

LinkAge Plus  
National Evaluation Team  
Interim findings – September 2007

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# The headline national research objectives

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- ❖ To build a robust evidence base to support the case for joined up services in terms of delivering better outcomes for older people
- ❖ To build an evidence base that supports the economic, as well as the social case for fully joined up / holistic services for older people
- ❖ To test the limits of holistic working
- ❖ To build a body of good practice and lessons learned for other partnerships and communities so as to encourage wider application of the approach beyond pilot sites.

# What have we been doing?

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We have:

- ❑ visited LinkAge Plus pilots
- ❑ been working on the development of the evaluation of the business/economic case – and undertaken visits in connection with this
- ❑ brought together national evaluators, local evaluators, pilots and DWP at Evaluation Workshops
- ❑ produced a draft 'Towards a Business Case' report (authors - Ian Blair and Peter Watt - WBS).

# Our Interim findings

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## Linkage Plus is seen as

- Delivering real benefits for older people
- A catalyst, an enabler
- Linking into other key agendas (POPPs, Ageing Society, PSAs)
- Expanding the reach to people and organisations
- Giving 'Choice' and 'Voice' to older people
- Developing the business case for older people-centred services
- Delivering 'Realtime' learning to organisations
- Designing services around older people's needs
- But with some operational challenges
- and some Presentational / 'political' challenges.

# Delivering real benefits for older people

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- ❑ Access to that *'little bit of help'*
- ❑ Improved information, accessibility and signposting
- ❑ Development of improved and some new services
- ❑ Community presence.

# Real benefits for real people – one example!

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## A case study from Nottinghamshire First Contact

- ▣ *Mrs S was referred to First Contact from a visit by Rushcliffe Home Alarms. A checklist was completed and referred to the Pension Service and to the Fire & Rescue Service. Mrs S had been bereaved for two months prior to anyone making contact.*

## Resulting from the visit –

- ▣ *The Home Alarms Service fitted an alarm within three days of their call*
- ▣ *The Fire & Rescue Service fitted two smoke alarms within two weeks, and*

# Real benefits for real people – continued

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- ❖ *The Pension Service contacted the customer and visited within four days and completed a claim for increased state pension. This was awarded at £49.67 per week and £596.04 arrears were also paid*
- ❖ Through First Contact Mrs S was able to gain access to services to meet her needs at a time of change
- ❖ Through one visit she accessed three separate services having previously been unaware of the range of services there to support her.

# LinkAge Plus - A catalyst, an enabler

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- ▣ A big effort by DWP to work in a genuinely collaborative way
- ▣ It is unlocking something at the local level – particularly around relationships
- ▣ A catalyst, an enabler
- ▣ Valued for what it can contribute to policy and service development rather than as an entity in itself.

# Linking into other key agendas

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LinkAge Plus links firmly into other key policy agendas and can make an important contribution to those agendas –

- ❑ POPPs, Ageing Society, PSAs
- ❑ Transformational government
- ❑ Better developed organisations
- ❑ More effective collaboration
- ❑ People centred services
- ❑ The well-being agenda
- ❑ Community capacity building ...

# Expanding the reach

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- ❖ LinkAge Plus is tapping into the enthusiasm of bodies beyond the traditional adult health and social care sector – eg, fire and rescue, the pension service
- ❖ And helping them reach people they would not otherwise reach (the socially excluded)
- ❖ In providing a relatively small amount of pump-priming money LinkAge Plus is furthering tangible partnership working – rather than just strategic talking about partnership working.

# 'Choice' and 'Voice'

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- ❑ LinkAge Plus is amplifying 'choice' and 'voice'
- ❑ LinkAge Plus is people driven (older people driven) – through consultation, active involvement as service deliverers, evaluators ...
- ❑ The lack of a rigid concept for LinkAge Plus has led to a more open mind – which can produce more diverse responses
- ❑ 'No wrong door' – but the door has to be found in the first place – and LinkAge Plus is making an important contribution here.
- ❑ Designing services around older people's needs

# 'Realtime' learning

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LinkAge Plus is:

- ▣ seeing a big focus on sharing 'realtime' learning – and identifying and sharing good practice
- ▣ providing a safe arena in which to practice and develop new ideas
- ▣ giving more confidence and information to services to support service and commissioning strategies – through better understanding of needs and demand.

# Business case arguments

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- ❖ LinkAge Plus adopts the principle of putting the needs of older people – as they themselves perceive them – at the forefront – key to maximising the productivity of provision
- ❖ ‘Low level’ support is highly valued by older people – *“adding years to life and life to years”* – and is likely to have preventative benefits.

# Some costs and benefits

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- ▣ The unit cost of a range of LinkAge Plus initiatives examined varied from £4.45 to £286 per contact
- ▣ Benefits to older people to set against this –
  - ▣ Improvements in happiness
  - ▣ Quality of life
  - ▣ Independence
  - ▣ The value of home life
  - ▣ Reduced isolation and social exclusion
  - ▣ Easier access to services ...

# Costs and benefits – continued

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- ❖ Difficult to monetise but, eg, delaying progression to more costly care has been valued at £181 a week (ODPM 2005).
- ❖ The cost of an individual hip fracture has been estimated as £25,425 (Parrott 2000).
- ❖ The cost of accidental falls has been estimated by Scuffham et al (2003) as costing health and social services as about £1 billion – with around 41% falling on social services.

# Costs and benefits – continued

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- ❑ The average cost of a domestic fire is estimated at £24,900 – of which £7,300 is due to property damage (ODPM, 2006)
- ❑ A third of all fire deaths are people aged 65 and over (Fire Minister, 2005)
- ❑ The unit costs of LinkAge Plus are small when set against figures like these
- ❑ LinkAge Plus – can we afford not to?

# Operational challenges

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- ❑ Sustaining the vision
- ❑ What age groups to be targeted?
- ❑ Organisational capacities / service ‘rationing’
- ❑ Further evolution towards focus on outcomes and better knowledge of unit costs
- ❑ Some perceived problems with national targets versus LAA targets – “potential for some conflict there”

# Operational challenges – continued

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- ❖ Some organisational incentives may be different –  
*“the hospital itself has no incentive to keep people out of it. It wants as many people through its doors as possible so that it can benefit from the tariff prices”*

# Presentational / 'political' challenges - 1

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- ▣ Costs and benefits may well fall differentially
  - but closer working at local level is helping partners to see the bigger picture
  
- ▣ There are start up costs
  - but these can be minimised by adopting best practice approaches

## Presentational / 'political' challenges - 2

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- ⌘ Key decision makers are generally not short of good ideas of their own – LinkAge Plus has to compete in that arena
- ⌘ LinkAge Plus is also competing against major priorities – education, environmental etc.
- ⌘ Gaining the attention and support of key, under pressure, decision makers – members, officers and partners.

# Contact details

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