A team of researchers from the School of Health and Related Research at the University of Sheffield and the User Centred Healthcare Design Lab4Living at Sheffield Hallam University are collaborating on this multi-national, multi-disciplinary three year programme of work dedicated to developing, evaluating and implementing novel social innovations that will impact on improving the quality of life and well-being of older people. The researchers are all participants in the UK National Institute for Health Research Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care for South Yorkshire. The funding comes from the European Union FP7-Health-2012-Innovation call, which has projects focussing on housing provision, physical activity, functional health and well-being of older people and social support for their carers. The programme aims to contribute to the EU goal of extending healthy life years and is built on close partnerships with end users and stakeholders, including older people themselves.

The project which is based in South Yorkshire in England is about 'Improving Obesity Related Outcomes in Old Age'. Our ambition is to reduce the proportion of the European population who reach old age with problematic obesity, to minimise its negative health impacts and maximise functional health in old age. Using a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods and a programme of user-centred healthcare design activities involving participants in an existing cohort of research participants in South Yorkshire, we will develop an intervention that promotes playful inter-generational interactions around healthy and active ageing, exploring the potential of using digital, sensor and social networking technologies.

Through utilising social networks and new technologies to facilitate these interactions we aim to reduce the prevalence of obesity in youth and middle age so that a smaller proportion of people reach old age with problematic obesity, to minimise health impact and maximise functional health in old age.