

A Toolkit for Inclusion in Practice

Learning from the Ambition
for Ageing programme

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Oldham residents take part in a documentary about ageing in Greater Manchester

Acknowledgements

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Levenshulme Inspire Choir perform at the Festival of Ageing

What this toolkit is

This toolkit presents mini case studies giving practical illustrations of ways of working inclusively, taking an integrated approach to equalities work.

We hope it is useful to start conversations within your organisations and communities about equalities, with each section illustrating several different ways of thinking about how we can work inclusively.

The case studies have been taken from across the Ambition for Ageing programme. This document is a companion to other equalities briefings and reports published by Ambition for Ageing. These examples are highly diverse. The reasons for this include the flexibility allowed by Ambition for Ageing's 'test and learn' approach, the inclusive design of the programme as a whole, and the culture of support for inclusive working at all levels of the programme.



Members of the GM Older People's Network in discussion

What this toolkit isn't.

This toolkit is not intended to suggest a tick-box list of 'equalities techniques', but instead it offers exemplars of particular ways of working inclusively. We collected case studies, examples and citations from published and unpublished Ambition for Ageing reports and other programme records, and conducted a grounded analysis to reveal the themes and subthemes relating to inclusive practice. As a result, the stories included here may not originally have been intended to showcase the points drawn from them.

The cases included are not the only examples within the programme of these ways of working. We chose them to give examples from across the Ambition for Ageing delivery areas in Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, and Wigan.



Out & About friendship group celebrate 50 years since the decriminalisation of homosexuality

What do we mean by an 'equalities approach'?

Taking an 'equalities approach' means placing people and communities who are usually on the margins at the centre of your programme development and design. It means looking beyond the categories in the Equalities Act 2010 and starting by understanding who is marginalised in your programme area, and asking how your programme will include the people and communities who are usually on the margins.



A filmmaker records our Social isolation and older BAME communities seminar

The toolkit has four sections:

KNOWLEDGE: Cases illustrating the importance of understanding key concepts and ideas core to an equalities approach.

WAYS OF WORKING: A non-exhaustive list of ways of working that indicates the range of practical ways to apply the general approaches of widening inclusion, narrowing focus, and being creative.

CULTURE & VALUES: Examples of ways to create an inclusive culture through respect for the grassroots, a practical commitment to empowerment, and through treating people well.

LEADERSHIP: Stories showing how leadership can come from any level of a programme.



Ambition for Ageing take part in Wigan Pride

A) KNOWLEDGE

The key knowledge you need when working with an equalities approach is conceptual. It is necessary to understand what causes marginalisation, and how to work with the knowledge within communities at the margins.

The following examples highlight a number of areas of understanding and knowledge to help you to work inclusively.



Understanding structural exclusion

People in communities of identity and experience are not marginalised because they possess certain characteristics, but because the way that society is organised excludes them.

In Oldham the local delivery partners realised that members of the Deaf community are particularly isolated, even more so if they are living with dementia.

They are often unable to find out about relevant information and support because British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation is rarely provided as standard at community events (on any issue), often due to cost.

A volunteer who had previously attended a Dementia Friends information session introduced project staff to a friend of his who was a BSL interpreter. The staff then organised an Alzheimer's UK session to raise awareness about dementia to the local Deaf Club. The session had great feedback - raising awareness in the Deaf community about the lives of people living with dementia.

In addition, it led to members of the Deaf Club joining other local events and activities such as exercise classes, and in the Deaf Club becoming a potential venue for other local groups to use.

Understanding there is diversity within minority communities

Even within minority communities there are groups with different needs and cultural preferences. When these are overlooked, people are further marginalised.

Salford refugee support organisation Visible Outcomes received funding through the 'Ageing Equally?' research programme to find out what makes an age-friendly neighbourhood for elders in their community. The 2011 census had estimated the BAME population of Salford as over 15% of the total, but had not differentiated between different communities or between refugees and settled communities.

A 2016 study showed that the BAME population of Salford is growing, however the different health and social needs of refugees were not acknowledged.

Through carrying out research among refugee communities, Visible Outcomes found wide variation in experience between older and more recent refugee communities.

They found that participants living near settled communities from the same or similar countries as themselves, with whom they shared language or religion, were more likely to feel that their neighbourhood was a good place to live. Many people from emerging communities that felt they had little in common with settled refugee and migrant communities and had to travel out of their area to find places where they could practice their faith and get support.

Knowing which groups are marginalised

Being aware of which groups are marginalised, or at risk of marginalisation helps target those who have been historically missed.

In Rochdale the Nigerian community had not been focussed on due to their small comparative size; the usual focus for community development workers had been the South Asian community.

The Nigerian Community Association found out about Ambition for Ageing and approached the programme for funding for intergenerational drumming classes to strengthen cultural knowledge within the community.

The decision to work with the group involved Ambition for Ageing investing time to build its capacity, support them in the application process, liaise with them regularly, as well as having to develop new

cultural knowledge about the community.

It took two months to help the group write its funding application, and eventually they received their first ever small grant to buy hand drums for intergenerational workshops. Even managing this small amount was not straight forward, as the group did not fully understand the purpose and requirements of the grant.

Similar to many small community groups, the group's expertise lay with supporting their community, and not with grant management. As a result, Ambition for Ageing staff had a much more hands-on, project management approach to supporting the group, continuously explaining and monitoring the group's adherence to funding objectives and offering information and advice when needed.



Knowing that marginalised communities are their own experts

Marginalised people are experts in their own experience. Working alongside these groups leads to projects and activities that meet their needs.

Out and About, an LGBT group in Oldham, found that one of its members was unable to be 'out' about their sexuality in the sheltered accommodation where they lived.

This experience of 'going back into the closet' is not uncommon, and results in further marginalising the older members of the LGBT community.

This led the group to apply for funding to develop a Rainbow Roadshow, delivering LGBT awareness training to local sheltered housing and care home staff.

The scheme caught the attention of staff at LGBT Foundation working on programmes for older LGBT people, and has helped to influence the grassroots focus of similar work at the larger organisation.



Knowing to look for strengths and assets

Sometimes the assets and strengths in minority communities may be hidden, and lie in less visible parts of their lives and histories.

In Crompton ward in Bolton, retired farmers from South Asia put their skills into regenerating the green space outside their shops, and between people's homes, improving public space for the whole community.

A grant gave them funds to purchase equipment, and develop their project to link up with a nearby neighbourhood with a similar initiative.



Tameside's Krupa Mandel exercise group

B) WAYS OF WORKING

Most ways of working inclusively fall into two categories: widening or broadening the scope or target audience of a project or activity; or narrowing the focus or target of your work. To work out which of these is most likely to be effective in any case it may help to refer to a model we developed to help plan approaches to group work, based on the spatial distribution of marginalised communities. Download the model from www.ambitionforageing.org.uk/equalitiesmodel.

Sometimes working with the most marginalised communities can require creativity, and working in unusual ways.

The following examples highlight how you can work inclusively by widening or broadening your approach or working more creatively.



Widening: Inclusion

Often, projects and activities can have small changes made to them to meet the needs of a wider range of people in an inclusive way.

In Wigan the Ambition for Ageing partner right from the start made sure its work focused on including people living in poverty, as this is a major risk factor for isolation.

An investment was made to Fur Clemt cafe, part of the Real Junk Food Project, to purchase table tennis and other activities equipment.

Now older people who live on a low income enjoy a 'pay as you like' cooked meal and are encouraged to stay after eating to chat, meet new people and try activities in an informal setting.

Local rugby league club Wigan Warriors have also joined in to run regular reminiscence sessions at the cafe.



Widening: Partnership working

Working in partnership with other organisations who hold relevant expertise can allow us to widen the reach of activities and projects to include more people.

In Oldham the Ambition for Ageing delivery partner created a working partnership with Henshaws, a local vision impairment support organisation.

Working together meant they were able to exchange knowledge, improve older people's access to each other's services and activities, and more widely spread understanding about the barriers that older people with sight loss face and which cause or exacerbate their exclusion and isolation.

This also led to successful co-production with people living with sight loss.

Widening: Increasing accessibility

By increasing accessibility to services, we can meet the needs of a wider number of people.

In Salford, older people weren't using local leisure facilities. A consultation found that they felt facilities were not accessible to them: they said the gyms were full of young bodybuilders, the equipment was not suitable for older or disabled people, and they stood out there and felt uncomfortable.

Still Got It Salford was a programme inviting older people into the gyms, encouraging them to come with friends and make the leisure centres their spaces.

The programme was a success: participants in the programme felt they could use equipment comfortably, they had fun, and they were encouraged by seeing other older people at the gym, swimming and going to classes.

They felt that older people would use leisure facilities more if they could go with a friend for companionship and confidence, which would support them to feel comfortable and able to join in. As the spaces were community assets available for all to use, these spaces have been used for more than physical activity, such as sharing refreshments and green & growing projects, this contributed to feeling like the spaces belonged to them.



Widening: Universal design - one solution, many effects

Taking a universal design approach removes barriers for groups at risk of marginalisation as standard.

The Corrie Gardeners community garden is a *Grow Your Own* social project operating on an estate in Bury where many flats accommodate single older residents.

They have worked closely with Ambition for Ageing to develop a range of activities, based on a detailed understanding of the residents' interests and needs including a quiet area, a children's area for grandchildren, seating near older residents' flats, and fruit trees that everyone can access.

Since some residents were veterans who lived with PTSD, around bonfire night they organised a Night Lights display featuring lanterns made by local children as an alternative to noisy fireworks.

They also provided a variety of food to meet different dietary requirements. This inclusive approach made the event accessible to others with sensory processing issues, including some autistic people, and refugees and asylum seekers from war zones.



Narrowing: Targeted outreach to a minority community

Targeting outreach to a minority community is a way to focus attention, energy and other resources.

The Ambition for Ageing partner in Tameside knew that older LGBT women in the area were isolated, and lacked opportunities to meet and socialise: “There are lots of lesbian women in Tameside who I contact through social media who don’t go out.

They tell me that if there was a safe women’s space to go to they would go.”

They reached out to Tameside and Oldham Gay Society, a longstanding social group in the area, which had previously hosted community engagement events, and supported them to host a women’s night for older lesbian, bisexual and transgender women.

WAYS OF WORKING

Narrowing: Targeted engagement of marginalised individuals

Targeting marginalised individuals is a way to engage and involve those who may not be engaged in wider activity.

In Leigh West, a disadvantaged part of Wigan, the Ambition for Ageing team were looking for ways to engage with older men.

The local park was dominated by young people, and older people felt it was off-limits. But there was a former angling lake in the middle of the park that, although in need of cleaning up, was still well stocked with fish.

With the support of a keen angler and the volunteer 'Bailiff of the Waters', who checks on fishing licenses, the project worker got approval from the local Angling Association to hold an angling competition.

This galvanised action to clean up the lake, generating community involvement, and wide interest in the fishing competition.

The competition became an opening party for the lake, and was so well attended that not everyone could be given a space around the lake. It resulted in interest and support for coaching sessions, maintaining a level of activity around the lake, and bringing older and younger people together in the park.

And so the Firs Park Anglers came into being.



Narrowing: Targeted solutions

Some specific solutions may arise following more in-depth work with communities.

Moss Side is an inner city area of Manchester with a large African Caribbean population.

As in many areas, a lot of older people in the community lacked digital skills, but local IT classes and support tended to focus on younger people's needs around skills for work, rather than older

peoples' priorities of communicating with friends and family.

The Ambition for Ageing workers and local community project worked with older people to design an IT club that would be run by older volunteers, and focus on practical needs that older residents identified.

Attendees highlighted a number of things they would like, including the need to use Skype to connect with family far away.

Being creative: Letting things evolve

Taking a lead from the local community and allowing things to evolve naturally benefits both organisations and individuals.

Each local area had slightly different structures for making decisions on applications for funding. The programme in Bury developed a “critical friends” group, whose role was to help improve project proposals.

Members of the group would attend local ward group meetings where proposals were developed and discussed, so that they could support applications and help make sure they met the funding criteria. If they felt something similar was already taking place they would link people together, encouraging sustainability.

The group very quickly developed its remit and its role further than had been anticipated.

As the project worker explained: “We tried to split them up, but they said no because they’d discovered they like sharing information and knowing about what is going on across Bury. They had also started to socialise and meet up outside the meetings.

They have become a core group of people who want the best for their community, and they like working together so they can provide consistency.”



Being creative: Bringing people together

It takes a great deal of creativity to bring together people from very different isolated or marginalised communities.

Ambition for Ageing's microfunding approach supported groups to find ways to work with what was hidden from view, and make something new.

In Rochdale, a partnership between Petrus Incredible Edible, a community growing project for homeless people, and Apna Ghar, a day centre for South Asian elders, found a beautiful and creative way to bridge cultural divides and bring people together. Project workers realised that people in both these groups experienced poor health, but also that there were shared interests in the historic medicinal and culinary use of plants, and how to grow them.

The Rochdale Cultural Herb Project was formed, and took on a medical herbalist, artist and therapeutic horticultural practitioner to enable members of both groups to share their knowledge, and form bonds across their challenges and life experiences.

During June Summer Solstice, the garden held an event that brought together more than 200 local people in a colourful, friendly celebration of many different traditions.



Being creative: Flexibility

Flexibility is important when working with marginalised communities, and can bring many benefits as well as meeting the needs of communities involved.

In Oldham an African women's group called SAWN applied for funding to run a drop-in at its charity shop.

The shop is well liked in the area, and through its openness and generosity the group has established a reputation for being helpful, even overcoming some local prejudice.

Their proposal was quite vague as they did not know what older people would want from the drop-in and included plans to reimburse volunteers which was not usually allowed under the terms of the Ambition for Ageing small funds.

SAWN explained that volunteers support others to access the project, by paying for their transport - bringing more people in and giving the project wider reach into minority communities. The funding was approved and the drop-in has been successful in attracting a diverse range of people and recruiting new members.



Artwork created in Bolton during the Creating Sunshine Event for dementia awareness

C) CULTURE & VALUES

Effective inclusion work expresses the values that underpin it. A culture of commitment to equalities and the rights of individuals and communities to speak and act for themselves is necessary to designing effective and supportive projects and activities.

The following examples highlight how you can work inclusively by having a commitment to grassroots and treating people well.



Commitment to grassroots: Listening

In wider society, the voices and experience of older people are often pushed to the margins so listening is crucial.

The Greater Manchester Older People's Network was set up in 2015 following consultation with older people, and is supported by staff at Macc, the voluntary sector support organisation in Manchester.

It has been mostly funded by Ambition for Ageing since the start of the programme, providing a voice for older people on key issues of ageing in Greater Manchester.

Following participatory events, the project has produced a number of reports amplifying the voices of older people on key issues such as health and social care, housing and transport, and a guide to participation, to encourage voluntary and statutory organisations to create conditions supporting older people to speak from experience.

Recommendations from the network are fed into the Greater Manchester Mayor's age-friendly strategic decision-making.

Commitment to grassroots: Asking

A commitment to listening to older people has to be backed up by asking the right questions, and action to hearing from more marginalised older people.

In Manchester the YellowBird Age Friendly Support Group was set up many years ago to support older people who may be experiencing dementia, isolation and loneliness or other health issues in the Moss Side area.

Moss Side is an ethnically diverse area where it had been found that people from the BAME community were less likely to access services.

Through direct action of door-to-door enquiries the group found out that, despite activities during the week, people who lived alone felt particularly isolated at weekends.

Funding from Ambition for Ageing enabled them to start Saturday Soup, which brings people together and offers exercise, bingo and cultural foods.



Commitment to grassroots: Working where people are

Understanding the needs of communities includes meeting them where they are, both physically and metaphorically.

The Ambition for Ageing programme as a whole funded many intergenerational activities.

These were often designed by communities to integrate older people and improve their local connections.

In Bolton an intergenerational project was designed to address the isolation of South Asian elders, as staff found it difficult to engage with this group.

Community conversations revealed that many elders were expected to take care of their grandchildren each day. Although there were lots of benefits to living with extended family, this responsibility meant they could not go out, socialise with friends, or stay connected outside of the home.

In response, staff developed activities alongside primary schools, specifically to enable grandparents to join in social activities whilst also being able to take care of their grandchildren.

Commitment to grassroots: Co-production and co-design

A commitment to co-production and co-design exemplifies and ensures an inclusive approach and can make delivery more effective.

The Ambition for Ageing Equalities Board was made up of individuals with lived experience of marginalisation, local community-based equalities organisations, and a small staff team.

The Equalities Board supported microfunding for a number of organisational members to research the needs of their communities.

Undertaken largely by community-based organisations, most of these research projects were co-produced to some degree.

Manchester Deaf Centre ensured that questionnaires were relevant and meaningful when interpreted in BSL; Manchester People First,

were able to demonstrate how research carried out by people with learning disabilities generates useful learning about accessibility; Ethnic Health Forum showed how training women to be researchers ensured that women's experiences were included in the research.

The small pots of microfunding were spread widely through these communities, while mining community knowledge about hidden seams of experience.

Commitment to grassroots: Empowerment

Isolation and disempowerment often occur together - and compound each other. It's not just hard to break out of this double trap, it's also hard to reach people in this situation which is why empowering people is so important.

Ambition for Ageing workers in Bury established a reputation for being trustworthy through working with veterans. This led the police to introduce them to Women of Worth, a project supporting women with convictions who are affected by domestic abuse.

It took a little while to build the women's trust enough to find out what they needed and wanted as they were not used to being asked. It turned out that they wanted wellbeing classes and services, to feel more part of the community, as well as better in themselves.

Encouraged by this start, the women became more able to assert themselves and ask for what they wanted - although often these exceeded what could be provided and project workers found it hard to manage their expectations.

Creativity helped to mitigate some of these challenges: instead of paying for a yoga instructor, Ambition for Ageing funded a laptop for online yoga classes for the group which could also be used to help women book GP appointments without their partners' knowledge.

Treating people well: Valuing individuals

Sometimes working inclusively in practice is about small acts of care and attention.

A programme worker in Tameside recounted working with an older woman who was the sole carer for her mother. She was interested in doing more social things, but did not have a computer or smart phone to access social media, and found it difficult to get information. She relied on the project mailing information to her, and on seeing posters on public information boards:

“You sometimes have to really look around to find things that you are interested in. The more information about things that is available especially in busy areas is really useful, posters, flyers things like that.”

Eventually she was able to arrange cover care for her mother and went to an Ambition for Ageing -funded Meet and Mingle ‘singles’ event. The staff helped people mix by carefully allocating seating at the tables, and supporting conversation starters.

“As I was on my own this was really useful. If it hadn’t been for this I would not have had the confidence to speak to each other. At this event I met someone and we got on really well. We started dating and we have been together for nearly 18 months. By sending me information the project gave me the opportunity to find out what was going on and an incentive to try things.”



Treating people well: Making people feel welcome

Inclusion is an embodied experience; people need to feel welcome, and safe.

In addition to producing a leaflet on what safer spaces policies mean in practice, some members of the Equalities Board attended training in dealing with conflict, and understanding prejudice and discrimination.

The discussions were not easy, as members tackled complex issues and there was lively debate about how to tackle differences in religious and moral beliefs.

However, the Equalities Board had been working together for some time before this, and as a group had established a commitment to shared values.

By working at this level of values, Equalities Board staff and members produced a document that covered principles for working together, practical examples, and guidance for resolving problems.



Attendees from a variety of faith groups attend the Loneliness Conference - Better Together

D) LEADERSHIP

An inclusive culture comes from strong leadership - but leaders aren't always at the top of an organisation, and can be found at many levels within a programme. Leaders may be individual staff, groups and organisations, or community members. Leadership may involve initiating work, modelling good practice, or being a passionate local champion.

The following examples highlight how leadership is an important part in developing and delivering inclusive projects.



Raising awareness

Sometimes inclusion is about raising awareness of marginalised groups and providing them with a platform.

In Bury Ambition for Ageing staff took on the role of allies to the older LGBT community, leading on organising awareness sessions as spaces for older LGBT people to raise their voices about local issues.

They started an intergenerational LGBT Forum, which applied for funding for a Pride in Caring event, and a Rainbow Train during Bury Pride - a specially chartered service on the East Lancashire Railway.

This raised the need for equalities awareness training for the railway volunteers, and the profile of the programme as leaders in awareness - raising on equalities issues within the wider community.

The forum is now meeting regularly and has constituted as an independent charity.



Modelling inclusion

Inclusion is not only about meeting people's needs, but about modelling inclusion throughout design and delivery.

For many years prior to Ambition for Ageing, a Timebank project in Salford had been bringing together a diverse range of socially isolated people. When its funding ended, Ambition for Ageing stepped in to support the group's activities with a range of small investments.

The one hundred strong membership includes BAME people, disabled people, and people with mental health conditions, people who have experienced bereavement and those living in poverty.

Although the group provides both social activities and individual support when needed, it has also become a friendship group, strengthening the members' connections to each other and building their resilience.

Despite the strong bonds within the group it is open to new members, and has resulted in a number of activity groups based on members' specific interests.

Finding and supporting a community champion

Identifying and supporting community champions can be key to working within local communities.

In Tameside, Champa, a widow and member of the Gujarati community, was concerned about the isolation experienced by other widowed Gujarati women in the Ashton Waterloo area. Many of these women spoke little English, had little experience of using technology, and had historically relied on their husbands for social connection. Many of the women did not know how to use public transport, or Ring and Ride and many could barely use a telephone even to stay in touch with their children.

They were at high risk of health problems.

With the support of a teacher and a younger mother in the community, Champa applied to Ambition for Ageing for funding and got support from project staff to run activities in two locations.

As the women's confidence improved, she aimed to bring the groups together. The group, called Dipak Dristi or Sharing Light, has been a huge success, offering diverse activities including sharing life stories and recipes as well as dancing and traditional celebrations.

The group has now since grown, has working in partnership with other agencies such as Age UK Tameside to provide additional activities and has been able to offer more volunteering opportunities to the local community. More recently, the group became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and achieved the Age Friendly Quality Award in January 2020.



This document is available in a variety of formats from Ambition for Ageing including digital, printed, a summary version and a plain text version.

All of these can be found on our website:

www.ambitionforageing.org.uk/inclusiontoolkit

Also available are two supporting documents, *A spatial approach to working with marginalised communities*, which give step-by-step guidance in identifying and working with marginalised groups within your local community. This information is available as a briefing and a workbook at:

www.ambitionforageing.org.uk/equalitiesmodel

About Ambition for Ageing

Ambition for Ageing is a Greater Manchester wide cross-sector partnership, led by GMCVO and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, aimed at creating more age friendly places by connecting communities and people through the creation of relationships, development of existing assets and putting people aged over 50 at the heart of designing the places they live.

Ambition for Ageing is part of Ageing Better, a programme set up by The National Lottery Community Fund, the largest funder of community activity in the UK. Ageing Better aims to develop creative ways for people aged over 50 to be actively involved in their local communities, helping to combat social isolation and loneliness.

Ageing Better is one of five major programmes set up by The National Lottery Community Fund to test and learn from new approaches to designing services which aim to make people's lives healthier and happier.

The Ambition for Ageing Equalities Board brought together individuals with experience of inequality of ageing and equalities organisations working across Greater Manchester. Its role was to provide insight and research into inequalities and to advise Ambition for Ageing and delivery partners. It was ran by the LGBT Foundation.

This document was written by Clare Bonetree and Sarah Wilkinson, who supported the Equalities Board during its run.



Some of the members of the Ambition for Ageing Equalities Board



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