

TRC Annual report 2011-2012

Centre Name: Social Policy and Ageing Research Centre (SPARC)

Centre Director: Virpi Timonen

Contact Details: timonenv@tcd.ie / ageing.research@tcd.ie Tel. 896 2950

Name of School with primary responsibility: School of Social Work and Social Policy

Head of School: Eoin O'Sullivan

Summary of activity

- The Centre continues to maintain a very high profile in international scientific publications – see <http://www.sparc.tcd.ie/publications/index.php>. Particular highlight this year is a major international book publication. The first book on grandparenting practices across the world, entitled *Contemporary Grandparenting*, co-edited by SPARC Director Virpi Timonen and Prof Sara Arber (UK) was published by Policy Press (UK) and the University of Chicago Press (US) in May 2012.
- *Changing generations – towards a new national dialogue on intergenerational solidarity in Ireland* project achieved its target sample in July 2012. Project team members are currently analysing the data and preparing presentations for conferences in the UK and the US, to be delivered between September and November 2012.
- Director of SPARC is a co-investigator in the Irish Longitudinal Study of Ageing (TILDA) and chairs its Translational Research and Policy Implementation sub-committee. As part of TILDA outreach work, the report on the *Profile of Community-Dwelling Older People with Disability and their Caregivers in Ireland* (where SPARC Director was the senior author and main speaker) was launched on 7th June in Trinity.
- Also as part of work drawing on TILDA, Centre staff are undertaking analysis of the life course, marital status, loneliness & depression, in collaboration with Prof Henretta of the University of Florida, a member of the TILDA Scientific Advisory Board. A supplementary qualitative dataset has been collected and is being analysed.
- Three PhD candidates affiliated to the Centre defended their theses successfully in 2011-12. The Centre has now produced 6 PhD graduates, who are all employed in policy and research fields; and currently hosts 3 PhD students and one post-doctoral research fellow.
- Centre was involved in a successful bid for funding for a three-year project on *Living and dying with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis: A Population based Analysis of Palliative Needs, Services and Outcomes in non-malignant terminal illness*. This Health Research Board (HRB) Interdisciplinary Capacity Enhancement (ICE) grant has been awarded to an interdisciplinary team led by Prof Orla Hardiman (lead – PI) and co-PIs Prof Charles Normand (health economist, TCD), Prof Anthony Staines (epidemiology, DCU), Dr Regina McQuillan (Consultant in palliative care), Prof Ivan Perry (Epidemiology, UCC), and Dr Virpi Timonen (SPARC Director).

Visibility of the Centre

The Centre's website (<http://www.sparc.tcd.ie/>) is updated monthly, as is the linked website of the Changing Generations project (<http://www.sparc.tcd.ie/generations/>).

The Centre's work has a strong outreach element. For instance, the Centre co-hosted a community event in April 2012 to mark the European Year of Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity. The seminar proceedings and media coverage of the event can be accessed on: <http://www.sparc.tcd.ie/generations/news-events/>. In October 2011, a wide range of external stakeholders were introduced to the project – report on the meeting can be found here:

http://www.sparc.tcd.ie/generations/assets/pdf/Changing_Generations_Consultation_Seminar%202011.pdf

The Centre also hosted an extremely popular workshop on coding and categorising in grounded theory research by visiting Prof Kathy Charmaz, a world-leading authority on the method in March 2012. The workshop was fully booked within a week of the announcement, and included attendees from five other Irish universities.

Trinity undergraduate students also benefit considerably from guest speaker seminars organised by the Centre. For instance, during Michaelmas term 2011 the Centre hosted two guest speakers (from the University of Jyväskylä, Finland and from the National Yang-Ming University, Taiwan), on the topic of comparative perspectives on social care for older people.

The Centre's visibility and growing international reputation is evident in regular invitations to address conferences and seminars abroad e.g. in Canada, Denmark, Finland in 2012

The Centre's research on governance and practices of home care for older people continues to be extensively referenced e.g. Law Reform Commission 'Legal Aspects of Professional Home Care' (2011) contains > 20 references to this work.

The survey questionnaire that we developed for *The role and future development of meals-on-wheels services for older people in Ireland* project is being used for on-going information generation by the HSE.

The *LIVINDHOME: Living Independently at Home - Reforms in home care in nine European countries* report (2011) is being used to redesign the home care support system in France.

Governance and viability

Regular meetings take place between the Centre director, Head of School and Associate Directors. There is an inter-Faculty drive to secure further sponsorship for infrastructure and staffing in the area of ageing research in College, and Centre director is playing an active part in this endeavour.