

The Quarterly Report

News from the Qualitative Team from Aston University

July 2012

Welcome to the first edition of the Quarterly Report. Here we hope to keep you up to date with the research carried out for ExtraCare by Aston University.

In this first issue we will:

- Say why the research is being carried out
- What a Focus Group is
- Where we are visiting next

WHY THE RESEARCH IS BEING CARRIED OUT?

For those of you who are new to this research we have two teams working with ExtraCare. The Main Team consists of Danielle and Leanne. The Qualitative Team (QT) consists of Barbara, Karen and Rachel. Those of you who have volunteered for the Main Study, or who have taken part in the Focus Groups, will already have met some of us.

If you are a new resident (within the last three months) you are invited to take part in research about your health and the activities you do, that may affect your well-being. This research looks at a number of different factors affecting your quality of life and how your care needs may change over time. This is why we ask you to help us for up to two years as we would like to collect information on your well-being on four occasions.

We are looking at ExtraCare's 5 element approach: (i) Activity based support and personal development; (ii) Health assessment and promotion; (iii) Enrichment/stimulation for residents with cognitive impairments (e.g. dementias); (iv) Active engagement, e.g. volunteering and (v) Community activities and group membership.

Those taking part in the Main Study will be given a folder containing the information sheets, details and pictures of the people who are conducting the study, note paper and a pen. You will also receive a diary in which we ask you to record your activities for a week, such as going for a walk or visiting the gym. If you decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form and then have a well-being check.

The researchers will analyse all the information carefully. We hope to work out what the main things are that lead to changes for you. We will also work out what that means in terms of costs of any care you need, to help with planning of future care.

We will present the results to you at ExtraCare meetings or at the University. We will also present them at conferences and may seek to publish the results in journals.

At all times it is your choice to take part and you may withdraw from the study without saying why.

WHAT IS A FOCUS GROUP?

The Qualitative Team are collecting information by carrying out interviews and Focus Groups. A focus group is where volunteers come together to have an informal in-depth discussion that is guided by questions from a researcher. It is not strictly a question and answer format. Past experience has shown that taking part in a focus group can be a really interesting experience, especially if the topic is important to those who volunteer.

At the beginning of each group we ask volunteers to sign a consent form. This is a legal requirement and says you have read the information sheet; agreed to take part and understand that the discussions will be audio-recorded with some of the comments used in papers and reports. None of these comments will have your name associated with them, they will be used anonymously. In this way your contributions remain confidential.

We take up to fifteen volunteers. The first discussion is about how you settled in to ExtraCare life and why you moved in; so we are seeking those who have recently moved in. We are though, interested in the experiences of those of you who have been resident for some time, so where we have spaces available longer standing residents are very welcome to join us.

WHERE ARE WE VISITING NEXT?

We have carried out Focus Groups at New Oscott Village, St Crispin Village, Lark Hill Village and Seagrave Court. These were well attended and everyone had a chance to say how they felt about the issues we discussed. The QT wish to thank all of you who took part and ExtraCare staff for helping us to arrange such successful meetings. The next meetings are in early August at Lovat Fields Village, Sunley Court, Imperial Court and Rosewood Court.

TAKING PART IN RESEARCH

If you are a new resident or a longer standing resident and would like to take part in the Focus Groups please speak to your well-being advisor. You will be given a participant Information sheet and be asked to sign-up for the group. There is a maximum of 15 volunteers for each meeting.

If you were not able to attend an earlier group and would like to take part when we visit next

year please keep a watch out in these reports for an 'early bird' notification of our next visit.

If you are a new resident either thinking of taking part in the Main Study or you have already volunteered and would like to help further with this research please contact us. We are just beginning to arrange the one-to-one interviews with new residents who have expressed an interest in talking to us about their move to ExtraCare.

If you are not resident at one of ExtraCare schemes taking part in this study, or are a longer standing resident, and you would like to take part in other research, we invite you to join the ARCHA panel (information sheet available here). This is a group of volunteers who take part in research and are invited to talks on various topics associated with ageing (such as drug development, changes in vision and hearing, mobility, diet and exercise and memory). If you would like further information please contact Wendy Overton on 0121 204 4134 or lhs_archa@aston.ac.uk

WHAT'S IN THE NEXT ISSUE?

In the Next Quarterly Report (October) we hope to be able to include feedback from you about the Focus Groups and the recruitment process and give you updates on the research. We will have a section dedicated to your views on taking part in the Focus Groups. So please send your feedback to:

b.hagger@aston.ac.uk or
j.collins3@aston.ac.uk

We look forward to hearing from you.

We will also go into some more detail about the ExtraCare and Aston study. Guest editor will be Dr Jill Collins who is a Health Economist on the ExtraCare study.