

Silverlinks: Project details

Summary	<p>Silverlinks is a four-year project which began in April 2014 (following an 18-month pilot phase) managed by Care & Repair England (C&RE) that aims to increase older people's capacity to manage the key life transition of deciding whether or not to continue to live in their current home or to move, either at a point of crisis such as the onset of disability, ill health or bereavement, or in advance of such life changing events.</p> <p>A key area of Care & Repair England's work is highlighting the link between housing and health. One of the major triggers for thinking about one's living situation, particularly in older people, is health and/or disability – in the Silverlinks pilot phase, the three main reasons older people gave as “triggers” for thinking about moving were a decline in health, increasing disability, or having had a fall/being worried about falling in the home.</p> <p>Silverlinks is pioneering new ways to build resilience and enable self help, primarily through linking older people who have already faced and dealt with a similar situation regarding their housing and care, to those currently facing these dilemmas. Older people pass on information and knowledge about housing and care options, share the benefit of their own experiences and offer mutual support to more vulnerable older people. The result is older people becoming better equipped to make their own informed decisions about their housing and care, and knowing where to go to access information, advice and practical help. They are well informed and better prepared to make these decisions in advance or when facing times of crisis.</p>
Name of the Project	Silverlinks
Topic	Housing and care
Contact person and contact email address	<p>Sarah Vernau Silverlinks Programme Manager</p> <p>sarahvernau@careandrepair-england.org.uk</p>
Region	England-wide
Location	Current locations Leeds, West of England (Bristol and Weston-super-Mare), Nottinghamshire and Northumberland.

	Plans to expand to other localities across England over the four year period.
Partner organisations	Formal partner organisations are Care & Repair Leeds; West of England Care & Repair; AgeUK Nottingham & Nottinghamshire; AgeUK Northumberland.
Website	www.silverlinksprogramme.wordpress.com (project blog)
Target population	<p>Older people who are facing decisions about their housing and care, or are beginning to think ahead about their future housing and care needs.</p> <p>Older people from all communities are welcome to be involved in the project but it is focussed particularly on “vulnerable” older people. Silverlinks works with organisations who are in contact with older people who may be isolated or home bound, or who would not normally access services, such as the Red Cross Home from Hospital service, Community Pharmacists and Meals on Wheels services.</p>
Aim	<p>The aim of Silverlinks is to equip older people with the information and knowledge they need to enable them to make their own informed decisions about their housing and care and access help and support.</p> <p>Silverlinks provides training and workshops in housing and care options for older people who in turn pass on information and advice to other older people so that they know where to go for information and advice and are better equipped to plan ahead. We also work with older volunteers who provide peer support for those facing times of crisis in relation to their living situations, providing them with information and time to reach their own informed decisions.</p>
Programme structure	Silverlinks is currently delivered in Leeds, the West of England (Bristol and Weston-Super-Mare), Nottinghamshire, and Northumberland. It is managed centrally by C&RE and delivered by workers employed by Age UKs and Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs) in the four local areas.
Activity to date	<p>Main activities</p> <p>Peer support. Older volunteers are linked with other older people (beneficiaries) to support them in making decisions about their housing and care on a one-to-one basis. Crucially this service allows the older person time to talk and be listened to, and to reach their own decision ensuring that they have considered all of the options such as repairs and adaptations as well as moving. Beneficiaries are referred to Silverlinks either via another organisation (eg Red Cross) through word of mouth, through attending one of the Silverlinks talks or workshops, or through a member of staff at the HIA/Age UK.</p> <p>Workshops and training. Silverlinks workers, trainers and volunteers deliver talks and workshops to older people about housing and care</p>

	<p>options in later life using a cascade model (“Pass it On”) – every attendee passes on the information to a further ten older people. Workshops are either to existing groups such as carers groups, lunch clubs etc. or are run as open workshops. In one locality we have a regular workshop session at a hospital rehabilitation unit for older people, ensuring they are aware of their options before being discharged.</p> <p>During the pilot phase, 148 older people were supported on an individual basis, either through home visits, telephone calls or conversations. A further 1121 were given information and advice through talks given to existing groups by volunteers, and 109 people through our workshops who in turn passed on information to over 1000 older people.</p> <p>The four year “flagship” phase, begun in April 2014, is well on the way to meeting our anticipated targets of 3,555 older people involved in the project; 1,360 older people individually supported by an older volunteer; and 34,000 older people receiving information and advice from a “Pass it On” trainee by the end of the four year period.</p>
Outcome measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% of older people involved in project activities will report improved ability to plan for and manage changes to their housing and care situations (target 3,555 older people involved). • 1,360 older people facing housing and related care life crises eg. moving home, installing home adaptations and / or find carers, will have talked to and been supported by another older person with related personal experience. Older people report feeling more in control and better able to manage their housing and living situations • 34,000 older people will have received information from a 'pass it on' trainee and 15,000 accessed related self help materials, with increased knowledge and awareness of later life housing and care issues and options
Outcomes	<p>All of the older people involved in the project are asked to complete short feedback questionnaires about the reasons they seek support from an older volunteer, and what, if any, action they have decided to take as a result.</p> <p>We find that many older people who find themselves in a position where they feel they need to make a decision about their housing, do not necessarily know the options available to them. One aim of Silverlinks is to pre-empt times of crisis so older people know what their options are and can make the decision that’s right for them.</p> <p>We also collect qualitative information and have a number of case studies/stories of beneficiaries who have received support from an older volunteer which can be found on our blog – these links to some case studies, demonstrate the type of support given by volunteers and</p>

the impact on beneficiaries.

<http://silverlinksprogramme.wordpress.com/2013/11/26/it-helped-me-make-up-my-mind-to-stay/>

<http://silverlinksprogramme.wordpress.com/2014/01/13/bristol-silverlinks-case-study/>

<http://silverlinksprogramme.wordpress.com/2013/11/22/if-i-could-lift-my-house-and-move-it-i-would/>

This link to a recent newspaper article is an excellent example of the type of support given by our volunteers (this example is from the Leeds project)

<http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/features/proving-it-s-good-to-talk-1-6578688>