

Health and happy ageing

Social Work

Research Summary Paper

In order of the 'Kenniscentrum Noorderruimte' in Groningen, two Social Work students from the Hanzehogeschool have done research to the needs of older people in the township Oldambt for the organization AFEdeMy. The main goal of the research was to get to know what the older people need to continue living in their own house in Finsterwolde and Scheemda. The resource question is: What do older people of 80 years and older need in the field of daily functioning, social participation and mental well-being to keep living in their own house in Finsterwolde or Scheemda?

The students have done literature research to the subjects' shrinkage, aging and general facilities for older people, facilities in the area, positive health and the target audience and older people in general. The students did semi-open interviews with the older people and used a list of topics. The topics were daily functioning, social participation, mental well-being, facilities and needs. The students took 30 interviews with older people from the age of 80 plus.

The students took the first five interviews together to test each other's way of interviewing. The students took the rest of the interviews apart from each other. During the interviews the students took notes and put the whole interview in a word document. Not recording was a conscious choice. The outcomes of the resource say that all the respondents want to stay in their own house, unless it really is not possible anymore. Most of the older people are emotionally attached to their house and environment. The respondents that don't drive and own a car (anymore) are a lot more dependent of their social network because the distance to facilities are longer in this township and public traffic is minimal, so most of them are tied at home most of the time. Some of the respondents use special facilities for older people like the 'plustaxi' and 'Op-Stap-Bus', but a lot of them don't know these facilities, just like the facility 'Sociaal Werk Oldambt'. The respondents that use support from the government had contact with an employee that is involved with the 'WMO' from the township ones to decide with help they need and can get, after that there was no contact anymore.

The needs of the respondents are very different. Most of them, 18 respondents, said that they have no needs for support in any way. Most of them have a good social network who helps them were the need or are, despite their age, still vital and independent from others. The respondents that does need support most of the time wants more contact and involvement with others. These are often people with a smaller social network and less skills to look for and find support themselves in any way. Seven respondents said that they feel lonely and they said that they want to go out more or want to have more contacts. Also, the outcomes of the research of Wijnja (2018) said that a lot of older people in Oldambt feel lonely. Overall seems the respondents satisfied with their living situation, they give themselves a seven or eight, average.

The first recommendation involves a better information giving from the municipality of the township Oldambt to older people, so that they know where to find the facilities in the area, especially the social facilities. The other recommendations to Sociaal Werk Oldambt are to make plans to recruit more volunteers and make the organisation better known and accessible for older people.