

## Appendix I - Study 1 – Interview study

### What did we do?

We spoke to twenty-five residents across three retirement villages in the South East of the England. The communities spanned private ownership, means-tested provision (social enterprise, charity and local authority) and hybrid (renter and owner) approaches.

Residents were aged 65 - 89 years old and had lived in their community for 18 months to 20+ years. We interviewed 8 men and 17 women.

They were a diverse group on the basis of socio-demographics, health, and mobility. Some residents moved to villages through choice, whereas others found they had to move to a village because of their life circumstances.

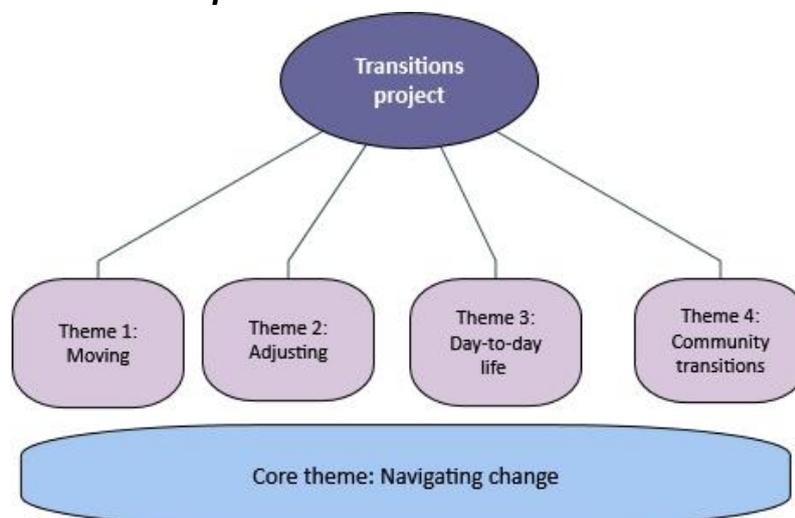
We interviewed residents between September and December of 2020. Due to COVID-19 social distancing protocols needed to be observed. Therefore, conversations took place either by phone or video-link. Interviews were designed to encourage residents to tell the story of their move into the retirement village, and ongoing life in the village.

Two of the researchers from the project analysed the interviews to come up with common themes in terms of what residents spoke about.

### What did we find?

We found a core theme relating to the ways in which people navigate change and four themes relating to the transitions that a person experiences when moving to a retirement community (see thematic map for overview).

#### **Thematic map:**



**Core theme - Navigating change** – This theme relates to the different ways that people navigate the move to, and major life events that impact them in a retirement community. It involves social support, one's own life history and

how transitions are framed in terms of a broader life history, personal coping strategies, negotiation, giving oneself time, autonomy and planning and attitude, mindset and personal philosophies.

**Theme 1 – Moving** – This theme relates to the experience of moving to a retirement community. It includes the lack of awareness that most residents had of these kinds of communities in the UK prior to making the move, the role of others in the move, the broader context of the move, the role of possessions and downsizing, first impressions of the community and the process of the move itself.

**Theme 2 – Adjusting** – This theme relates to the experience of adjusting to life in the retirement community. It includes social and community factors (becoming part of community, staff, making friends, activities, role of existing residents and taking a walk), the process of adjusting (existential and identity challenges, practical signposting, balancing losses and gains, creating a home, struggles and difficulties), individual characteristics and influences (having a partner, context of move, gender, personality and individual differences), familiarity and similarity and outcomes (personal growth, not being alone, feeling at home, relief and relaxation, gratitude, security, safety and care and being well-adjusted).

**Theme 3 – Community life** – This theme relates to navigating day-to-day life in the retirement community. It includes staff in the community (management, communication and support), social and community relationships (positives and negatives of social relationships and community life), hobbies and exercise, inside and outside the community (importance of technology and transport), the environment of the community (particularly the importance of gardens, community hubs and the natural environment), the impact of outsiders and generations (interacting with older and younger people).

**Theme 4 – Community transitions** – This theme relates to those changes and events that impacted people within the retirement community setting. The most commonly mentioned transition was the pandemic, which had a large impact on all residents we spoke to. Other transitions included staff and structural changes, anticipated transitions (such as possible declines in health and bereavements), caregiving, community roles, getting older, health decline, new residents, and needing to move house.