



Dewis Choice

Volunteer Information

Building Justice Options with Older People

The Choice Project

The Centre for the Study of Ageing, Abuse and Neglect within the Department of Law and Criminology, Aberystwyth University was awarded a major research grant of £890,000 from the Big Lottery as part of a £1.3m research project.

Choice works with older people, professionals and volunteers to explore new ways of promoting justice and well-being for the older person who has been mistreated in their own home by a family member or someone with whom they have a relationship of trust.

The project has 4 main objectives:

- 1 – Public awareness raising
- 2 – Designing new approaches to justice
- 3 – Delivering and evaluating the impact of the Choice initiative
- 4 – Sharing and disseminating our research findings



How you can volunteer

The *Choice* project is exploring attitudes towards ageing; what people value in their relationships as they grow older and looking at new ways of promoting wellbeing for older people.

Choice would particularly like to learn **what you think** makes a healthy relationship between family members, not just with partners, spouses, parents, but all family members and your views on various aspects of ageing.

We would like your help in gathering information to champion the cause of the older generation, as part of our project aimed at increasing choices available to older people experiencing difficult family circumstances.

There are a range of exciting opportunities available for volunteers.

Choice is looking for people with a variety of skills and experience, so if you would like to help us in any way, we would love to hear from you.

Here are some of the ways you can volunteer:

Be part of a discussion group. We are interested in gathering people's views on aspects of well-being, attitudes towards ageing (their own and how society views older people), and what they feel constitutes a healthy relationship.

To help us with this we are looking for people who would be interested in taking part in a small group discussion, looking at a range of topics all related to ageing.

To find out more – please download the information sheet from the Choice website, by following this link: <http://choice.aber.ac.uk/healthy-relationships/>

'What is a healthy relationship?' Very few health & wellbeing campaigns focus on what people aged 60+ value in their relationship with family members.

You can help us by telling us what you feel is important to you.

- There are numerous ways you can give your views – contact the research team to arrange a suitable time for us to speak with you.
- Write to us with your views on what it is about your husband, wife, children, grandchildren that makes the relationship rewarding.
- Send us photos, images, adverts etc. which shows us examples of positive ageing in Wales.
- Participate in one of the discussion groups as mentioned above.

'Show us your community' Helping us to understand your community; telling us where older people meet and what groups they belong to. This could include taking us for a stroll through your community and will help make our awareness raising activity more effective;

'Helping to raise awareness within your community' – on the issues around older people who experience mistreatment in their own home. This could involve:

- Talking about the project at local meetings of groups you already attend or by helping at the local public engagement group meetings;
- Putting up posters and leaflets about the project, for example in libraries, doctors' surgeries, pharmacies and other suitable locations in your area;

'Putting your creative hat on'. We are keen to see any ideas people have as to images they think would work well for the project and that we could use for our campaigns. For example, it can include drawings, photos or images of older people that show ageing in a positive light, however, we cannot guarantee that all material will be used.

Please send your ideas to us via email to choice@aber.ac.uk, social media or post!

'Joining us on social media'. We are keen to promote the needs and rights of people aged 60 years and over. We provide the latest updates on project developments, changes in policy and news of public events and conferences focussing on issues relating to us in later life. We would also like you to express your views and post any positive images you see about older people on Twitter.



Our Twitter user name is [@choiceolderppl](https://twitter.com/choiceolderppl) so please follow us.

One of our volunteers, Lauren Boaler, (left) out with Project Researcher, Rebecca Zerk on a U3A walk in a very damp December!



Training

Where appropriate and necessary we will provide you with training to support your work on the project. This could include more information on the restorative approaches and principles, safeguarding procedures and domestic abuse and the criminal and civil options available.



Check out the YouTube conversation between two of the project team members, who discuss what they understand by elder abuse, whether there are typical abusers and people who are abused, the differences between elder abuse and domestic violence and why it is so important to raise awareness of the subject.

https://youtu.be/85FmA5H_KqU

The Project

Choice grew out of a number of research projects the Centre carried out pre-2015 into different aspects of elder abuse.



Left to right: the three co-investigators on the Choice project: Professor John Williams, Senior Research Fellow, Sarah Wydall and Professor Alan Clarke, at the Cardiff launch meeting, complete with the project cake!

Follow the link below to the Research section of the Choice website where you will see a list of research publications, reports, conference presentations and books relating to different aspects of elder abuse, domestic abuse and justice, which provide interesting background to the *Choice* project.

<http://choice.aber.ac.uk/research/>

The three and a half-year long *Choice* project runs from 2015 to 2018. The project is working in partnership with national charities such as Age Cymru, Hafan Cymru and Welsh Women's Aid. The project also had considerable support from local authorities and the Older People's Commissioner for Wales.

Choice worked with older people, professionals and volunteers to design and test a new approach based on restorative principles. The Choice Support Worker works with clients referred onto the project to explore a range of options - civil, criminal and restorative to promote choice and empowerment in local settings.

The research team evaluate the choices older people make when they are being mistreated by a family member in their own home.

The project operates within existing Social Service safeguarding procedures and measures.

What *Choice* offers:

- Choice worked together with older people, volunteers, local communities and professionals in two pilot areas (Carmarthenshire and Cardiff) to design an additional approach based on restorative principles. This new approach forms one of three options introduced to the client by the Choice Support Worker.
- Older people are involved from the beginning in all discussions and decisions as to the best course of action and are empowered as a result of this involvement.
- Qualified and trained project staff liaise with the older person and other family members to agree how best to resolve their situation.
- The Choice Support Worker can work with the older person for up to 18-months

Sarah Wydall, Senior Research Fellow, at Aberystwyth University said;

“This project addresses a failure of existing procedures to provide victims of elder abuse with a sense of justice and reassurance that the abuse will not continue. It is highly innovative in its approach, particularly the involvement of victims and the integration of research and practice. Although based in Wales, the findings of the project will have international significance.”

The four objectives of the project are:

1 – Public Awareness Raising

The project is raising awareness, particularly in the two pilot, operational areas of Carmarthenshire and Cardiff, amongst the public and community-based services providing support for older people.

The awareness-raising campaign provides information on positive ageing, healthy relationships and holding focus groups discussing different aspects of ageing. It also highlights how to seek help if someone is being mistreated with further information given on adult protection and safeguarding

The public awareness raising helps people in the community recognise the signs of mistreatment and how to respond to them more effectively. This aspect of the project is inter-generational with older and younger people acting as ambassadors.

This highly innovative project has already featured in the local and national media and this coverage will continue throughout the life of the project.

The launch conference was held on 22nd October 2015 in Carmarthen, where Sarah Rochira, the Older People's Commissioner for Wales (shown right below) and Eleri Butler, (shown left), the CEO of Welsh Women's Aid were two key speakers.



There was a launch in Cardiff in January 2017 at which we introduced the service and the Choice Support Worker, Carmel Boston.

Our website – see link: <http://choice.aber.ac.uk>

The website contains more detail about the project, provides access to research papers and reports relevant to the issue of abuse of older people and the 'Latest news' section contains copies of the presentations given at the Carmarthen conference in October 2015.

2 – Design new approaches to justice

In phase two of the project we designed new approaches to justice based on restorative principles – one in Cardiff and one for Carmarthenshire. These new options exist alongside criminal, civil justice and welfare options.

These approaches were designed by members of the public together with local practitioners from both the third sector and local Social Services. Different restorative approaches were developed for the two pilot areas. These were tailored to the needs and priorities of the local area that were identified by the design groups in each area.

3 – Deliver and evaluate the impact of the Choice service

(a) Delivery

An innovative element of the project is that fully-trained personnel are also involved. A Choice Practitioner and two Choice Support Workers are employed to discuss with older people who have been harmed by family members, the range of options available to them.

Any agency can refer an older person onto the project, but the older person has to go through the existing Social Services risk assessment process carried out by the Adult Safeguarding Teams in Carmarthenshire and Cardiff. The project is only able to accept referrals for people who have been designated as 'lower risk'. The risk level will continue to be monitored by the Choice Support Worker before, during and after the intervention.

The Support Worker adopts a person-centred approach to meet the needs of the older person. They will engage with other services to help provide a complete package of support for the older person. The Choice project focusses on justice and human rights, any welfare needs will be referred to the third sector.

Participants in the project will be supported for up to a period of 18 months.

(b) Evaluation

The project will evaluate the effectiveness of all aspects of the Choice service in a number of ways:

- The research team will discuss with participants their levels of satisfaction with the service, their sense of empowerment and degree of involvement in the decision-making process.
- The two Choice Support Workers and the Choice Practitioner will comment on any perceived changes in victims' engagement needs and empowerment.
- Numerous measures will be administered to assess issues relating to safety, empowerment and control.
- Participants may be asked to keep a reflective diary, using any medium they wish, throughout the process as well as meeting with the research team.
- The 'success' of the reparation process will be monitored after a period of six months.

4 – Share the learning and dissemination of research findings

The findings from the project are being disseminated at selected conferences aimed at practitioners, academics and the general public. We see sharing the learning about the Choice initiative as a crucial part of the project.

A multi-media training package will be produced for practitioners. The findings of the research will inform the development of guidance on appropriate responses to abuse, harm and mistreatment. This package will provide information on promoting healthy relationships in later life.

The Project Team

Pictured L to R:

Back row: Elize Freeman - Lynn Rees - Rebecca Zerk - Jeremy Newman - Carmel Boston - Helen Holt

Front row: Alan Clarke - Sarah Wydall - John Williams



Contact us

Please contact us if you have further questions about the project or how you may be able to help us by volunteering.

Address

Choice Project, Aberystwyth Law School
Room 2.60, Elystan Morgan Building, Llanbadarn Campus,
Aberystwyth University, Aberystwyth, SY23 3AS

Email: choice@aber.ac.uk



Our Twitter user name is [@choiceolderppi](https://twitter.com/choiceolderppi) so please follow us.

Telephone: Jeremy on 01970 622516, or Elize on 01970 621934

Thank you for your interest in *Choice*!