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Conference Abstract

## Co-design and navigating conflicts of interest: enabling independent living for seniors living in supported housing

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### Abstract

This paper concerns an on-going telecare project where a participative, co-design, approach was taken to specify, deliver and evaluate an information service that would enable older people, ranging in age from 57 to 98 with more than 50% over 80, to maintain their independence, quality of life and sense of well-being. In addition the project served to explore the potential such a service has for enabling the housing provider to provide the support required by the older people.

The project is part of the HOST EU initiative and partners in Italy and France are exploring similar issues. In the UK digital TV was explored as a method to provide information (alongside TV channels). TV was chosen as a mechanism for providing access to information because it was assumed that older people were familiar with it. Information included health information, alerts to events, travel information and messaging and video communication with family, friends and other contacts such as housing service providers.

This paper firstly reports on the initial user requirements phase of the project where a participative, co-design approach was taken working with older people in the supported housing project in Newark. This initial phase helped to identify the information needs of the older people and the design of the interface to enable access to the range of information and tools. This, for example, included working with the older people to develop the icons that would enable the selection of categories of information. Identifying and prioritising information needs was achieved through the use of participative techniques that are recognised as enabling and encouraging community participation. This included agreeing how to work together, confidence building, group work, brainstorming, drawing, use of post-it notes, collaborative ranking and ordering of topics etc. An outline of the methods deployed and the findings of this particular stage in the project will be given, including the categories of information need and the icon designs.

However, the focus of this paper will be the results of a survey of the older people with regard to their views, both positive and negative, on the participative process and the challenges that were experienced. This will also include their evaluation of the product/service and will attempt to indicate the impact that the service, and their involvement in the project, has had on the older people.

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Furthermore, although credence has generally been given to the co-design and participative approach, and it was generally well received by the older people there was still some resistance and challenges associated with this approach. These challenges relate to working with older people but also working with others, such as service providers and technologists. This paper will therefore highlight these challenges and make suggestions as to how they can be addressed by future co-design projects, particularly those involving older people, housing providers and technologists.

**Keywords:**

**host project, older people, co-design, information service**

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