Appendix 6a – Case study: Cross-sector planning at the local authority level

Adapting health and social care services for older people
Local strategies in Horsham and West Sussex in collaboration with the BIOPICCC project

Background
Horsham District is located within the county of West Sussex, with a population of approximately 128,000 people. By 2033, the proportion of people aged 65 years and over is projected to reach more than 30%, with 6.6% of the population projected to be 85 years and over. Horsham District is a predominantly rural local authority area, with one large market town, a number of smaller ‘market hubs’ and several small villages dispersed throughout the district. The local authority area is relatively affluent and, in terms of ethnicity, is predominantly white-British.

West Sussex County Council, Horsham District Council and NHS West Sussex have been collaborating with Durham and Heriot-Watt Universities as part of the BIOPICCC project (Built Infrastructure for Older People in Conditions of Climate Change) since 2010, with the aim of developing strategies to help ensure that the infrastructures and systems supporting the health and social care for older people will be sufficiently resilient to withstand the potentially harmful impacts of climate change up to 2050.

West Sussex County Council has a sustainability strategy with four priorities for action: reduce carbon emissions; adapt to a changing climate; use resources effectively and efficiently; and make sustainability business as usual. Horsham District Council has a Climate Change Strategy which recognises the need to adapt to a changing climate. In addition, Emergency Planning in the District Council is increasing its focus on assisting local communities to prepare for extreme weather events.

How are West Sussex County Council, Horsham District Council and NHS West Sussex improving sustainability?
Both the County and District councils formed partnerships to develop integrated strategies to adapt to a changing climate and to prepare for population ageing. The BIOPICCC Team launched the BIOPICCC project with a presentation to elected members of Horsham District which helped to initiate a discussion amongst councillors about adaptation strategies and raised awareness of the issue.

BIOPICCC also assisted by helping to frame the agenda for discussions and by convening meetings with a range of partners working at the local authority area level (See appendix 2a). The purpose of the meetings was to bring together stakeholders from many different agencies and older people’s support organisations to pool knowledge relevant for strategic planning. In particular, these meetings explored how older people, and the services they depend upon, have been affected by recent extreme weather events such as floods, coldwaves and heatwaves in the past. This helped to pin-point parts of the system which may need to be adapted to climate change and to locate parts of the district where older populations may be especially vulnerable during periods of extreme weather. The meeting was supported by a range of information from routine sources including Environment Agency flood maps and socio-demographic data from the Office for National Statistics. Participatory mapping was used as a way of capturing local knowledge from the participants and
reports were produced by the BIOPICCC team from the meeting and circulated back to local partners for comment.

The BIOPICCC team followed up these meetings with further local consultations in areas identified as potentially vulnerable to extreme weather. The councils provided geographic information and experience from a range of services including Emergency Planning and Community Planning; while staff from Adults’ Services were able to provide in-depth knowledge of services that have been adversely affected by extreme weather in the past, and which could be affected in the future. NHS West Sussex including Public Health, Emergency Planning, Estates, Medicines Management, Property Management, Planning and Health Informatics provided information on primary and secondary care settings, and analysed practice profiles to provide information on access to care for older people.

Findings suggest that:

- older people are most concerned about weather which disrupts their day to day routines such as snow and ice;
- local setting is an important factor in understanding local vulnerability and resilience to extreme weather. A number of rural areas showed evidence of strong social networks and local cooperation increasing the resilience of the older population;
- the plurality of health and social care providers presents both challenges and opportunities for climate change adaptation and resilience building; and
- reduction in public expenditure is putting pressure on formal and informal service providers.

The findings from the research to date fed into the “Shaping a policy preparing for an ageing population workshop” organised by West Sussex County Council.

Greg Slay, Health and Social Care Practice Development Manager, said “We all have a responsibility to safeguard the needs and interests of future generations. This research work on climate change will mean we can plan better services for older people in the country, whether they receive social care services through the county council or from other organisations.”

Tony Skelding, Emergency Planning Officer, Horsham District Council, said “Although there are no statutory responsibilities for communities to plan for, respond to, or recover from emergencies, it is good practice for communities to prepare for all types of emergency and the BIOPICCC Project is assisting in this process. The project is helping Parish Councils to identifying vulnerable people/groups in the community and mapping them against local risks and hazards. Both sets of details are recorded, cross referenced and local capacity and resource strategies are designed around these findings. The final outcome will allow the community to become more self-reliant in an emergency and where possible assist the “blue light” services in the response and recovery process of any incident.”

Success factors

The BIOPICCC project has facilitated closer working relations between NHS West Sussex, West Sussex County Council and Horsham District Council. The project has enabled the Adult Services directorate within West Sussex County Council to focus their programme of work around adapting to future weather conditions. Consideration has been given to potentially vulnerable older adults and also the wider health and social care system and supporting infrastructures including roads and utilities. It is hoped that the experience gained in the case study communities can be used in working with other communities in Horsham District and across West Sussex.