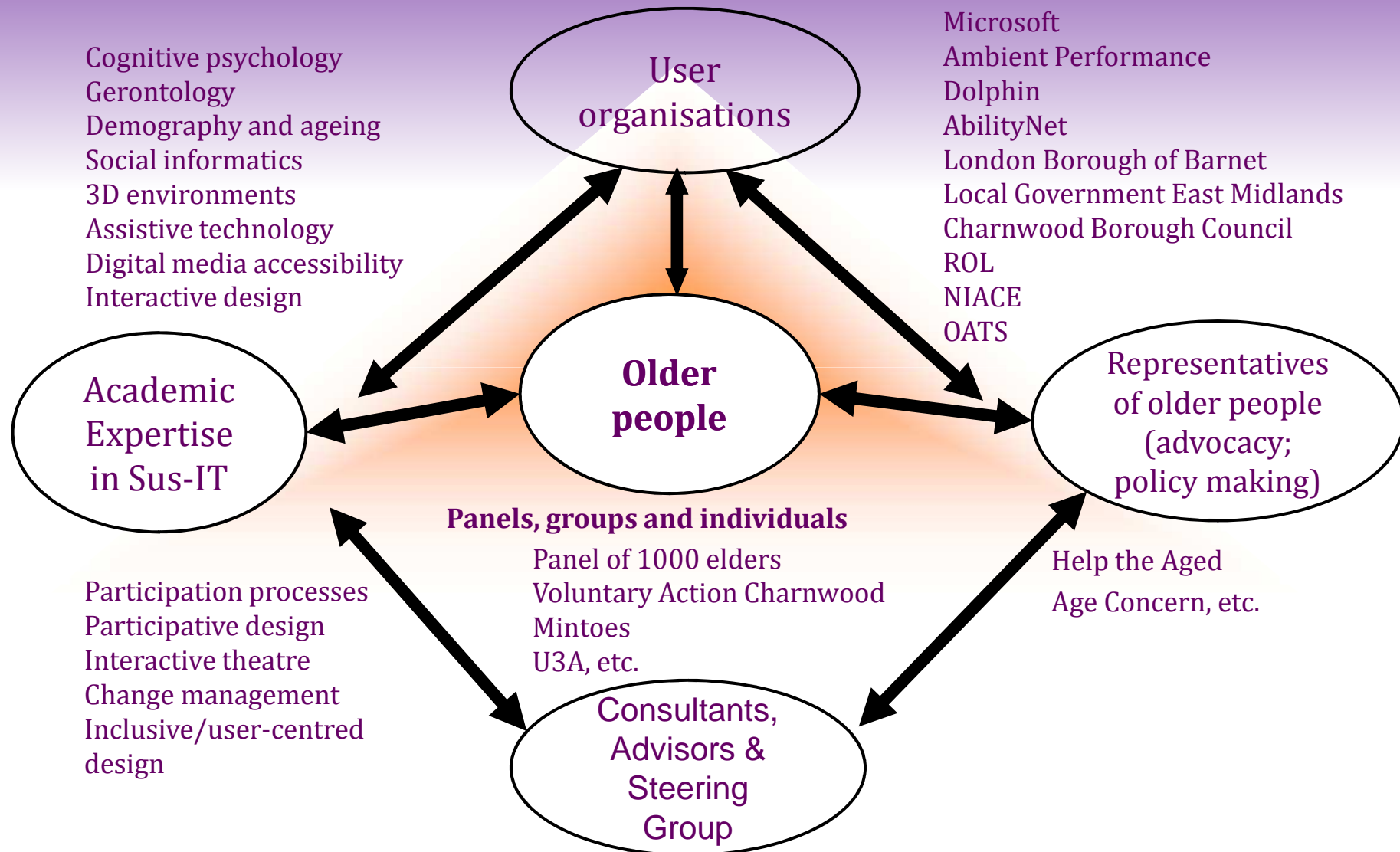


# USER ENGAGEMENT IN THE NDA PROGRAMME

- Commissioning:
- Highest quality science, multi-disciplinarity and user engagement
  - Commissioning panel and peer review

- Supporting:
- Specific project funding
  - Preparatory networks innovation
  - Follow-on funding
  - Programme meetings
  - Programme and project advisory groups
  - User workshops, findings
  - Programme partnerships

# The Sus-IT research community



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# THE SPECIAL CASE OF OLDER PEOPLE'S INVOLVEMENT

- Consumerism (Tokenism) vs. Empowerment
- A Matter of Human Rights
- Essential for Beneficial Research Outputs
- Support for the New Politics of Ageing
- Pressure from Funding Agencies

# THE NDA OLDER PEOPLE'S REFERENCE GROUP

## Aims

- To advise the Director on the overall shape, structure and balance of the programme from the perspective of older people.
- To help to monitor outputs from the programme and consider their implications for older people.
- To help to disseminate the outputs from the programme, especially to older people, and to encourage discussion of the findings.
- To act as a resource to the programme on issues concerning the involvement of older people in all stages of the research process.
- To give advice where requested to individual research projects within the programme.



30 March 2010, London

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# THE NDA OLDER PEOPLE'S REFERENCE GROUP

## Assessment (interim)

- Continuum of Involvement
  - Active participation (steering group, testing instruments)
  - Passive communication (emails, telephone)
  - None
- What works?
  - Integration of OPRG members into project
  - OPRG acting as translators of academic research
  - Getting feedback from OPRG
    - research design
    - instruments
    - contacting older people
- Benefits for projects and Programme

# THE NDA OLDER PEOPLE'S REFERENCE GROUP

## Key Challenges

- Early involvement of OPRG
- Clear guidelines
- Budget
- Difficulties in communication
- Time and staff resources
- Skills matching to project needs
- Question of representation
- Fit with different disciplines
- Ethics

# THE NDA OLDER PEOPLE'S REFERENCE GROUP

## Indicators of Likely Success

- Openness on Both Sides (2-way learning)
- Programme Capacity
  - Meeting of OPRG (compare notes, solidarity)
  - Joint meetings
  - Funding and flexibility
- Non-exploitative
- OPRG Representative as Research Team Member
- Regular Information Flow



# THE NDA OLDER PEOPLE'S REFERENCE GROUP

## **Role Potential**

- Early input to engagement plan
- Help with project communication
- Training resource
- Input to future research proposals
- Networking resource
- Help with knowledge transfer
- Ambassadorial

# THE NDA OLDER PEOPLE'S REFERENCE GROUP

## **Example of Helpful Input to Research**

The OPRG made a number of recommendations for changes to first phase developments of WP2's inclusive research tools. However, the OPRG also strongly advised that the research tools be completely re-evaluated to also include a wider age range of research participants. The OPRG commented that the focus on the barriers in the built environment – namely the provision of public lavatories – if focused just on the over 50's, may continue to stigmatise the facilities and the older people who rely on them, but that opening the research to all ages would offer a more balanced and inclusive solution that would cater to all members of the public throughout the life course.

# FUTURAGE USER ENGAGEMENT THEME

## **Recommendations**

- Policy of strengthening user involvement in ageing research
- Responsiveness to user priorities
- Capacity building
- Coordination of European ageing research
- Dedicated funding
- A 'user engagement' requirement
- A paradigm of user methodology
- Support for NGOs

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MUCHAS GRACIAS  
THANK YOU

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