9   Discussion of the results and implications

This concluding chapter first summarises the results of the empirical investigation before relating them to the state of research. To guide further research, it names the questions which remain open and those that have arisen during the course of the investigation. The thesis closes with recommendations for practitioners on the local and the national level as well as thoughts about lessons other countries can learn from the investigation into British experiences in planning for an ageing population.

9.1   Summary of results

The main research question "How do local actors in the UK plan for population ageing?" has been split up into three sub questions. The condensed answers to those questions, which are provided below, constitute the basis for the reflection of the results with respect to the state of research.

1. Who plans for an ageing population, and how?

From a local governance perspective, involved actors with their capabilities and action orientations as well as actor constellations and interactions were analysed to answer this first research question. A characteristic constellation of local actors who deal with population ageing is depicted in Figure 19. Either the council's adult social care department or the Local Strategic Partnership takes the lead in planning for an ageing population. Older people and ageing are often seen as adult social care's responsibility, because they offer services for older people – a statutory task for local councils. Particularly in these areas, where it is the lead actor in planning for an ageing population, it has widened its role to comprise the coordination of activities connected to the ageing population and older people's quality of life. This contrasts with its image of being a last resort for the more disadvantaged older people. Another council department which is increasingly concerned with strategic planning for an ageing population is housing. The National Health Service is more specifically involved in health-related issues. Only few councillors take an active interest in older people's issues.

The private sector has limited influence on dealing with ageing and older people strategically. It is essentially restricted to commissioning consultants to develop certain plans. The third sector, in contrast, is rather prominent in planning for an ageing population. Main organisations are charities like Age Concern and older people's forums who lobby for older people's issues, point to deficits of statutory agencies, offer own services, etc. Local Strategic Partnerships, consisting of members from all three sectors, tackle ageing as one of several challenges for a local area's strategic development. Their function is raising respective issues and making sure they are embedded in the work of the partners.

The majority of actors involved in planning for an ageing population regard the older population's needs and coming up to those needs as the central challenge connected to population ageing. Accordingly, only very few strive to change the local demographic profile, for example by attracting younger people. In order to illustrate different approaches in planning for an ageing population across organisations, a typology of actors has been developed. It consists of four types, which have been constructed on the basis of actors' goals and activities to reach these goals. The four types are "the modern efficient service provider", "the dedicated social service provider", "the strategic manager for older people's issues" and "the lobbyist for older people's issues".

A dominant pattern concerning governance arrangements is a change from working in silos to working in partnership. Motivations for partnership work range from an attempt to use resources efficiently to the cross-cuttingness of the ageing agenda. Joint working between social care and health is especially remarkable. Beyond that, older people themselves are more and more consulted about their needs and aspirations and most recently have even become integrated in strategic planning. Hereby, and more generally, formalised older people's partnerships are crucial vehicles which bring actors together who are involved in planning for an ageing population. Parallel to the differences in lead actors between the case study areas, two models of older people's partnerships can be distinguished: adult social care led partnerships and Local Strategic Partnership led models.

Traditional hierarchical and sectoral steering is still important as the dominance of adult social care departments shows. In line with general trends in the UK, however, network-like governance arrangements become more and more important in planning for an ageing population. These correspond to the cross-cuttingness of the ageing issue as they cover different thematic fields. They span the public and voluntary and community sectors, but rarely the private sector.

2. What kind of strategies are there to deal with population ageing?

A particular focus has been set on strategies which deal with the ageing of the population, as they can be interpreted as a documentation of the status quo of planning for an ageing population and a main result of the local learning process. Apart from the strategies as such, the process of strategy-making has been examined. A variety of strategies are used in the local areas to tackle the ageing of the population. Different formats deal with older people exclusively (see Table 10). General older people strategies are most widespread, they promote actions to improve older people's quality of life and aim to change attitudes towards ageing and older people. They cover topics such as health and care, housing and older people's involvement. Joint commissioning strategies for older people constitute the concrete basis for commissioning processes concerning health and

care services and impact daily work more than the older people strategies which cover softer issues. Another prominent strategy focus is older people's housing, care and support. While older people strategies and joint commissioning strategies usually refer to rather short time horizons of three to five years, housing care and support strategies cover 20 to 25 years.

Further formats that are used, for setting strategic approaches on how to deal with ageing and older people, are cross-cutting plans like the superordinate Sustainable Community Strategies, their matching Local Area Agreements as well as council plans and spatial planning documents such as Core Strategies (see Table 11). In contrast to the strategies which deal with older people exclusively, these exist in all local areas. Depending on the local area, they tackle ageing to different degrees of detail or not at all. The time horizon of SCS covers roughly 20 years, of LAAs three years and of Core Strategies 15 to 20 years. LAAs and corporate plans which are particularly relevant for implementation because they are coupled to funding, usually give little weight to ageing and older people.

Apart from spatial planning documents, the choice of strategy formats seems to be independent of the proportion of older people an authority has, contents are only marginally linked to it. The general ageing trend and the wish to improve older people's quality of life are usually in the foreground. Furthermore, the strategies are strongly influenced by national trends. These cover issues such as prevention and early intervention, maintaining older people in their own home and more participation of older people.

The strategies and the strategy-making procedures have diverse functions. One of them is the application of national trends to local circumstances. As mentioned above, specific plans like joint commissioning strategies for older people guide concrete work. Furthermore, strategies are used to create awareness in their target audience concerning the increasing number of elderly people in a local area and its consequences. Strategies, which do not deal with ageing and older people exclusively, such as Sustainable Community Strategies or Core Strategies, are often used to mainstream topics that have not previously been prominent. The assembling of information during strategy-making can lead to a self-energising effect, which drives further accumulation of knowledge in the strategy-making process. Finally and most crucially, the involved actors emphasise that strategy-making has a communicative function. The aim of creating a plan brings stakeholders together and forces consensus among them as far targets, instruments, etc. are concerned; it stimulates collective learning. Strategy-making and collective learning are thus closely related – strategies being manifestations of learning and stimulating learning at the same time. However, this does not apply to all strategies as there is also superficial strategy work observable.

3. What kind of learning process has led to the current state of planning for population ageing?

The final research question has been investigated from a collective learning perspective. Accordingly, four phases have been distinguished referring to different aspects of cognitive changes in planning for an ageing population: setting the ageing agenda, building up knowledge on ageing, collective learning to plan for an ageing population and strategy-making for an ageing population.

The empirical findings emphasise the role of external influences in the agenda setting phase. Awareness concerning the ageing of the population is largely due to publications by national government; stimuli from national government like finance mechanism or supervision are crucial in the phase of first actions. However, those influences do not lead to local activities per se, but interplay with personal commitment is necessary. Here, those who are in direct contact with older people striving to improve older people's quality of life, such as staff in adult social care but also actors from the third sector, are crucial. They know the difficulties older people face from their daily experience. Overall, different triggers cross-fertilise. Remarkably, the proportion of older people in a local area does not seem to be related to the point in time when the area reacts to the ageing challenge. This is linked to the fact that most local actors do not yet realise significant changes in demand connected to ageing.

Once planning for an ageing population is on the local agenda, knowledge on ageing is amassed. Three main mechanisms have been identified: basing planning on (demographic) evidence, older people's participation and learning stimulated by national government. Local activities correspond to national efforts to promote the usage of evidence, especially quantitative data, as a basis for policymaking and service planning. While this allows for more targeted service provision, refines knowledge on ageing, etc., there are also risks like the danger of concentrating on such activities where effects can be measured with little effort. Older people's participation in policymaking and service planning also generates a kind of evidence, for example in the form of survey data. Beyond that, older people are taking a more and more active role. Older people's forums, for example, are not only a consultation base for the local administration, but are active in raising issues on their own. As in the agenda setting phase, there is also strong influence by national government in the subsequent phases. It continues to stimulate local areas' learning to plan for an ageing population via publications providing information on the issue, instruments, financial incentives and targets as well as inspections of local performance.

The breadth and depth of the local learning process in planning for an ageing population depends on the transmission of commitment beyond a core of people. Hereby, more influential actors are crucial, who either work at a higher level in the local authority

hierarchy or who are councillors. The types of actors identified with respect to the first research question contribute to collective learning to a different extent, in a different manner and at different points in time. Main catalysts to drive a local learning process belong to the following categories: the formation of groups dedicated to the ageing issue, the elaboration of strategy documents, local projects and national government initiatives. Concerning the first, older people's partnerships bringing stakeholders for older people's issues together are particularly important as drivers of the local learning process. The formation of such a new governance arrangement can be interpreted as an observable manifestation of a learning process insofar that it is preceded by attributing certain significance to the issue and acknowledging the need for concerted action. In all older people's partnerships the dominant form of learning is information exchange about issues related to ageing and older people. Information exchange advances planning for an ageing population insofar that specific knowledge concerning older people' issues is diffused, new ideas are developed and attitudes in the wider membership change. This depends on the design of the partnerships. Principally, if the partnerships have responsibilities that go beyond exchanging and developing ideas and include decisions, for example, concerning services, they can also enable problem solving learning (Wilkesmann 1999). This form of collective learning emphasises striving for consensus and developing a shared perspective (Wilkesmann 1999, 78; Pommeranz 2001, 201). The strategy-making phase has already been summarised with respect to the second research question.

Across all phases of the local learning process in planning for an ageing population, certain patterns appear repeatedly. These can be attributed to the nature of the issue – the cross-cuttingness of ageing – and the enormous influence of the national government on local governance. The issue's cross-cuttingness leads to struggles in broadening the agenda beyond older people's health and care, to experimenting with governance structures, to involving older people and to using strategies as catalysts. National government's strong influence is ambivalent. On the one hand, it drives local reactions to ageing but on the other hand it provokes superficial and unsustainable answers.

9.2   Reflection of the results and the research design with respect to the state of research

As the summary of the results has shown, the major contribution of the thesis is in-depth empirical knowledge on local planning for an ageing population. More precisely, it reconstructs governance arrangements as well as learning processes in local planning for an ageing population. On the basis of these insights, it discusses central challenges and perspectives local areas face when developing strategic approaches for their ageing population. The research is grounded in practice. Its design and conceptual framework were developed according to the grounded theory paradigm. The field was approa-

ched with a comparatively open framework based on the theoretical perspectives of local governance and collective learning. Qualitative methods like interviews based on a guideline and document analysis gave further scope to identify concepts and relations between variables in the empirical data. The approach was open to adapt its focus to empirical findings.

The research questions have been answered with the help of patterns which were reconstructed from the empirical data. Those patterns, such as the "two-stage shift towards older people's active engagement" (Chapter 7.2.2), describe and explain issues which are relevant for answering the three questions. Furthermore, own concepts like the typology of actors involved in planning for an ageing population or the two models of older people's partnerships were developed. According to the state of research, i.e. the lack of in-depth empirical research on the subject (see Chapter 2.4), the results correspond to a "thick description" (Geertz 1973) to a large extent. The used concepts focus on reconstructing and understanding the phenomenon. The breadth of the investigation is typical for grounded theory studies. The research questions have to leave scope for results that are grounded in empirical material, i.e. the discovery of relations during fieldwork, emphases placed by local actors, etc. Again, this corresponds to the current state of research. While the grounded theory approach covers both, research design and conceptual framework, the following will first discuss aspects pertaining specifically to the conceptual framework and then those that refer to the research design.

9.2.1 Discussion of the results

Theoretical perspectives on a practical issue

With respect to the conceptual framework, it must be mentioned that the thesis provides theoretical perspectives on a practical issue. Non-governmental and governmental organisations have examined the state of local planning for an ageing population with the help of surveys and good practice studies. These focus on understanding the current situation in local areas as a basis for potential interventions. Academic research on related subjects – particularly German research on reactions to demographic change – has elaborated on abstractions which are also valid if detached from the concrete case. Those studies put more emphasis on a general understanding of mechanisms in this research field. Some have applied governance and collective learning as theoretical perspectives. However, particularly with respect to learning, they have used more closed approaches, i.e. have tested in how far specific models correspond to the practical experience.

The approach which I have applied seeks to combine the strengths of applied and more abstract research. In contrast to charities, governmental organisations, etc. my perspective is not influenced by political interests, commitment to a particular section of the population or such like. Additionally, most of the applied research studies cannot go

into depth as far as PhD research which extends over three years. An analysis of a case study which commonly covers one or two pages, for example by the Improvement and Development Agency & Local Government Association (2009) or the Planning Advisory Service & Improvement and Development Agency (2009) (see Chapter 2.3), can only sketch local activities. The two sensitising concepts – local governance and collective learning – have been applied to sharpen the focus of the investigation and to prepare the abstraction of results. In contrast to using specific models, this left scope to discover further aspects in the empirical data. All in all, I evaluate this proceeding as fruitful. One has to keep in mind that such an approach is specifically appropriate if the state of research has not progressed far and approved theoretical concepts are lacking.

New insights on governance and collective learning

It has been helpful to use the (local) governance concept as a tool for turning the attention to actor constellations, modes of interaction, etc. The concept has proved appropriate for a grounded theory approach insofar that it left room to develop own concepts like the typology of actors involved in planning for an ageing population. However, it has been difficult to handle its frequent and differing usages ranging from analytical and descriptive to normative treatments.

It was crucial to assume a multi-level governance perspective insofar that local governance is strongly determined by central government. The regional level turned out to be only marginally influential. A specific debate in the governance field is concerned with multi-organisational partnerships. In the UK the formation of such partnerships is strongly encouraged by national government. Their role has been discussed ambivalently in the literature, however (see Chapters 3.1 and 3.3.1). They have been criticised for remaining dependent on central government initiative and funding, being ineffective, etc. With respect to planning for an ageing population, multi-organisational partnerships are estimated as very valuable by the local actors because they suit the issue's cross-cuttingness. They are less driven by central government initiative and funding than by local commitment and requirements. However, partnerships per se are no solution. Depending on their design, they fulfil different roles, allow for different forms of learning, etc. This has become apparent in the analysis of collective learning in older people's partnerships.

Collective learning approaches have been used to focus attention on the development of planning for an ageing population over time. For my interest of study, an action-oriented view on learning has been considered suitable as I have assumed that detailed knowledge and precise recommendations to improve practice for local actors could be gathered this way (see Chapter 3.3.2). Consequently, certain action-oriented conceptualisations of collective learning which are discussed in the literature were consulted.

These were in particular problem solving learning and simple collective learning as discussed by Wilkesmann (1999) and Pommeranz (2001). I have further developed the first, whereby I meet the demand for inductive insights on collective learning, which Pommeranz expressed. In particular, I arrive at a different evaluation of the criteria of open network access and lose coupling within and across networks for learning in networks than Pommeranz does. According to him, the more open the access to the network and the looser is the coupling within and between networks, which enables overlapping of networks, the more probable is network learning. My findings in contrast imply, that open network access and loose coupling are associated with learning forms that focus on a mere exchange of information. The development of a shared perspective, however, relies on more stable networks with a dominance of strong ties. Thus, my recommendation is to differentiate between collective learning as information exchange and collective learning as problem solving. Simple collective learning, which refers to solutions based on majorities or on hierarchy, could not be observed with respect to planning for an ageing population in British local areas at all. One has to keep in mind that learning patterns differ according to policy areas (see Kissling-Näf, Knoepfel 1998) and modes of governance which are prevalent there. Simple collective learning contradicts the network mode of governance, or negotiated agreement in Scharpf's (1997) terms. Admittedly, within network structures, there might not only be network modes of governance but also for example hierarchical steering (see Chapter 3.3.2; Lowndes, Skelcher 1998). This has not been observed empirically, however. A further form of collective learning has been termed collective behaviourist learning. It refers to a simple reaction to stimuli and threats from central government, e.g., gearing activities towards national funding opportunities.

The combination of both theoretical perspectives, governance and collective learning, has been particularly rewarding. Various scholars have criticised the missing connection between the two perspectives and have demanded closure of this research gap (see for example Fürst 2003, Von Löwis 2005, the latter referring particularly to networks). There are many hints in the literature as to how far governance arrangements and collective learning are linked (see for example Fürst, Benz 2002; Kissling-Näf, Knoepfel 1998; Scharpf 2000). As explained above, the form of learning, in this case collective learning as information exchange, collective learning as problem solving or collective adaptation learning, depends on the structure and mode of governance. A network mode of governance and a certain network structure with strong ties, decision-making power, etc. for example enables the development of a shared perspective. Conversely, it has been shown that governance arrangements change as the local learning process in planning for an ageing population proceeds. I have particularly examined the formation of networks such as older people's forums and older people's partnerships, which can be a learning catalyst and a result of a learning process at the same time. They are

formed when ageing has moved up on the agenda and one has recognised the need for concerted action.

Links to further debates in and about planning and the role of local authorities

In the course of the presentation of the empirical results, connections to several debates in planning have been established. First, the trend to base planning for ageing and older people more and more on (demographic) evidence has been put into the wider context of evidence based planning. This has helped to refine the advantages and risks of such an approach. The function of strategies and strategy-making is another issue which is discussed in planning. I have emphasised the communicative function – in line with the communicative or argumentative turn in planning (Healey 1993; Fischer, Forester 1993). Beyond that, there are diverse connections to the debate on participation. Apart from providing in-depth empirical knowledge on local planning for an ageing population, developing collective learning approaches further and adding to the planning debate, the thesis has implications for the political debate on the role of local authorities in the UK. The ambivalence of the strong national government influence has been elaborated clearly.

9.2.2 Discussion of the research design

In the following, I discuss different aspects of the research design and assess in how far they have contributed to reaching the goals of the thesis.

Heterogeneity of the case studies

Three case study areas, North Tyneside, Poole and Wealden, have been selected. The sampling was led by the principle of maximum structural variation, i.e. by searching for heterogeneous cases. This way, the heterogeneity of the research field should be captured. It was assumed that patterns which are evident in such a variety of cases can be considered as general phenomena. Indeed, many patterns apply to all three cases and there is reason to believe that these are widespread phenomena. However, those that only apply to one of the case studies have to be treated very cautiously. As the three areas differ with respect to many variables – from location to extent of ageing – there are many possible explanations for such occurrences. Why, for example, has the process of planning for an ageing population started late and broad in Poole when compared with North Tyneside and Wealden? A variety of explaining factors come together. They cover such diverse aspects as the socioeconomic situation, which allows older people to cover service demands with the help of the private sector, and the lack of an awareness creating event such as the inspection of social care services, which revealed deficits in planning for an ageing population in North Tyneside and East Sussex. Caution is thus

needed for such causal explanations; one must refrain from ultimate statements. Further research has to clarify these relations of variables.

Researching "normal practice"

In contrast to various studies which analyse good practice of dealing with an ageing population, I have chosen to consider those cases that have strategies in place but that are not exceptionally successful. This way, it was possible to examine difficulties and stagnations as well, which was particularly rewarding. It could be shown, for example that the reluctance to consider population ageing in North Tyneside's spatial planning policies is related to the planning department's disinclination to take on the new planning paradigm introduced by national government. There are hints that North Tyneside is no exception in this respect. Recommendations for spatial planning to take ageing into account need to consider this in order to be effective.

Qualitative methods

Qualitative methods, predominantly qualitative interviews and document analysis, have been used for the empirical investigation into planning for an ageing population. The analysis of the data, especially the reconstructive analysis following Kruse 2009, was very time-consuming. It was rewarding, however, and the research questions could have hardly been answered with less effort, as they included for example the identification of individual action orientations. The insights won with the help of qualitative data complement the results from quantitative studies. As presented in Chapter 2.3, a survey carried out by Care & Repair England (2008) found out that Regional Housing Strategies and Regional Spatial Strategies do not respond to the ageing of the population sufficiently. The survey design did not allow for the identification of the underlying reasons, however. By using qualitative methods and considering "normal practice" I could identify reasons for differences in consideration of ageing in (local) plans. Another example refers to the missing correlation between the proportion or number of older people in a local area and its activities in planning for an ageing population (Audit Commission 2008, 22; Gilroy, Castle 1995, 34). What, if not the number or proportion of older people determines local preparedness? The qualitative methods, which I have applied, have helped to identify other factors which seem to be more relevant, for example an influential voluntary and community sector.

Research into collective actors poses the challenge that on the one hand, information about organisations, from mission statements to actual work carried out, might not be sufficient to understand certain underlying intentions or the like. On the other hand, interviews with individual persons might not give satisfactory answers pertaining to the organisation they are part of. Thus, the combination of both was fruitful.

A dynamic perspective

The thesis investigates the development of local governance arrangements and strategies in planning for an ageing population as well as learning processes. Only during the empirical phase, which extended one and a half years, I could observe changes directly. Otherwise I have reconstructed process development retrospectively. In doing so I relied on documents and on the recollections of interviewees. Even if actors' views might be distorted in some instances, documents such as strategy documents and minutes of meetings draw a quite clear picture. Other studies on learning processes have chosen a similar approach, for example Glock (2006) or Kissling-Näf & Knoepfel (1998) and have arrived at convincing results.

German research about the UK

Conducting research in a foreign country included several challenges, particularly concerning language subtleties, interview organisation and simplified explanations during interviews. However, advantages such as the pronounced frankness of many interviewees and the greater distance to the research object, which ensured openness to empirical findings, counterbalanced these. (see Chapter 4.1; Cappai 2008, 20 f.; Kruse 2009a) Furthermore, the conceptual framework and the theoretical abstraction from the empirical data benefited from the German experience with research on demographic changes. Governance and learning approaches had already been applied there to analyse reactions to demographic shifts.

9.3   Open questions and need for further research

Some questions could not be answered conclusively within the thesis; others emerged in the course of the research. This subchapter depicts options for further research. As in the previous chapter, I first discuss issues connected to the conceptual framework, then those related to the research design.

Further research is needed with respect to collective learning. The differentiation between collective learning as information exchange and collective learning as problem solving should be tested and refined with more cases. Beyond this, it would be interesting to check whether this differentiation of learning forms is also applicable to other policy fields. A core difficulty with respect to learning approaches is that learning processes cannot be observed directly, because learning is primarily a change of cognitive structures which might or might not be accompanied by a change in behaviour (see Chapter 3.3.2). Consequently, it is not possible to give a conclusive answer to questions such as which role collective learning has played in the formation of older people's partnerships.

With respect to governance, it would be interesting to research the reverse relation of multi-level governance – in how far do local activities influence the regional and national levels. Interviewees hinted at, for example, the national government's interest in consulting with local older people's forums. The typology of actors involved in planning for an ageing population could be developed further by considering further case studies.

The results are mainly based on empirical data from three case study areas. In a strict sense, the findings only apply to those three areas. As described in Chapter 4.3.1, it is possible to generalise analytically, however, and heterogeneous cases were sampled step by step to cover the research field adequately. The population of potential cases consists of unitary authorities or districts which are characterised by above average ageing, a coastal location and the existence of an integrative strategy to tackle ageing. The new cases were used to test emerging concepts. As mentioned above, theoretical concepts referring to actors and collective learning could be tested and refined with the help of further case studies. Considering more cases would also allow for developing a typology of reactions to ageing. This would be helpful to point to certain characteristics of typical approaches. Furthermore, it would be rewarding to integrate such cases, where no integrative approaches in planning for an ageing population exist and to identify the reasons and consequences. A study which chose less heterogeneous cases could elaborate on the role of locally specific factors in planning for an ageing population. A lower number of intermingling variables would facilitate this task. Beyond that, one could go beyond fine-grained case study research and conduct a survey building on the results of the thesis. It could for example identify how widespread ASC and LSP-lead older people's partnerships are or provide an overview on the existence of different types of strategies to tackle ageing.

Due to the three year timeframe of the PhD programme, it was not possible to conduct a longitudinal study. Instead, the local learning process in planning for an ageing population was mainly reconstructed with the help of documents and interviewee's recollections. Particularly changes in stakeholders' attitudes could be identified more precisely if one re-interviewed them at different points in time. It would also be beneficial to spend more time in the case study areas and to take part in meetings to observe for example collective decision making.

The thesis does not examine actual effects of local governance arrangements, learning processes and strategies in planning for an ageing population. As stated in Chapter 2.4, it is still early to evaluate impacts as strategic approaches towards ageing have only gained prominence in the last few years. A separate empirical analysis would be needed to consider these. As local planning for an ageing population and research about it proceeds, it becomes more appropriate to conduct evaluative research. The following questions, for example, are still open: Does more consideration of population ageing in plans lead to better results? What impact can older people's partnerships have? Does problem

solving learning lead to better results than learning based on information exchange? An evaluative analysis would encounter difficulties, however, for example in proving the effects of strategies, such as changed attitudes towards ageing and older people or the introduction of new services for older people, because of different determinants interfering with each other.

Examining the British experience in planning for an ageing population was connected to the wish to learn from this experience. As presented in Chapter 2.1, there is an enormous concentration of older people in British coastal areas and a remarkable policy response to the ageing of the population on the national and regional level since the end of the 1990s. Concerning the local level, information was more fragmentary, but several good practice examples were documented. Thus it was assumed that one could benefit from experiences in British local areas. The empirical findings have confirmed this assumption. Even though the British experience has been examined in its own right, transferable experiences can be identified. These are discussed in Chapter 9.5. It is not possible, however to discuss these in greater length and to consider transfer conditions. Further studies could choose a comparative study design to examine those issues in greater detail.

9.4   Recommended action

In this chapter recommendations are deduced from the analysis of local planning for an ageing population. They are based on the experience in the three case study areas. Due to the enormous influence of national government, they cover suggestions for improvement for both levels, local areas and national government, i.e. they address actors involved in local and national steering.

Recommendations for local areas

The three case study areas, North Tyneside, Poole and Wealden, have experienced different development paths in planning for an ageing population. As explicated in Chapter 8.3, the areas differ according to demographic conditions as well as characteristics such as affluence, settlement structure or the role of the voluntary and community sector, which influence the reaction to ageing. Generally, approaches to improve planning for an ageing population should be developed on the background of the specific local context. Beyond that, one has to keep in mind that "it's a long slow process" (Mr J., consultant: 28) and that it is not realistic to expect immediate results. The recommendations refer predominantly to governance arrangements and instruments which are supposed to be beneficial for the ageing agenda.

Older people's partnerships have shown to be valuable elements of local governance arrangements in this respect. As they can take different shapes and fulfil different func-