

## Schedule

Dates for submission of Entry Forms/Fees and Work

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### **Thursday 20 November 2008**

#### **Deadline for Entry Form(s)/fee(s) for all projects (including Design Directions Plus)**

Entry Forms/Fees should be sent under separate cover – **not** with your entry – to:  
RSA Design Directions Registrations  
8 John Adam Street  
London WC2N 6EZ  
UK

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### **Monday 17 Nov – Friday 12 Dec 2008**

#### **Submission period for all project entries (except Design Directions Plus\*)**

Entries will be accepted at **Brooks Transport Services Ltd** on any weekday within the dates stated between 08:00-18:00, excluding weekends and bank holidays. Entries arriving after 18:00 on 12 December 2008 will not be accepted

#### **Please remember that entries should be sent or delivered to:**

Brooks Transport Services Ltd  
Unit 2/15  
Second Avenue  
Bluebridge Industrial Estate  
Halstead  
Essex CO9 2SU  
UK

#### **All entry forms/fees should be sent or delivered to:**

RSA Design Directions Registrations  
8 John Adam Street  
London WC2N 6EZ  
UK

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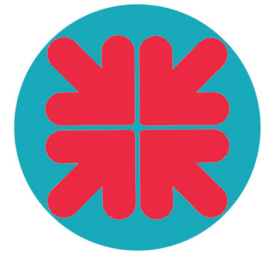
### **\*Design Directions Plus**

**Submission date for these projects** (i.e. Action for Age and The Visit)  
**is Friday 9 January 2009**

## Action for age

*designing a better future*

*Design Directions Plus is an exciting new concept that offers students the opportunity to benefit from valuable input on their project from key experts and stakeholders. It will expose them and their project concept to advice, feedback and input from people who are active in the field.*



**DesignDirections+**

The Action for age project looks at the role of design in addressing some of the complex challenges, and the exciting opportunities, presented by an ageing population. In particular it addresses how older people can become isolated and marginalised, how their health and emotional wellbeing can become undermined and how, as a result, the quality of their lives diminished

### Introduction

Falling birthrates, coupled with increased life expectancy due to general improvements in health, have resulted in an ageing population, and many more people can now expect to live beyond 85 years of age than ever before. Whilst this is to be celebrated it is nonetheless the case that as the population ages and more people live alone, social isolation amongst older people is emerging as one of the major issues facing society. Older people are also among the main users of health and other care services, so the potential future impact on these resources will grow making it an increasingly significant social and political issue as time goes on.

In responding to this project, you need to unpack and understand the experiences of older people, the circumstances that affect their lives and the pathways to loneliness and isolation. Whilst these are often linked to socio-economic circumstances, it is also the case that older people often have weaker social networks, preventing them accessing many of the things most of us take for granted: friends and regular company, stimulating activity and easy access to services such as shops, post offices and GPs.

You then need to reflect on the ways in which design can respond to some of the issues in ways that could improve the lives of those at risk. How can awareness be increased in society of the valuable role and potential contribution older people can offer: if they are engaged, active and have a sense of purpose, they can make a big contribution to our communities but will remain an untapped resource unless used.

### Background

#### Ageing facts

- in the past thirty-five years the number of those over 65 grew by 31%
- in the past thirty-five years those under 16 declined by 19%
- by 2031 the number of over 75 year-olds in the British population is expected to increase from 4.7 million to 8.2 million
- by 2031 the number of over 85 year-olds is expected to be nearly three million compared to 1.2 million in 2006

#### Some stark facts

- among older people living alone, 17% rated themselves as 'often/always lonely', compared with 2% living with others: 80% of the 'often lonely' lived alone
- one in five people over 65 are alone more than 12 hours a day
- over one million people feel trapped in their homes
- a 2004 survey showed that over one million older people spent Christmas alone

Statistics such as these show how older people are more at risk of depression and ill-health brought about by isolation and loneliness.

### Understanding the issues

When thinking about the issues of loneliness and social isolation in relation to older people, you need to understand what has led people to each of these two types of situation. For some it will be a continuation of their life experience; for many others, it will be a new and hitherto unknown experience brought about by changes such as bereavement. You should be clear in your mind when developing your response to the project, to which of these different 'pathways' (loneliness or isolation) you are responding. Also, try to understand the nuances between living alone, loneliness and social isolation. Loneliness refers more to how people think about the level of social contact they have (or do not have); social isolation is a measure of how disengaged people are in their wider community whilst living alone may not necessarily lead to either of those situations.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Loneliness, social isolation and living alone in later life (ESRC 2002)

You should also take care when defining what you mean by older people. It is not a generic term for anyone older than you are yourself! You need to take account of different ages and stages along the ageing process. It is important then to have a clear idea of which group you are addressing in your response to the project and the issues that affect their lives. Your reading around the subject will often specify the age being referred to: an older person is often defined as one 65 years or over; the older-old will often be specified as 85 years and over, etc..

### **You are a designer – what can you do?**

As a designer you will know how important it is to work meaningfully with users, other stakeholders and professionals in order to improve services, products and communications. Best practice is shaped by an understanding of people and their needs and responds to difficult problems in ways that improve and enrich their lives.

At the core of this project is the question: what can you do to improve the lives of those who are already – or who are at risk of – experiencing loneliness and social isolation? What insights might you uncover that could have an impact on the lives of older people in this way? Understanding, and making sense of the ways that people live and behave, and drawing insights from these observations is at the heart of what the best designers do – they simplify complex information and facilitate clear communication.

Designers can work with people in innovative and user-centered ways to create radical ideas which are visible and tangible; they can create connections between those ideas, identify, visualise and design key 'touch points' to make networks and services accessible and user-friendly; in this way they can begin to empower users to effect meaningful change and improve their quality of life.

### **Brief**

*Design a new service, network or other solution that would benefit older people experiencing, or vulnerable to, loneliness and isolation and that would help to improve their emotional and general wellbeing. How might you engage older people in the process of co-designing a response that would be meaningful to them? How can this process lead to more appropriately designed outcomes?*

The format of the designed solution is flexible: it could be a service, a network, an environment, a piece of communication, an event, a new role, or it might take elements from several of these. The aim is to design a coherent solution that addresses the needs of the person/people you are designing for, lead to their greater integration into the community and improve their general wellbeing. Make sure you communicate the story of your project in a clear and engaging way that would make those with the power to make it happen take note.

Where we can, many of us use our own informal social 'care circles' when we need them – families and friends, colleagues, the internet, groups and societies etc – which offer shared knowledge and mutual support. However, while informal networks such as these can play an important role in our social and emotional wellbeing, older people are less likely to have good social networks and many have none at all.

What are the design opportunities where design thinking, methods and people-centred processes could develop and visualise proposals to support older people in new ways? Also, what are the opportunities for encouraging self-help using a range of media targeted at this growing demographic? The following are just examples of some issues that might shape wellbeing in older people and which you might choose to address in order to focus your work or you may identify a completely different issue through your own research:

#### **– Bridging the generational gap**

Social cohesion between the generations is an important factor, and will become increasingly so as the shift to greater numbers of older people in society progresses and the dependency ratio (that is, the number of people working supporting higher numbers of retired people) falls. Also, the classic model of the extended family living together has now almost vanished; in fact increased mobility makes it less likely that generations of the same family will even live in the same geographical area. The weakening of these ties results in older and more vulnerable people in particular, falling outside the care and responsibility of their families. Interestingly however some minority ethnic groups can provide another perspective. Whilst there are cases of poorer health and greater poverty levels, these can be offset by strong family and religious support networks.

How might younger and older people be brought together? What can you learn from different models of UK ethnic communities (some Indian and Pakistani groups for instance?). Could older people become involved in child-care for instance, establishing inter-generational contact where older people could teach children life skills based on years of experience? Payment would help older people remain financially independent and help establish an alternative 'care cycle' built on belonging while supporting older people's independence for longer. What are other ways to bridge this gap?

#### **– Maintaining a comfortable environment**

Wellbeing of older people is improved if their living environment is comfortable and well maintained. Older people often enjoy gardening for instance but could benefit from help with the 'heavy lifting' and bending aspects that make it less pleasurable and rewarding.

Could community gardening clubs, supported by neighbourhood guardians or wardens, encourage

neighbourliness and modest levels of activity in older people, and improve the safety, quality, appearance and social fabric of communities?

– **Eating well and staying well**

Experts increasingly believe that a healthy diet is important to reducing the risk of dementia as well as being important to maintain general good health.

How can this be encouraged? Malnutrition can be a common problem among elderly people, yet many older women will have had a lifetime of cooking and baking for the family. How could these activities help give a sense of purpose, stimulate the senses, rekindle memories and skills, build relationships, and improve health and wellbeing?

– **Active minds and bodies...**

Maintaining general good health aids general wellbeing. Exercise is shown to help lower the risk of mental health problems such as depression and give a positive sense of wellbeing; furthermore, although no hard evidence exists to support it, regular mental stimulation could help improve acuity and lower risk against dementia too.

How can design help to support people maintain their general wellbeing, outside the formal, clinical model? It is not only older people who need to keep active so are there cross-generational opportunities here? What might a service or informal social health network look like that fulfils this need? Is there a way of rethinking exercise-fitness incentives?

– **...and grumpy old men?<sup>2</sup>**

Whilst older people are particularly vulnerable to depression, older men are a high-risk suicide group. Men, and older men especially, are less likely to talk about many of the difficulties they experience, particularly around their mental health, or be proactive in seeking support or assistance.

How might this harder to reach group become engaged in the community and be drawn into activities that encourage their greater social inclusion? What are the innovative ways that community/neighbourhood services might use to engage with and address the needs and wishes of this specific group?

– **Belonging and involved**

Involvement in the local community is an important factor in promoting a sense of wellbeing and self worth and for older people it can help counter factors that lead to depression and isolation.

What new community/neighbourhood services could be designed that could enable greater wellbeing? What might the role of peer support and other initiatives, perhaps across the generations, look like?

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<sup>2</sup> The Mental Health Foundation is currently running a project called Grumpy Old Men? that aims to promote and support innovative services working with older men at risk of isolation and depression to help improve their mental health and well being

**Tackling the design challenge**

This project focuses on the lives and needs of a group in society that is likely to be outside your immediate and everyday experience, but to develop a response that is meaningful, you must uncover facts and insights that are based on real experience.

**Some questions to help take your project forward**

- How can older people become involved, supported and reconnected to their neighbourhoods and communities?
- Does the key to addressing the problem of loneliness and isolation lie with older people themselves? Will creating the opportunity for them to co-design their own outcomes lead to more appropriate services?
- Older people are a mine of information and experience. How can these be harnessed, valued and used?
- How can greater social cohesion between generations be fostered?
- What are the opportunities for new services, systems, networks and other solutions to counter isolation and support the health and wellbeing issues faced by the growing number of older people in society?
- What evidence exists which might point towards viable solutions?

**Your 'user' group**

Nothing will give you greater insight into the issues than speaking to older people themselves. This tangible human dimension needs to be added to your research and it will help you generate your own insights and understanding of those for whom you are designing. There are likely to be a number of networks within your community of which you are unaware and some of these are likely to include older people (religious or church groups, day centres for example). These will provide you with your starting point for contact. In addition, there are a number of organisations such as Age Concern, the WRVS, Help the Aged, Mental Health Foundation and others (local areas often have their own offices) who may be able to advise you and facilitate contact with older people and others in the field.

**Listen and understand**

Find out as much as you can about what concerns older people, what is important to them and what would improve their quality of life. Listen carefully and resist suggesting solutions immediately; assess their priorities and expectations first. You will benefit from involving them in co-designing your proposal as much as possible.

This may be by encouraging them to keep written diaries or to take simple photographic recordings of what enhances or impedes the quality of their daily lives, by accompanying them and recording their daily activities by video, photography, storyboards, or by listening to their perspective over a cup of tea.

Design and record your own interactions with those you consult. This might be face-to-face interviews, questionnaires, workshop activities or any other creative ways you think appropriate.

You need to:

- Understand the different needs of different people
- Keep a good record of your conversations and meetings

This form of evidence is central to the project as it will allow you to develop a dialogue with people, help identify issues, and record your process for your entry.

### Other experts in the concept development

Who else do you need to consult or work with in partnership? Who are the key stakeholders? It will be essential to include other specialist disciplines as well as older people themselves. Who will help you identify the individuals and groups and whether they want to work with you, and who will have specialist knowledge about needs and issues? Might these be members of the local council? They could help identify what services currently exist, where the gaps are and who falls through them. Also, think about professionals in the field of social care and those who work directly with older people.

Within your university there are likely to be other courses that could feed into your research in a very helpful way. At the outset, why not seek out a psychology student, a social science student, a social care or social policy student and work with them to develop your project? This reflects how you might be expected to work in the real world, so why not start now? Factor in time to build trust and a team where possible.

### Pushing the parameters

Although this might at first appear remote and uninspiring territory for a designer, use the constraints to stimulate your creativity. Do not limit yourself to how things happen currently but let your insights, research and conversations lead you into new ways of thinking about the issues and how they might be addressed.

### Research/background reading

Some very useful and relevant research has been published which will provide an essential and valuable springboard for your ideas. Look at the Resources page on the project webpage for ideas. Also, familiarise yourself with services and networks that already exist so you do not duplicate these, although you may suggest building on existing models if you are adding a new and innovative angle to them.

### Case studies

In recent years, there have been a number of interesting initiatives where design thinking and design-led strategies have addressed pressing and complex societal issues. For instance, in 2000, the DTI advocated four cornerstones for designing for an ageing population: design for social interaction, for flexibility, for independence, and for stimulation<sup>3</sup>. The Design Council's Red projects (2004-06)<sup>4</sup>, and DOTT07<sup>5</sup> are more recent initiatives that explored and prototyped new ideas and services and you should look at the case studies on their websites. A number of pioneering design consultancies<sup>6</sup> also address these issues through 'service' or 'transformation' design, and the balance of work in well-established consultancies is shifting from a predominance of product to service-orientated design.

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3: [www.education.edean.org/pdf/Intro009.pdf](http://www.education.edean.org/pdf/Intro009.pdf)

4: [www.designcouncil.info/mt/RED/ageing/](http://www.designcouncil.info/mt/RED/ageing/)

5: <http://www.dott07.com/go/alzheimer100>

6: e.g. thinkpublic, live/work, Participle, and Engine

## Submission details

Action for Age is a Design Directions Plus project

*Design Directions Plus is an exciting new concept that offers you the opportunity to benefit from valuable input on your project from key experts and stakeholders. It will expose you and your project concept to advice, feedback and input from people who are active in the field.*

## How it works

### 1 Hand in

You will have an extension on the usual hand-in date for Design Directions projects:

**Friday 9 January 2009**

At this stage you will need to submit:

- an A4 typewritten executive summary which includes:
  - a a clear statement of the problem/issue and how you identified it
  - b details of your concept
  - c how you conducted the research, the users you have consulted, and how it helped you understand the issues
- a sketch development book
- A3 format concept board(s) (max. 5) visually mapping out the proposed service, system or network or what it is you envisaged and how it improves on what is currently available
- A3 format user-centred storyboard/scenario board(s) showing older person interaction with the key 'touch points' of your service, system, network or design, what makes it accessible and user-centred and appropriate, annotated with other details, such as technology, and local services

### 2 Shortlist

Once the preliminary judging is completed, shortlisted students, whose projects are deemed to have potential for development, will be invited to take part in a one-day expert-led workshop. Here you will have the unique opportunity to work with key stakeholders in the project area in order to develop the project into robust, meaningful and user-centred outcomes. All reasonable costs will be covered.

**Likely to be during the week of 30 March 2009 (this may change)**

### 3 Final stage

There will be a presentation of the developed project to a specially selected, high-level panel. Candidates will be given details of what is required nearer the time, and there may be limited funds available to support final presentation development (e.g. film etc)

**May/June 09**

## Glossary

### Co-design

The process through which users, stakeholders and designers work collaboratively to improve their services, products or communications

### Community or Network

A group of people connected socially by something they share or have in common. For example: they live in the same street, housing estate, village, or they share a common interest or occupation such as belonging to the same library, place of worship, club, allotment group etc

### Social Capital

The value of all social networks (who people know) and the way that people want to support and help one another for the common good as a result of being part of a community or network

### Social Value

The broader benefit gained by society through an individual or group action

### Stakeholders

Everyone who is affected by or has an interest in a project or process

### Collective efficacy

Social cohesion among citizens/neighbours combined with their belief that together they can achieve social outcomes for the common good

### Empowerment

Having the capacity and the opportunity to play a full role in society in general (not just in economic terms but also in social, psychological and political terms)