

Student Design Awards 2010/11

An innovative programme of awards

RSA

Introduction

Past winners of the RSA student design awards include Jonathan Ive of Apple, Bill Moggridge, co-founder of IDEO, Betty Jackson, fashion designer and Participle partner Hugo Manassei.

Since their birth as an industrial bursaries scheme in the 1920s, these awards have closely mirrored the evolution of professional design from single-discipline craftsmanship and narrowly-defined design for industry to more diffuse forms of service innovation and socially-inclusive professional practice. Innovation and inclusiveness have swept design up in their multidisciplinary embrace, while the crafts and tools that traditionally constituted design have become less distinct.

As student design briefs classified under fashion & textiles, ceramics or industrial design gradually gave way to the public challenges of ageing, disability and mental health; prisons, public security and behaviour change, these crafts and tools also became less visible in the hundreds of entries to the RSA student awards.

In consultation with design tutors, designers, tutors, past RSA award winners, Royal Designers, sponsors and other stakeholders, many of whom took part in an on-line survey of the Awards, the RSA's briefs for 2010-11 reflect five changes:

- 1 The language of the briefs has been simplified
- 2 A 'scope' section makes it clear that a practical, tangible product design is as viable as a conceptual or service solution
- 3 The judging criteria have been clarified as: design craft, ingenuity, insight, communication and social benefit; all underpinned by the challenge to demonstrate the resourcefulness that makes design so valuable in these days of austerity
- 4 Guidelines are given with respect to students' documentation of process
- 5 The deadline for entries has been extended to March 2011 to give tutors more flexibility

The six briefs for 2010/11 each address an important social issue: sustainability (*Make something disappear* and *Double-duty devices*); young people (*My favourite subject*), older people (*Modern age*); altruism/charity (*Giving and getting*); and high quality public design (*Postage stamps*). A more complex brief about ageing and intergenerational relationships targeted at post-graduates but open to all students, *Action for age 2: Mind the gap*, was published in April with a February deadline.

Emily Campbell

Director of Design, RSA Projects
August 2010

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Schedule

Dates for submission of entry forms, fees and work

Thursday 17 February 2011

Deadline for Entry Form(s)/Fee(s) for all projects

(including *Action for Age 2: Mind the gap*)

Entry Forms/Fees should be sent under separate cover

– **not** with your entry – to:

RSA Student Design Awards Registrations
8 John Adam Street
London WC2N 6EZ
UK

Monday 7 March
– Friday 25 March 2011

Submission period for all project entries

(except *Action for Age 2: Mind the gap**)

Entries will be accepted at Brooks Transport Services Ltd on any weekday within the dates stated between 08:00-18:00, excluding weekends and bank holidays. Entries arriving after 18:00 on Friday 25 March 2011 may not be accepted

Please remember that all entries should be sent or delivered to:

Brooks Transport Services Ltd
Unit 2/15
Second Avenue
Bluebridge Industrial Estate
Halstead
Essex CO9 2SU
UK

All Entry Forms/Fees should be sent or delivered to:

RSA Student Design Awards Registrations
8 John Adam Street
London WC2N 6EZ
UK

**Action for Age 2: Mind the gap* – Submission date for entries for this project is: Friday 25 February 2011

Make something disappear

use design to eliminate waste, overproduction or excessive consumption

Brief

Choose a product that consumes significant resources to produce and distribute and use design to reduce or eliminate its negative impact. Either design the product differently, or design a way for people to do without it.

Scope

For the purpose of illustration, the following would all be viable responses:

- a product whose disassembly at the end of its functional life is pre-conceived and integral
- a product that eliminates the need for packaging
- a product that combines several functions and eliminates the need for other products
- a service or behaviour change that eliminates mass manufacturing or transport
- a communications campaign that drives waste out of existence
- a design that eliminates the need for light, energy or water
- a product designed to serve for longer than usual, eliminating the need for replacements
- a new way of sharing which eliminates the need for multiple private ownership
- a product that improves with age or repair
- the combination of a product and a service that leads to the use of less materials
- a product that is designed for retro-fitting or remanufacturing into a product with higher performance or more functionality
- ...and many others are possible.

Judging criteria

Design craft – does your solution look and feel the best it can?

Ingenuity – does it make a conceptual or lateral leap we haven't seen before?

Insight – what need, gap or opportunity have you discovered and how?

Communication – is it easy to understand and does it inspire people?

Social benefit – how does it help society as a whole?

Finally, the RSA argues that design represents a resourcefulness that is invaluable in today's climate of austerity. Is your solution resourceful?

Process and presentation

You have 4 A3 presentation boards and a written summary not exceeding 500 words in which to describe your solution. In addition to presenting the finished solution, describe your process:

- what were your observations? Show how your analysis of these observations gave you insight into the design opportunity
- your insights might be research-based or intuitive, or a combination of both: relate the concept clearly to these insights
- make sure the judges know what specific issue or issues you have had to resolve in the process of designing your solution
- tell the story so that we understand the context for your solution and the benefits it delivers

Background

The profession of design has largely grown out of the industrial capacity for mass producing goods during the late 19th and 20th Centuries. Good design has been an integral part of the best products and services of this period. The skilled application of aesthetic judgement and an understanding of the potential of materials and manufacturing processes have helped to improve the quality of the man-made world for millions in the last century and a half.

In the 21st century, however, the association of design with material production has become more problematic; with a perceived over-abundance of goods, rampant growth of consumerism in the developed world, and the depletion of our natural resources through construction and manufacturing. There is an increasing awareness that our consumerism comes at a huge cost to the environment and that 'less and better' is a more sustainable approach. Moreover, that the purchasing power of the citizens in the world's wealthiest countries is not matched by their greater happiness.

In a recent catalogue essay, the designer Sebastian Bergne pointed out that some of the most inspiring and lasting movements in design have been driven by the pursuit of restraint and simplicity: from the spiritual Japanese aesthetics of the 17th century, through the early American Shaker communities, Mies van der Rohe's modernist mantra "Less is more", Buckminster Fuller's geodesic domes and Dieter Rams's rule, "good design is as little design as possible".

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What if design today took as its objective not the creation of new things but the elimination of things or processes that exist already?

Remember that eliminating production has social and economic consequences. New technology makes earlier technology disappear, but it increases our appetite for manufactured devices. The iPhone has been vaunted as the ultimate in convergence – rendering other products unnecessary – but it certainly provokes a lot of manufacturing, disposal and acquisition, and has spawned the production of all manner of accessory and supplementary products. Electronic transport fare devices like London's Oyster card eliminate need for printed tickets, but have a controversial effect on our rights to privacy. Above all perhaps, manufacturing production sustains the economies of many developing nations. What is the right balance for a designer to strike between serving the advancement of society and saving resources? What products or services embody this balance?

Submission details

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- any models or mock-ups should be submitted as photographs or print-outs mounted on one of your A3 boards – do not submit 3D work at this stage
- one sketchbook related to the brief
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- students shortlisted for interview will be asked to prepare a five-minute presentation outlining their proposal and may bring along additional 2 or 3 dimensional material to support it

My favourite subject

get young people excited about design

Brief

Design resources or strategies for use in secondary school to help students and teachers understand all the powerful things that design can do.

Scope

For the purpose of illustration only, the following would all be viable responses:

- an innovative teaching module or set of lesson plans featuring design
- an event or event series to excite young people about design
- an enrichment activity that excites young people about design
- an innovative visit programme that helps young people understand design
- a set of classroom resources or teaching aids for design
- a series of inset (training) activities for D&T teachers
- ...and many others are possible.

Judging criteria

Design craft – does your solution look and feel the best it can?

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- tell the story so that we understand the context for your solution and the benefits it delivers

Background

Design has the potential to unlock both a practical competence and a resourceful optimism in young people that should enhance their ability to learn, take responsibility and actively participate in society's evolution.

In spite of this potential, Design & Technology tends to occupy a marginal place in the curriculum. Neither an academic subject like history or geography, nor a functional skill like maths or ICT, D&T in today's classrooms tends to concentrate on developing students' ability to design and make products following a series of relatively low-risk and prescriptive assignments. Although there are pockets of dynamic and exemplary teaching, the general picture is one of missed opportunity. With a concentration on materials and components, a strong accent on technology and an emphasis on basic, procedural tasks often unrelated to everyday experience, D&T can easily fail to foster the more general and transferable competences we recognise design as embodying: problem-solving, for example, or teamwork, observation and analysis, improvisation and adaptation, visual literacy and an understanding of the physical environment's effect on quality of life.

In 2008 a new secondary curriculum was launched aiming to ensure all pupils are "actively and imaginatively engaged in their learning". The reformed curriculum for Key Stage 3 (11-14 year olds) was designed to give teachers greater freedom to shape and direct learning in new ways, with the stated aim of fostering 'successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens'. What opportunities for the better teaching of design are signalled by this flexibility? Greater engagement with topical or local issues and greater capacity for personalised learning could both be reasons to interpret the D&T curriculum in a fresh way. Is it also an opportunity to raise the profile of D&T as a fundamental component of being educated, rather than a vocational route for those less able to succeed in 'core' subjects?

My favourite subject

Brief devised in collaboration with Bill Nicholl,
 Lecturer in Design & Technology Education,
 University of Cambridge Faculty of Education
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In a rapidly changing world of social, economic and environmental challenges, young people face an unpredictable future. A restrictive and pedestrian interpretation of design, inadequate and uninspiring resources and a back story bearing the stigma of roots in woodwork and metalwork will all prevent D&T becoming key element of a rounded education that builds personal and social resourcefulness.

Your research could begin by looking at the reformed national curriculum – intended as a framework for the development of responsible citizens, successful learners and confident individuals. It aims to encourage independent enquirers, creative thinkers and people who can reflect critically on what they learn; young people who are able to work in teams and participate effectively. Ultimately it aims to make people confident and responsible, able to live healthy and fulfilling lives, and able to make a positive contribution to society.

Designers place a great value on communication. How can the communication imperative of design be used in the context of school? Design can also help us to untangle complexity and disorder. How can design help to connect the various parts of the curriculum, or improve the social and community life of a school? How can visualisation help students to understand what they are being taught? Designers are comfortable with uncertainty, risk and ambiguity – even excited by it: how can their confidence be passed to young people in their teens as they learn design?

Could a social agenda be the spur to exciting young people about design? Look for examples of professional designers actively addressing contemporary issues for society. For example, the ageing population has been a focus for designers for some time; climate change and sustainability are other significant areas where design has a role; obesity and sedentary lives lead to major health challenges to which design could respond; well-designed environments and services can help to re-connect the individuals making up a society declared by many to be 'broken'.

Think about your own experience of the D&T at school – and that of your peers. Did it deliver what the prescribed curriculum sets out? Talk to your former D&T teacher and understand the challenges facing them. Critique your past, as well as present practice. Ask the question designers are very good at asking – 'Why?' Knowing all that you now know about design, how would you get young people in school excited about it?

You may choose to narrow your focus to a particular theme and/or to a single Key Stage or age group. Be clear about what these are and why you have selected them.

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Double-duty devices

extend the life of millions of medical products and components

Brief

Design a medical device which is suitable for recycling from the following list: inhaler; intranasal spray; eye dropper; single use syringe; autoinjector.

Scope

The following would all be viable responses:

- reusing the whole device or component parts of it for the original intended purpose
- reusing the whole device or component parts of it for a new medical purpose
- reusing the whole device or component parts of it for new non medical purposes of significant commercial or industrial potential
- a device with advanced features designed to make recycling easier
- ...and others are possible

Judging Criteria

Design craft – does your solution look and feel the best it can?

Ingenuity – does it make a conceptual or lateral leap we haven't seen before?

Insight – what need, gap or opportunity have you discovered and how?

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Background

'A medical device made for reuse must work as well as it did on its first use every time that it has been reprocessed.'

Device Bulletin 2006(04) Single-use Medical Devices: Implications and Consequences of Reuse (Department of Health October 2006)

"GlaxoSmithKline manufactures 100 million dry powder inhalers and 200 million inhalation aerosols a year. Most inhalers, intranasal sprays and similar devices are disposed of through normal household waste, ending up in landfill or for incineration."

Andrew Grant, Director, Worldwide Device Technology, GlaxoSmithKline Research & development

Hospitals and other healthcare facilities worldwide make decisions daily on devices used for the medical care of patients, based on cost and environmental concerns. Forty years ago, medical devices were commonly made from ceramics, stainless steel and other durable materials, which could withstand sterilisation, but the advent and growth of the use of plastic in device manufacture meant that reprocessing procedures had to change, becoming more complex and safety conscious. Whilst reprocessing is now a sophisticated process in developed economies, in developing economies it can compromise patient safety.

Savings from recycling run into millions of pounds. In 2006 the US market for reprocessed devices was valued at over \$130 million and was expected to reach \$200 million by 2011¹. However, counter arguments, often from device manufacturers, state that there is no way to be sure that a recycled device is free from contaminants, either from its initial use, or from chemicals used in the recycling process. As an illustration, imagine that an inhaler, or other medical device, is going to be re-used, and the current user is HIV positive with Hepatitis C, and also exhibits Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) prions² – what can be done in terms of design to make the device suitable for recovery, cleaning, sanitising and then re-issue? Devices that use hydrophilic and antimicrobial coatings create challenges for recycling too, as do those with special coatings that reduce the risk of infection or address other problems.

Problems associated with reuse of medical devices³

Potential for cross-infection

Infection is one of the greatest patient safety concerns associated with reuse. The risk of cross-infection may increase due to the inability of the reprocessing system to completely remove viable micro-organisms. This may be due to design e.g. narrow lumens and the type of material used e.g. heat sensitive materials. Viable micro-organisms may be incompletely removed and be transferred to the next patient

Inability to clean and decontaminate

A satisfactory cleaning process for devices must be able to access all parts of the device to allow complete decontamination and at the end of that process the cleaning agents must also be able to be completely removed. This process should be validated, to establish that it will consistently provide results complying with its predetermined specifications. Examples of features of a device that make cleaning difficult are: acute angles, coils, long or narrow lumens, specialist surface coatings etc.

Residues from chemical decontamination agents

Some materials used in device manufacture can absorb or adsorb certain chemicals, which can then gradually leach from the material over time. For example disinfectants like glutaraldehyde may be absorbed by plastics and leach out during use, resulting in chemical burns or a risk of sensitisation of the patient or user

Material alteration

Exposure to chemical agents, such as cleaning agents and chemical sterilants, may cause corrosion and/or changes in the materials of the device. Exposure to elevated temperatures or pressure during the sterilisation process may also alter the properties or cause degradation of the device material. For example, plastics may soften, crack or become brittle

Mechanical failure

Some devices may experience stress during each cycle of reuse, leading to fatigue-induced failure and fracturing

Reactions to endotoxins

Endotoxins are Gram-negative bacterial breakdown products and can be a significant problem if the device has a heavy bacterial load after use which cannot be adequately removed by cleaning. The sterilisation process will not inactivate the toxins, even when cleaning and sterilisation is effective in killing the bacteria

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¹ Millenium Research Group US Markets for Reprocessed Devices 2007
² An abnormal, transmissible agent that is able to induce abnormal folding of normal cellular prion proteins in the brain, leading to brain damage and the characteristic signs and symptoms of prion diseases, such as CJD
³ Source: Device Bulletin 2006(04) Single-use Medical Devices: Implications and Consequences of Reuse (Department of Health October 2006)

Conflict resolution

creating possibilities of agreement

Brief

Identify a conflict situation between people in which productive dialogue is difficult, and design a means to make it easier, more spontaneous, fluent, constructive and/or productive in order to create possibilities of agreement.

Scope

A wide range of responses from design students in all disciplines are welcome, including product design, interaction design, graphic design and interiors. For the sake of illustration, these might include:

- an environment, interior or furniture that creates the right conditions for a different kind of conversation or conflict resolution
- a means of communication to people who don't speak your language
- a provocative film or video
- a visual aid or set of props
- a toy or game
- a script, a set of questions/prompts or an innovative meeting agenda
- an event or activity that brings opposing people together

Judging criteria

Design craft – does the solution look and feel the best it can?

Ingenuity – does it make a conceptual or lateral leap we haven't seen before?

Insight – what need, gap or opportunity has it discovered, and how?

Communication – is it easy to understand and does it inspire people?

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Background

Conflict, both large and small exists around the world between groups of people separated by geography, ideas, organisations, values, and interests. For many of these people, being in a continuous state of opposition is an inevitable way of life; something to be accepted and endured. Over time, positions become deeply entrenched. Well-rehearsed stories that perpetuate the status quo are handed down from one generation to the next. An objective, accurate or 'true' picture of the positions in any conflict situation becomes elusive; people's views are often based on misinformation and misconception rather than on direct experience.

For many more people, conflict is simply the outcome of the absence of an opportunity to share, and possibly change perspectives. Resolving conflicts of any scale or complexity requires a fundamental and humble starting action: having a conversation. Very often these can be difficult conversations to initiate.

Even statesmen schooled in diplomatic dialogue at the highest level find themselves in conflict zones where talks break down. Formal exchanges like restorative justice processes, prison visits, trials and tribunals often resist what these situations most urgently seek: clarity and candour. A clear understanding of the range of perspectives at play makes it necessary to challenge the narratives that cement opposing positions. To achieve this understanding, conversations must encourage the maintenance of critical doubt, a commitment to compromise, and the promotion of on-going rather than definitive dialogue. But often, the very people in these situations lack the means and skills of communication.

Design naturally starts conversations all the time: "What is it about this place?", "Let me show you

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something”, or “Can you believe what they’ve done to our neighbourhood?” Design prompts comment and dialogue by getting us to look at the world differently. How then could design help us to broach the unmentionable, expose what remains hidden, and give people the resources to guide them through a difficult conversation toward conflict resolution? What can design do to help break the cycle of behaviours and beliefs that serve to maintain a state of perpetual opposition between groups of people? Can design change the dynamics of the conversation so that perspectives shift? How could the environment help? What tools might be developed? What behaviours could be encouraged? How might what the interlocutors see and sense make the work of talking easier and more productive?

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Modern age

how can the design of living spaces make growing old seem more attractive and inviting?

Brief

Design a domestic product or living environment for older people that surpasses conventional expectations. Either design something to help a person growing older in the home they made and know (A), or design something for a purpose-built home for the elderly that evokes the qualities of a lived-in home (B).

Scope

For the purpose of illustration only, the following would all be viable responses:

- a piece of furniture or furniture system
- a domestic tool, product or appliance
- an architectural intervention
- a decorative item or scheme
- an interior design or living environment
- an adapted bathroom, kitchen or workshop
- a retrofit concept
- a new domestic service
- ...and many others are possible.

Judging criteria

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Background

For the modern movement, design promised to shape a better, more integrated and equal world, where design's benefits were meant for everyone, not just a few. Yet the values that Modernism embodies are still not evident in how society accommodates people as they enter old age. This design 'bypass' is nowhere more evident than in the area of housing. How can the values of good design which are so available to a person creating their first home be made available to someone at the other end of the life span?

Dame Joan Bakewell, Britain's official 'spokesperson for the elderly', says that what most older people want is to be younger. If we take her view as a point of departure, the challenge of designing for this age group can be quite differently framed. How can design make growing old seem a more attractive and inviting prospect? If we thought of ageing as a phase of our lives filled with opportunities and challenges, what would our living spaces be like?

A

In the short term many older people continue to live in homes that are challenging on a practical level and often bigger than they need. For most of us, the places in which we live help to define who we are. Home is also where we are in control of the routines and decisions of everyday life. Often the wider environment, with the security of longstanding neighbours and familiar surroundings, reinforces older people's desire to remain in their long-term homes. It is no wonder, then, that generally, older people want to stay in their own homes and that care services are tailored to the assumption that most people want to do so.

Yet often these long-term homes are no longer suited to a person's physical, and/or mental capacity or social needs. Hard-to-negotiate staircases, bathrooms and kitchens unsuited to impaired mobility and balance, the clutter acquired during a rich and busy life, diminished social interaction, family-sized houses and gardens that need regular maintenance – these are just some of the things that become less easy to manage as one grows older in a traditional home.

How can we bring greater effectiveness at caring into homes that may not be 'fit for purpose', but which evoke a personal sense of attachment and a continuity between past, present and future?

B

Environments designed for older people – including sheltered housing and residential care homes – are too often characterised by narrow environmental signifiers that reinforce the association of age with insignificance and infirmity. A crude sense of function thwarts elegance, standardisation erases identity, and regulation dismisses the notion of an independent mind. Not only by these signifiers, but also by their status as dedicated care homes or 'exclusive' retirement communities, these environments separate older people from everyone else in the community.

How can we bring those qualities of being at home – in a place with manifold memories and meanings – to living environments that are inevitably designed according to medical imperatives: environments designed to keep people breathing and blinking, rather than to bring them joy, or comfort?

With a more ambitious and resolute approach to housing design and provision for older people; with a commitment to quality, elegance and meaning irrespective of age, what products or environments could we imagine?

A & B

Whether your solution addresses the improvement of an existing and lived-in home, or purpose-built housing for the elderly, remember that attention to detail is often the distinguishing and dignifying benefit of design. Also think carefully about the continuity between the (small, particular) scale of the individual and the (large, general) scale of the collective; and the fit (or lack of fit) between spatial and social experiences.

Submission details

- up to 4 x A3 boards (max. 4) showing design development and final designs (see Process and Presentation above). Mark clearly on the front of each board whether your submission is for A Existing Home or B Purpose-built housing
- a short, typewritten text not exceeding 500 words and set in 14pt type describing your solution, the process by which you reached it, and the benefits you believe it will create
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Giving and getting

use design to invoke need and inspire generosity

The brief

Choose an existing charity and design a means by which it can increase its fundraising and other resources. Make it easier for people to give, or make it easier for charities to ask – or both.

Scope

For the purpose of illustration, the following would all be viable responses:

- a compelling new donation or collection box
 - a powerful graphic display of statistical information
 - a well-communicated and ingenious fiscal mechanism (e.g. Gift Aid)
 - a persuasive new way of using words and/or images to invoke need
 - a service or campaigning system that deploys time, talent and connections in new ways
- ...and many others are possible; clever ways of assisting giving and getting which maintain essential principles of honesty, transparency and fairness.

Judging criteria

Design craft – does your solution look and feel the best it can?

Ingenuity – does it make a conceptual or lateral leap we haven't seen before?

Insight – what need, gap or opportunity have you discovered and how?

Communication – is it easy to understand and does it inspire people?

Social benefit – how does it help society as a whole? Finally, the RSA argues that design represents a resourcefulness that is invaluable in today's climate of austerity. Is your solution resourceful?

Process and presentation

You have 4 A3 presentation boards and a written summary not exceeding 500 words in which to describe your solution. In addition to presenting the finished solution, describe your process:

- what were your observations? Show how your analysis of these observations gave you insight into the design opportunity
- your insights might be research-based or intuitive, or a combination of both: relate the concept clearly to these insights
- make sure the judges know what specific issue or issues you have had to resolve in the process of designing your solution
- tell the story so that we understand the context for your solution and the benefits it delivers

Background

Charities are defined as organisations or institutions set up to provide benefit to those in need. The essential attribute in legal terms is that a charitable activity must seek the public 'weal', or prosperity, and is not concerned with the conferment of private advantage. Remember that the charity sector is wide-ranging and includes community and voluntary organisations, schools, hospitals, NGOs, museums, libraries and cultural institutions and groups campaigning for a variety of human and animal rights.

The UK has a long-established history of relatively generous giving, most recently demonstrated in the response to the DEC Pakistan Appeal. Strong giving has continued in spite of the recession, and whilst some areas have lost support (the arts, for example), others have received increased support. Research has shown that individual giving patterns have shifted – some people are giving more to fewer charities, for example. Generally, individuals are becoming much more thoughtful about why they give and to whom. Corporations, likewise, are being more discerning about how many and what types of charities and CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) activities they are involved with, but are tending to do more with those that they have chosen.

In spite of this well-established system of giving, a survey by the Charity Commission in 2008 showed that four out of ten charities had already been affected by the credit crunch, with a quarter reporting a fall in donations and income predicted to continue its descent. Oxfam and others have said more recently that individual donations are most likely to suffer as widespread redundancies make people eliminate non-essential standing orders from their bank statements. Many businesses and corporations meanwhile continue to trim donations to charitable and community work off their balance sheets to concentrate on core profit-making activities.

At the same time, the need for services provided by charities and the third sector is growing, with increased hardship as a result of the recession, widespread and dramatic cuts to public funding predicted in the coming years, and a society that becomes more diverse and complex all the time.

The last Government placed great emphasis on the value of the third sector, while the Conservatives' Big Society names "charities, voluntary groups and a new generation of community organisers" as the agents to tackle some of the most stubborn social problems.

Where will the time and money come from? In these straightened circumstances, how will people be persuaded to give more of the time and money they have to good causes?

Design and behaviour change

"How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it."

It is often said that altruistic principles like these expressed by Adam Smith – ironically, perhaps, the acknowledged father of economics – have gone out of fashion in today's world of free-market capitalism. It's certainly true that anti-social, selfish, unsympathetic behaviour is rarely out of the news, whether exhibited in nuisance neighbours, airplane drunks, or everybody's current bête noire, greedy bankers.

But recent neurological research shows that people are not as selfish as the Enlightenment theory of economic man, driven by rational self-interest, led us to believe. Often our decisions are surprisingly altruistic. Furthermore, new knowledge from behavioural science clearly indicates the power that social norms – our understanding of how others behave – have on our behaviour: we are not as autonomous and calculating in our decision-making as we thought, either. Finally books like the policy-sensation *Nudge*, and other theories of "persuasive technology", demonstrate that the design of the products, services and environments that people interact with can have a marked effect on the way that people behave.

You might consider:

Why do people give? There is extensive evidence that people give (money and time) to organisations and activities that they are passionate about. How can charities understand this better, and how can they reach those who are passionate about their area?

What stops people giving? Are there subtle barriers as well as the obvious pressures of personal budget, inconvenience and preoccupation with one's immediate world?

How could the experience of giving be enhanced? What forms of acknowledgement, feedback or emotional reward could be designed in to the mechanisms of giving and getting? What else enhances the experience of giving?

Charity 'muggers', who stop passers-by in the street to ask them to sign up to direct-debit donations, have recently been discredited as a fundraising device by allegations of a lack of transparency about their employment status and where the pledged money goes. What devices could make them more creditable? Beyond that, what is the successor mechanism to this prominent feature of contemporary city life?

How could people be made more aware of their relative wealth, or made to see that they have surplus time and resources?

How do social needs easily dismissed as remote and inessential become vivid?

How can the generosity of some be invoked to inspire and influence others?

Fundraising needs to be fundamentally linked to a charity's strategy or business plan: there needs to be a clearly-articulated need for support, and several ways in which that support can be given. How can design enhance this strategic whole?

Submission details

- up to 4 x A3 boards (max. 4) showing design development and final designs (see Process and Presentation above)
- a short, typewritten text not exceeding 500 words and set in 14pt type describing your solution, the process by which you reached it, and the benefits you believe it will create
- any models or mock-ups should be submitted as photographs or print-outs mounted on one of your A3 boards – do not submit 3D work at this stage
- one sketchbook related to the brief
- all work (except sketchbooks) should be submitted on A3 lightweight card and everything should carry an RSA label on the back; do not submit work in plastic sleeves or on foam board, metal, wood or perspex, or in boxes; these requirements are in the interests of students to ensure the safety of their work whilst in storage and transit, and to ensure that it can be displayed for judging
- students shortlisted for interview will be asked to prepare a five-minute presentation outlining their proposal and may bring along additional 2 or 3 dimensional material to support it

Postage stamps

inspire the nation with Fashion Classics and UK 'Firsts'

Brief 1 Celebrate the idea of 'firsts' and create stamps that inspire the nation whilst instilling national pride.

Brief 2 Celebrate the influence of British Fashion in a visually exciting way that would be a joy to use on post.

Judging criteria

Design craft – does your solution look and feel the best it can?

Ingenuity – does it make a conceptual or lateral leap we haven't seen before?

Insight – what need, gap or opportunity have you discovered and how?

Communication – is it easy to understand and does it inspire people?

Social benefit – how does it help society as a whole? Finally, the RSA argues that design represents a resourcefulness that is invaluable in today's climate of austerity. Is your solution resourceful?

Process and presentation

You have 4 A3 presentation boards and a written summary not exceeding 500 words in which to describe your solution. In addition to presenting the finished solution, describe your process:

- What were your observations? Show how your analysis of these observations gave you insight into the design opportunity
- Your insights might be research-based or intuitive, or a combination of both: relate the concept clearly to these insights
- Make sure the judges know what specific issue or issues you have had to resolve in the process of designing your solution
- Tell the story so that we understand the context for your solution and the benefits it delivers

Background: Special Stamp Programme

Royal Mail's Special Stamp programme is developed with regard to a number of criteria that include the following:

- to commemorate important anniversaries
- to commemorate events of national importance, as well as significant contemporary UK successes on the international stage
- to reflect the contribution of the UK to world affairs in the broadest range of activities, from the arts and humanities to science and technology

- to explore 'the British way of life', celebrating the diversity of cultures and interests within the UK
- to contribute to the cultural life of the UK through the patronage of art and design, and thereby act as a showcase for the best of contemporary British creative talent

The programme is also designed to include a variety of subjects, imagery and techniques in order to appeal to the interests and tastes of different groups over the year's programme.

Students should choose one from the following two briefs (or submit concepts for both if desired).

Brief 1: UK 'Firsts'

The UK has achieved many world firsts across the fields of science, engineering, entertainment, sports, exploration and medicine. Stamps often mark such achievements and firsts – globally, nationally and even personally. And stamps can also be chosen to enhance a card sent to mark a significant birthday or anniversary.

The purpose of this brief is to celebrate the idea of 'firsts' and to create stamps that inspire the nation whilst instilling national pride. This is a subject rich in substance and content, and an opportunity to educate and surprise.

These stamps will provide an ideal spin-off for Smilers, which are used by the public to mark celebrations with personal photos as labels attached alongside postage stamps. The Royal Mail link to Smilers products is: <http://www.royalmail.com/portal/stamps/content!/?catId=32300675&mediaId=32600693>

The 'Firsts' set will consist of six stamps, featuring the Queen's head and all with the 1st class value. They must be the definitive size, which is 20.3x24.1 mm, as that is the size used in our Smilers range.

Brief 2: Fashion Classics

The fashion industry in the UK is renowned worldwide for its creativity and influence, both in the past, and in present day.

The aim of the brief is to celebrate that influence in a visually exciting way that would be a joy to use on post. Examples of potential starting points are as

- follows, but please explore your own approaches based on your research.
- Key milestones in fashion over the past half century:
- Mary Quant's mini skirts, Ossie Clark's flowing gowns, etc.
 - 'cutting-edge fashion UK' – i.e. who is on the cusp of the leading edge right now and what are they doing
 - fashion inspired by the music industry or associated with music. e.g. Union Jack dress, Beatles Mop-top, Quadrophenia, Teddy Boys, Punk rock, etc.
 - the legacy of UK fashion: the fashion fads that made history and their equivalents today

The set will feature six stamps, featuring the Queen's head and the values 1st, 58p, 60p, 67p, 88p, 97p (do not include the 'p' in the designs). Any of the stamp template sizes supplied electronically may be used but students are invited to make new recommendations within these general size constraints. However, the design must work within a maximum depth of 37mm.

General information pertaining to both briefs:

The target audience for each brief is broad, as the topics will strike a chord with young and old; stamp collectors and general public.

We encourage contributions from designers, illustrators, photographers, typographers, painters, etc. as well as collaborative projects.

The images created should work at stamp size, in isolation and as part of a set. The approach should engage as broad a range of the public as possible.

In undertaking your background research, please only contact related organisations for the purposes of obtaining information that would be available to the general public; please do not discuss the project with them.

Market

- a stamp is a receipt for a service and is available to anyone within the UK wishing to use the postal service
- this service covers the globe and therefore the stamp is an ambassador for the UK when posted to overseas destinations
- a new and younger generation of stamp collector

Aims

- to produce an innovative response that goes beyond conventional treatments and styles – look at recent examples of innovation in stamp design
- to demonstrate originality of thought and approach based on sound research

Guidelines

- When considering the design of a stamp, it is important to remember the following points:
- think on a small scale from the outset
 - the Queen's head must appear top right or left facing towards the design and must be in a correct relationship with the overall stamp size. Please see Postage Stamp Resources page. If using overlays, ensure they are easily lifted to reveal the original artwork
 - once research is complete and decisions have been made on your overall approach, preliminary visuals should be reviewed at stamp size
 - since a stamp on an envelope is evidence of the pre-payment for postage, and because the recipient is primarily interested in the content of the envelope, each stamp must convey an immediate message
 - design should combine clarity with an attention to detail
 - there should be a clear visual distinction between one stamp design and another to ensure that there is no confusion between the different values when the stamps are being sold at the post office counter

Submission details

- up to 4 x A3 boards (max. 4) showing design development and final designs (see Process and Presentation above). These should include one board showing the six designs, ideally rendered four times larger than actual size, and one board showing reductions of the stamps at actual size. The price may appear anywhere provided it is legible; it should not appear over an intricately textured area. Please specify on the front of each presentation board whether your submission is for Fashion Classics or UK Firsts
- a short, typewritten text not exceeding 500 words and set in 14pt type describing your solution, the process by which you reached it, and the benefits you believe it will create
- any models or mock-ups should be submitted as photographs or print-outs mounted on one of your A3 boards – do not submit 3D work at this stage
- one sketchbook related to the brief
- all work (except sketchbooks) should be submitted on A3 lightweight card and everything should carry an RSA label on the back; do not submit work in plastic sleeves or on foam board, metal, wood or perspex, or in boxes; these requirements are in the interests of students to ensure the safety of their work whilst in storage and transit, and to ensure that it can be displayed for judging
- students shortlisted for interview will be asked to prepare a five-minute presentation outlining their proposal and may bring along additional 2 or 3 dimensional material to support it

social networks as a route to positive intergenerational relationships

This brief forms part of the 2010/11 scheme, and was issued early to allow potential participants an extended period in which to develop their projects (Important: (i) make sure you read the whole document (ii) see Project timetable and submission details at the end for key dates and other information).

This project, supported by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, forms part of an exciting bi-lateral project with Experimenta, a Lisbon-based design organisation running a similar brief with Portuguese design students. Experimenta is also the producer of a major design festival next due to happen in 2011, at which it is intended to bring together the project finalists from both the UK and Portugal for a bi-lateral workshop.

Action for age addresses some of the complex challenges, and the exciting opportunities, presented by an ageing population. Many older people are vulnerable to loneliness and isolation that can have a detrimental effect on their health and mental wellbeing. Where are the opportunities to create and foster positive intergenerational relationships that have value for older people and for other groups too? How could meaningful and mutually beneficial intergenerational links help forge greater social cohesion in local communities?

Social cohesion between the generations is important. It will become increasingly so as the proportion of the general population that is elderly increases and the dependency ratio (that is the ratio of people in work to people in retirement), falls. At the same time, the classic model of the extended family living together has now almost vanished; in fact, increased mobility makes it less likely that generations of the same family will even live in the same geographical area. The weakening of these ties results in older and more vulnerable people in particular falling outside the traditional support networks of their families.

This project focuses on how social networks might enhance our capacity to support the development of intergenerational relationships and how design can contribute to catalysing weak or hitherto absent connections to create change.

Introduction

Responding to this brief, you will need to research and understand three things:

- the experiences of older people
- what social capital means and how it is created
- social networks and how they are formed and fostered

The experiences of older people

Falling birthrates, coupled with increased life expectancy due to wide-ranging improvements in health, have resulted in an ageing population, and many more people can now expect to live beyond 85 years of age than ever before. Whilst this is a cause for celebration, more people live alone and social isolation amongst older people is emerging as a major issue facing society. Older people are also among the main users of health and other care services, so pressure on these resources is expected to increase over time.

You need to understand the circumstances that affect the lives of older people and the pathways to loneliness and isolation. Whilst these are often linked to socio-economic circumstances, it is also the case that older people often have weaker social networks, preventing them accessing many of the things most of us take for granted: friends and regular company, stimulating activity and easy access to services such as shops, post offices and GPs.

When thinking about the issues of loneliness and social isolation in relation to older people, you need to understand what has led people to their situation. For some it will be a continuation of their life experience; for many others, it will be a new experience brought about by changes such as bereavement or the departure of old friends or family to live elsewhere. As you develop your project, keep in mind these different 'pathways' (loneliness or isolation). Also, try to understand the nuanced differences between living alone, loneliness and social isolation. Loneliness refers more to how people think about the level of social contact they have (or do not have); social isolation is a measure of how disengaged people are in their wider community whilst living alone may not necessarily lead to either of those situations.¹

¹ Loneliness, social isolation and living alone in later life (ESRC 2002)

Take care when defining what you mean by older people. It is not a generic term for anyone older than you are yourself! You need to take account of different ages and stages along the ageing process. It is important then to have a clear idea of which group you are addressing in your response to the project and the issues that affect their lives. Your reading around the subject will often be specific about age: an older person is usually defined as one 65 years or over; the older-old will often be specified as 85 years and over.

What social capital means and how it is created

Much is written about the loss of the strong social relationships that categorised communities of the past, where mutual support and networks of dependence created what we would now recognise as place-based communities rich in social capital: that is, the value that social cohesion and personal investment in community life can bring. Whether or not this harks back to a mythical golden age of community, or one that really existed (if only in particular urban working class areas and rural communities), it is nonetheless important today to devise ways of uncovering potential or hidden connections that may form the basis of strong and supportive network-based communities for our times.

You will be very familiar with different forms of online 'social networking'. Sites such as Facebook and MySpace that suddenly made it possible for those using them to maintain friendships and other relationships online, at the same time created a route for others, unknown to them and not part of their existing network, to join in or make connections, based on a shared interest or activity.

With this in mind, look at how society organises itself – the online world has mimicked this structure where, at a most basic interpretation, communities comprise groups of people and organisations connected to others by links that vary in their strength and intensity whilst having the capacity to be of significant value. These constituent parts of a community can take all forms: churches, libraries, post offices and community centres are examples of organisations, whilst individuals are drawn from friendship groups, neighbours and public servants (e.g. postmen or local councillors) among other spheres. Meaningful connections such as these can be understood as constituting 'social capital', and those connections that exist in physical space (as opposed to solely online) are at the heart of what makes productive, strong communities and provides a powerful starting point from which to approach this brief.

The need to build and better harness social capital in communities is an idea gaining traction in the world of policymakers and has the potential to contribute positively to the challenge at the heart of this brief: how connections can be woven together in order to build a social network that supports the growth of strong and sustainable intergenerational relationships.

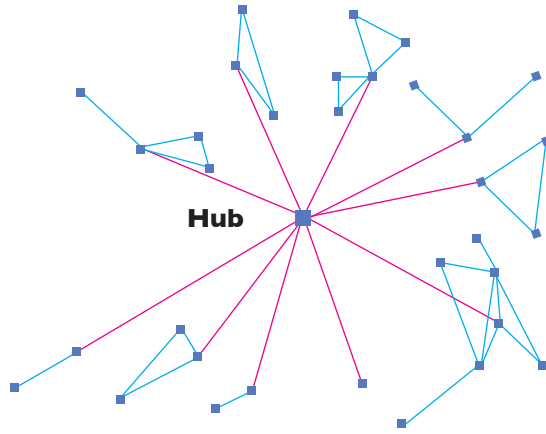
How social networks are formed and fostered

Social network analysis, as used and understood by social scientists, is based on a set of principles that view social relationships in terms of a series of 'nodes' and 'ties'. Nodes are individuals or organisations within the networks; the ties are the relationships between them. This simplistic explanation is best understood by viewing a social network as a map of all the relevant people, organisations and institutions with value (or potential value) in your project. Importantly, the map should also display the connections (and the strength of these connections) between the people, organisations and institutions in the network. Social networks can operate on many levels, from groups as small as families up to the level of cities and beyond; they can play a central role in helping you identify the potential for intergenerational links in your chosen place. **Remember, social networks are a means to problem solving – not the solution in themselves.**

Key steps in forming a social network:

- **identifying** a context (neighbourhood, institution, shared interest etc). For this brief, building intergenerational relationships is central, as is thinking about the needs and wants of the different groups likely to be involved. How will this information be gathered (e.g. informal interviews, meetings or written surveys/questionnaires)?
- **understanding** the network and connections that already exist. Who are the individuals, groups and organisations that comprise it? This is important. Without a clear picture of the different players in the community – who knows who, who plays leading roles, who has particular expertise, what the different groups are – it will be difficult to identify what links and connections are missing or weak. These can be anything from young mums' coffee mornings, elderly persons' day centres, youth groups, refugee schemes etc. The purpose is to effectively identify the connections that ought to be created or repaired in order to achieve the goal
- **visualising** this information into a **network map** helps to create a snapshot of the community as it currently exists. This gives a theoretical representation of the place and provides a useful tool for understanding what the groups are in the network, as well as the ties – both weak and strong – that connect them. The map that results may be very complex, as there are many kinds of ties between the different parts of a given network and many kinds of participants. The challenge is to visualise the complexity of the network and all its players in a way that acknowledges the critical role they can each play at different times in determining the ways problems are solved, groups and organisations operate, or people can achieve their goals
- **creating** network connections. From the information collated and visualised in the network map, it is possible to see where the opportunities are to create, strengthen and patch connections and different paths along which information can flow. This is the beginning of building a network that links different groups and generations. The 'weaver', who is at the heart of the network, actively creates interactions between its different parts that might

not otherwise connect. Imagine a wheel with a number of spokes (see the diagram below). The 'weaver' is at the centre of the wheel – the hub – and the spokes lead to the different fragments in the network. These fragments are unconnected (except within their own small groupings, of course) and the weaver's purpose is to identify and stimulate connections that might never happen spontaneously.



Brief

Identify a context – your local neighbourhood, institution, a shared interest for instance – and design something that encourages intergenerational connections. It should address both the needs of older people vulnerable to loneliness and social isolation and others in the community who would benefit from these connections. Think also of the larger benefits across the community. Consider how you might engage people in the design of the response; what would be meaningful to them and make the outcome appropriate for them?

The format of the designed solution is flexible: it could be a service or an activity; an environment or an event; a club or association; a shop or facility; a role or enterprise. It could be a product, but only as part of a service or system. It could be something entirely different but ensure it responds to the brief above.

Once you have a clear idea of who and what comprises your chosen context (i.e. people and institutions), you can start to identify where the links – those that are obvious, those less so – could be made. Remember that design itself is a process that can create unexpected connections and changes in attitude, and designers have the ability to visualise and give life to radical ideas and solutions.

Creating a network map would be extremely helpful to both you in moving your project forward, and the judges in assessing it. It will help you to communicate the story of your project in a clear and engaging way.

What might the links/connections look like?

There will be obvious and less obvious potential connections, on which you will base your proposal. Part of your purpose will be to explore and identify what it is that could potentially bring disparate groups

together. For example, are there opportunities around childcare or other caring roles; knowledge and learning; skills-sharing; entertainment, recreation or leisure? Explore other areas. Try not to frame the ideas as charitable 'help' that might be given by one group to another; aim for shared experience and mutual benefit in order to build a sustainable idea with the potential to develop and grow.

Perhaps look at other groups in your chosen place at risk of exclusion and isolation (as well as older people themselves). Look around. Read the newspapers. Who are those at risk of being left behind or forgotten about; who are those who are ignored or are unjustly vilified? Look too at the under-utilised resources in your chosen place. The local university for instance or a place of worship – is there potential for bringing them into the mix and what might this be?

You might want to think about the evidence that as well as older people being particularly vulnerable to loneliness and depression, older men are also a high-risk suicide group². Why is this so and what is the evidence about how this might be prevented? How might this harder-to-reach group become engaged in the community and be drawn into activities that encourage their greater social inclusion through intergenerational activity?

This is an opportunity to design a solution that whilst focusing on older people also involves the wider, richer mix in many communities often unseen and therefore under-utilised.

This project focuses on the lives and needs of a group in society that is likely to be outside your immediate and everyday experience so developing a response that is meaningful, will require you to uncover facts and insights based on real experience.

Things to consider

Your 'user' groups

Nothing will give you greater insight into the issues with which this project is concerned than speaking to older people and other groups themselves. This tangible human dimension needs to be added to your research and it will help you generate your own insights and understanding of those for whom you are designing. Your background research should uncover groups within your community of which you are unaware and some of these are likely to include older people (religious or church groups, day centres, for example). These will provide you with your starting point for contact. In addition, there are a number of organisations such as Age UK (the new organization combining Age Concern and Help the Aged), the WRVS, Mental Health Foundation and others (local areas often have their own offices) who may be able to advise you and facilitate contact with older people and others in the field.

Listen and understand

² The Mental Health Foundation ran a project called Grumpy Old Men? that aimed to promote and support innovative services working with older men at risk of isolation and depression to help improve their mental health and well being

When you talk to your research subjects, find out as much as you can about what concerns them, what is important to them and what would improve their quality of life. Listen carefully and resist suggesting solutions immediately; assess their priorities and expectations first. You will benefit from involving them in co-designing your proposal as much as possible.

This may be by encouraging them to keep written diaries or to take simple photographic recordings of what enhances or impedes the quality of their daily lives, by accompanying them and recording their daily activities by video, photography, storyboards, or by listening to their perspective over a cup of tea.

Design and record your own interactions with those you consult. This might be face-to-face interviews, questionnaires, workshop activities or any other creative ways you think appropriate. You need to:

- understand the different needs of different people
- build-up a sense of your respondents' existing networks by establishing who and what (organisations and interests) they already connect to, and how important these connections are to them
- keep a good record of your conversations and meetings

This form of evidence is central to the project as it will allow you to develop a dialogue with people, help identify issues, and record your process for your submission.

Other experts in the concept development

Who else do you need to consult or work with in partnership? It will be essential to approach key stakeholders in your chosen context as well as older, and other, people in the network you map out. Who will help you identify the individuals and groups and if they want to work with you, and who will have specialist knowledge about needs and issues? Might these be members of the local council? They could help identify what services currently exist, where the gaps are and who falls through them. Also, think about professionals in the field of social care and those who work directly with older people.

Within your university there are likely to be other courses that could feed into your research in a very helpful way. At the outset, why not seek out a psychology student, a social science student, a social care or social policy student and work with them to develop your project? This reflects how you might be expected to work in the real world, so why not start now? Factor in time to build trust and a team where possible.

Pushing the parameters

Although this might at first appear remote and uninspiring territory for a designer, use the constraints to stimulate your creativity. Do not limit yourself to how things happen currently but let your insights, research and conversations lead you into new ways of thinking about the issues and how they might be addressed

Research/background reading

Some very useful and relevant research has been published which will provide an essential and valuable springboard for your ideas. Look at the Resources page on the project webpage for ideas. Also, familiarise yourself with services and networks that already exist so you do not duplicate these, although you may suggest building on existing models if you are adding a new and innovative angle to them.

These things to consider are crucial to your project but they take time. By starting your research and groundwork early – the reason this brief has been launched early – you can build the relationships and trust with the organisations, individuals and groups that you will need to develop your project.

Project timetable and submission details

This project offers participants the opportunity to benefit from valuable input on their project from key experts and stakeholders. It will expose them and their project concept to advice, feedback and input from people who are active in the field.

How it works

1 **Brief issued: Spring 2010**

2 **Briefing for potential participants: May/June 2010.**

This briefing will include guidance on how to approach the project and background on social network analysis from service design and social network experts. Students intending to undertake this brief should try to attend this briefing. Please email design@rsa.org.uk to express interest and get more details

3 **Project hand in: Friday 25 February 2011.**

Participants have an extension on the usual hand-in date for this scheme in acknowledgement of the groundwork necessary for this project.

At this stage you will need to submit:

- an A4 typewritten executive summary which includes:
 - a) a clear statement of the issue and your objectives
 - b) details of your proposal concept and who it involved (different groups/individuals/organisations etc in the community)
 - c) how you conducted the research, who you consulted, and how it helped you understand the issues
- A3 network map – this is the theoretical representation of your chosen context/place when you first started – this should have provided you with a useful tool for identifying the groups in the network, and the ties that connect them and for highlighting opportunities for new connections
- A3 format concept board(s) visually mapping out your proposal (service, system or whatever it is you envisaged), and how it improves on what is currently available (or has created something new)
- A3 format user-centred storyboard/scenario board(s) showing interaction of the older person(s) and others with the key 'touch points' in your proposal, what makes it accessible, intergenerational, user-centred and appropriate – annotated with other details, such as technology, and local services
- a sketch development book

4 Mentoring and workshop

Once the preliminary judging is complete, students shortlisted as finalists, and whose projects are deemed to have potential for development, will be invited to take part in an expert-led workshop. This will provide the unique opportunity to work with key stakeholders in the project area in order to develop it into robust, meaningful and user-centred outcomes. A few weeks prior to this, finalists will be given a mentoring session with a leading service design consultancy.

All reasonable costs will be covered.

Likely dates for mentoring and workshop:

- **Mentoring: week commencing 14 March 2011**
(date subject to change)
- **Workshop: week commencing 4 April 2011**
(date subject to change)

5 Final judging

The final stage will be a presentation of the developed project to the judging panel: **May 2011**
(dates subject to change)

Glossary

Co-design The process through which users, stakeholders and designers collaboratively work to improve their services, products or communications

Community or Network A group of people connected socially by something they share or have in common. For example: they live in the same street, housing estate, village, or they share a common interest or occupation such as belonging to the same library, place of worship, club, allotment group etc

Social capital The value of all social networks (who people know) and the way that people want to support and help one another for the common good as a result of being part of a community or network.

Social value The broader benefit gained by society through an individual or group action

Stakeholders Everyone who is affected by or has an interest in a project or process

Collective efficacy Social cohesion among citizens/ neighbours combined with their belief that together they can achieve social outcomes for the common good

Empowerment Having the capacity and the opportunity to play a full role in society in general (not just in economic terms but also in social, psychological and political terms)