



WORKSHOP NOTES AND SELECTED FEEDBACK



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Ageing Better in Birmingham

Older People's Voice

Birmingham's workshop introduced the Birmingham team, and shared visuals of 'age of experience' members and the hub's activities with a focus on what the older person's voice means to the Birmingham programme. Group activities were used to open this topic up for discussion and allow attendees to share experiences. The interactive session also included a stereotyping activity around a number of case studies.

“Highlighted the need for volunteers to be more than volunteers – older person's voice is so important – need to enable and empower us as individuals to help shape the future for 'all' older people and across all ages.”

“Interesting to hear how older people are often talked over and ignored in ALL walks of life.”

Bristol Ageing Better

Nurturing Sustainability

Led by members of BAB's Older Persons Commissioning Panel and Community Researchers, this workshop explored ways in which groups and activities can be supported to become sustainable beyond the life of Ageing Better. Bristol discussed ways in which older volunteers can be supported to start their own activities, and eventually to have the encouragement and tools to become self-sustaining.

Key learning points

- The workshop discussed how finding longer term funding, partnership funding and commercial activities could all be potential ways of ensuring sustainability.
- There was a feeling that fixed subscription fees may be unavoidable, and make things possible, whilst other sources of funding included venue hire, sponsorship, community fundraising and donations.
- Volunteers were felt to be invaluable, with volunteers from businesses a source that could be tapped into.
- Community Researchers conducted in-depth evaluation to understand activities' ability to tackle loneliness long term. Significant effort has been invested into the training of community researchers and Bristol are exploring options to establish a social enterprise or to continue research as part of the Older Person's Forum work.
- The increasing potential of social media to engage with older people was explored. Different areas have different approaches with Thanet having a separate Facebook page for each project and Isle of Wight just one.
- Different media were felt to work for different audiences and communities.
- A tree of wellbeing concept was used with good roots for stability with leaves representing the outcomes and raindrops illustrating what was needed for projects to flourish.
- "One of the key messages was opening people's eyes and helping them to see they CAN! Give people aspirations."

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“Excellent morning with our Bristol colleagues. An insightful morning that encouraged thought-provoking interaction. Thank you Bristol.”

Ageing Better in Camden

Same but Different

Ageing Better in Camden shared their experiences of how to run a group with people from a BAME Community from the perspective of Bangladeshi women in Camden, London.

Through a translator, participants shared their experiences of finding out about and being involved in services delivered in Camden.

Key learning points

- The importance of tailored support (e.g. women only swimming sessions) was clearly identified.
- Reverse scaffolding as a support mechanism was recognised as very valuable (not only for people from BAME communities), with women accompanied weekly initially and support phased out to encourage independence.
- It is important to have friendly groups where people understand participants and they can feel at home and welcomed.
- Groups that want to involve people from BAME communities need to recognise and cater to their additional access needs.
- In some cultures women have very little interaction with money – Camden has supported women to learn to handle cash. This has opened up opportunities for them to continue to access leisure services independently.

***“Really good to see representatives from the actual group.
Gained a better understanding of the culture.”***

Brightlife, Cheshire

Commissioning

Brightlife's workshop was facilitated by members of Brightlife's Older People's Alliance and used an interactive approach to allow attendees to experience the commissioning process up close. It explored how 'Bright Ideas' commissions got off the ground with attendees given the opportunity to play the role of a community group member or a commissioner, and assess the impact that £20,000 can have on the local community.

Key learning points

- The only people who take commissioning decisions for Cheshire are older representatives.
- Smaller projects have tended to be the most innovative.
- The most innovative ideas sit with communities, not commissioners.
- Trusting in the older representatives as commissioners has been powerful and beneficial.
- One project provides support to community groups to help them to explore their idea and turn it into a bid. This has been really positive and enabled smaller groups with no experience of funding to be involved.

“Long term thinking – walked away with ideas for the future programme.”

T.E.D. (Ageing Better East Lindsey)

Connections

Friendship groups are a self-sustaining community initiative developed through Talk, Eat, Drink (TED) as part of the National Lottery funded Ageing Better programme. At present, there are five established TED friendship groups across East Lindsey and 3 new groups are in development. The aim of the groups is to welcome and encourage anyone over the age of 50 to get involved with their local community, meet new people, and take part in social activities. Friendship groups are led by volunteers and support is provided by the T.E.D Friendship Officer. Volunteers are encouraged to form connections, plan activities, outings and engage other members of the group to ensure the groups success and longevity.

The workshop explored the barriers to connection and how friendship groups can form good connections with each other, local services, and lonely and/or socially isolated people aged 50 and over. During the workshop staff and volunteers from the TED programme provided an overview of TED and the Friendship Groups and attendees were invited to take part in a coproduction learning activity entitled: Through Their Eyes.

Key learning points

- Rurality is one of the key factors for isolation for the over 50s within East Lindsey.
- Lack of transport is one of the major issues which we face in engaging people in TED across Lincolnshire.
- There is a focus on engaging more men in TED Friendship groups and deliver partner programmes based on feedback and outcomes from the CMF data.
- We now have a strong emphasis on the sustainability and legacy of the TED Programme.
- Toolkits and sustainability plans are now being developed to ensure the work of TED continues once the funding has ceased.
- Friendship groups are volunteer led to provide that sustainability.

- The test and learn aspect of the programme has allowed it to adapt to the needs of the Beneficiaries.
- Close partnership with East Lindsey District Council to share TED learning for sustainability and future development.

“Really good range of information and programmes for those in more isolated communities.”

Ambition for Ageing (Greater Manchester)

Getting your voice heard –having an influence

Members of the Greater Manchester Older People’s Network delivered a presentation to show how they champion older people’s voices, have an influence and campaign on issues that matter to older people.

The presentation was followed by a table exercise to share experiences of older people getting their voice heard or making a change. The session discussed some of the current priority issues for older people and considered how Age Better programmes might work together across the country to make a difference.

Key points

- There are 300 people in the Older People’s Network. The project aims to be representative and has members from all Greater Manchester boroughs.
- The group empowers older people to strengthen their voice and have voice and influence, for example two members were invited to participate in a House of Lords inquiry into intergenerational fairness and service provision.
- Regular large scale events of up to 100 people give older people the opportunity to discuss what matters for them. They are also attended by key decision-makers such as the Mayor.

“I’d heard great things about what’s happening in Manchester and hoped to gain a better insight into the initiatives being developed there. I wasn’t disappointed! Good stuff!”

Connect Hackney

Challenging stereotypes

Stereotyping is part of everyday life and, in many instances, vital to our survival, when needing to make quick decisions to assess perceived danger and take appropriate action. However, stereotypes are often formed on out dated opinions, biased thinking, skewed information, or just simply untruths. It's important to recognise how we stereotype others, the barriers these create and how to make new connections and nurture existing relationships. Connect Hackney's workshop challenged attendees to think on how they might stereotype others and possibly how others might stereotype them.

Key learning points

- We all make judgements about people which are often inaccurate and can act as a barrier to making new connections.
- Theatre was a particularly powerful way of demonstrating stereotypes and how challenge them. It allowed attendees to actively participate, without fear of judgement, as the theatre style workshop used a character, rather than a real person.
- The workshop demonstrated that we all make judgements, and that's normal. However, it's important to challenge what judgements we're making about others, and see how our judgements can impact on those on the receiving end, either directly or indirectly, and the workshop provided a safe space to do this.

“Excellent experiential workshop – example of a very creative way of looking at & dealing with stereotypes – fun!”

Age Friendly Island (Isle of Wight)

Transport and Isolation

The Isle of Wight's ambitious workshop used a live radio broadcast from Sheffield to share their approach to improving transport on the island for older people. Attendees (and the audience in the Isle of Wight) heard from some of their older people what difference the work done with local bus company, Southern Vectis, has made to their travel experiences. There was opportunity to join in discussions on what else could be done to make it even better.

Key learning points

- Isle of Wight have done work promoting the island as being Age Friendly by bus; designing safer journey cards and sharing safe travelling tips (for example: have money ready, don't rush off buses, hold on securely, look after your bags, sit down as soon as you can).
- Training is now compulsory for all bus drivers on the island (using age simulation suits and glasses to give indication of sight problems). Bus drivers have said that this gives a real insight into what it is like to be older.
- There are economic challenges – bus companies want “bums on seats”.
- Age Friendly training is now increasing on the mainland as there is a measurable decrease in falls and trips on buses.
- Leeds has provided training for drivers as well and drivers and around 50% will now wait for you to sit down before moving.
- In Leicester there are issues re travelling at night as no buses. Bristol residents also reported that waiting for buses in the centre in an evening can be scary.
- Bristol also have a similar system to safer journey cards and these have spaces for people to write own condition on.

- Better Journeys in Sheffield are working with Stagecoach and they have a compulsory training course. Also looking at active transport re walking and cycling re 5 ways to wellbeing.
- Leicester U3A group have a leader who helps coordinate transport trips and people join in because of having confidence in the leader and being part of a group
- Mixed economy of transport is important – not just one size fits all
- East Lindsey – longer bus journeys with more stops – mean some rural journeys can be three hours.
- Hackney – have had to fund paid support to help people get out of their houses and to whatever transport there is expensive.
- Volunteer driver schemes can help.

“Wonderful what they have achieved! To be able to get the bus company to get their drivers to commit to look after the older generation. Excellent.”

“Shows transport is a major difficulty everywhere. I liked the stories of bus drivers and changing attitudes and the extending timetables idea.”

Time to Shine (Leeds)

Transition

Time to Shine, the Leeds Ageing Better Programme, has worked with a small team from the Centre for Policy on Ageing, funded by the Gulbenkian Foundation, to develop and run a pre-retirement course, based on Story. This workshop explored how programmes sustain themselves, and how to keep going when funding runs out. It focused on opening up the creativity of the community to explore ideas and generate options and the challenges of finding participants.

- The pre-retirement course is the first of its kind to support attendees to develop emotional resilience.
- Feedback from attendees has been extremely positive, but recruiting participants has been almost impossible after an initial partnership with a council early leavers' initiative ended.
- It is felt that difficulty in engaging people may be due to lack of awareness; employee concern about being seen as considering retirement; and/or lack of interest in this type of training, with people perhaps being more concerned about financial advice and not being aware of the potential emotional impact of retirement.

“Very interesting. Well presented with good ideas. Great idea! Support needs to be delivered at early stages of life, not the latter part.”

Leicester Ageing Together

Sustainability: it's not all about the money, money, money.

A diverse group of Leicester Ageing Together participants explored ideas and exchange learning on keeping things going when the funding runs out. Their workshop shared imaginative and enterprising ways in which they are planning to 'fill the gap' and survive and thrive, from new ideas like the 'Cosy Bus' to changing perceptions of disability.

Key learning points

- Leicester Ageing together extended their programme and used the time to explore diverse ways to keep activities going, for example opening a community café, an idea from local people.
- Drawing on the diversity of community and their ideas is key – they know their place and people best.
- Camden's Warm Welcome approach was discussed – bringing people, who may feel very uncomfortable, into activities by giving a warm welcome can massively increase engagement.
- Cafes have worked well to engage the community – Leicester have expanded this model.
- Local businesses have provided food for free which has enabled the café to run Christmas Day meals – engaging with local businesses can be very worthwhile.
- Don't focus on getting funding for sustainability – building and connecting communities is important.
- Intergenerational work is important, especially finding ways to connect people across generations. Consider funding outreach to engage younger people with older people.
- Asset Based Community Development, building from the bottom up is more sustainable than top-down deficit-based models.

“Really liked the way that Leicester focussed on alternative ways of supporting groups when funding declining. Greatest resources is people – and they recognised this.”

Ageing Better Middlesbrough

Creating Community

Middlesbrough's workshop used the metaphor of cake to explore the successes and failures of creating communities, with an opportunity for participants to share their highs and lows. community. If community was cake how would you create the perfect slice? What are the essential ingredients and what is the ideal recipe? What do you do if it all goes wrong?

Key learning points

- Communities enhance wellbeing and it is human nature to need to be part of a community – essential to wellbeing.
- Language is important to engaging with communities. Using 'helper' rather than 'volunteer' removes barriers to enable people to get involved.
- Although people may become active within their communities, there is a reluctance to come out of local communities (or communities of interest) to become involved in broader programme activities.
- Change can be difficult for people to accept.
- Older people who take part in activities wear a badge. This has led to conversations on the bus, widening awareness of the programme.

“Well structured – good to hear about the programme and the activity helped focus on our own areas and encourage discussion.”

Age Better in Sheffield

All voices are created equal: an innovative approach to co-governance

Age Better in Sheffield's Core Partnership is responsible for overseeing their whole programme. It brings together beneficiaries and public sector professionals to make decisions in a collaborative and sustainable way. 50% of the Core Partners are aged 50+ and their lived experience contributes to the design, delivery, evaluation and ultimate success of our programme. In this workshop the Head of Partnerships and 2 of the programme's Core Partners shared their experience of co-governance. Participants had the opportunity to take part in a mini exercise demonstrating the use of tools for creating the right environment where all voices can be valued equally.

Key learning points

- The membership of the board has changed over time but the older people representatives have been particularly consistent: 4 out of 5 the members of the Core Partnership who were there at the start are over 50.
- A Clore fellow visited the core partnership – "I was struck by the fact that the disparate group of individuals with diff experiences and views were also a cohesive, functional board that exhibited mutual respect and trust" – but a lot goes on behind that to prepare and to develop trust and honesty . It takes planning and spending time together and trying different tools to provide space for discussion and to hear people etc.
- Consensus building – looking to legacy (through "appreciative enquiry" process).
- The partnership seeks to be transformative not ameliorative (changing lives).
- Two Core Partners went on a co-production workshop in Europe last year – connectedness and art and culture so high on the list of what people want in life.

- The workshop practiced an exercise in transformative listening – concentrated listening (not being interrupted) from Nancy Kline’s Time to Think methodology which is used in Core partnership meetings. This demonstrated how hard it is to listen and say nothing and how it can allow space for the other person to speak.
- The workshop discussed use of this in business meetings and how it could be used in other programme governance and meetings.

“Really interesting mix of talk and interactive work. Imaginative and made us all think. We could progress this.”

Ageless Thanet

Health, wellbeing, isolation and loneliness

Ageless Thanet have worked hard to challenge perceptions of ageing and deliver health and wellbeing activities/services which don't conform to the 'usual' model for 'stuff for old people'. Professionals and volunteers from Ageless Thanet shared their approach and the impact it is having upon older people in Kent. Attendees were also encouraged to reflect on their own thoughts and feelings about what health, wellbeing, social isolation and loneliness actually meant to them through drawing pictures.

Key points

- Breaking down stereotypes is a key aim of Ageless Thanet.
- Some activities are moving towards a charging model so that they can be sustained. This seems to be working well.
- All test and learn innovations are monitored by the university who explore the impact on the local area.
- Supporting the community by giving equipment to help them set up rather than cash works well (e.g. gardening equipment for the gardening group).
- An Age Friendly Business scheme gives older people a reward scheme which allows businesses who are part of the scheme to give discounts if someone shows the card. Businesses involved have reported increased business as people are more likely to go if they perceive that they are getting something off.
- Participants have been supported to set up their own businesses which can have transformative effects on their life as well as being good for the local economy.

“Loved the variation of Ageless Thanet. They have continued to progress since the conference in Margate last year.”

Age Well Torbay

Creating engaging communities

Torbay's highly interactive workshop invited attendees to play the Ageing Well Torbay interactive board game and learn how Ageing Well Torbay has put Torbay on the map through creatively engaging communities. The workshop celebrated the successes and learned about the pitfalls and challenges they have encountered.

Key learning points

- People like having a chance to be kind. Age Well Torbay call these kind and generous people the gift givers, or Connectors.
- People sometimes need to be told 'yes you can' and when they know they can do whatever they want to do, they set up activities for themselves and others. So far there are over 250 citizen led activities set up in this way at the Ageing Well Torbay (AWT) programme.
- Community Builders find the Connectors in communities and neighbourhoods by being visible, in parks, cafes and communal spaces and making approaches. These random encounters also help them to find 'bumping places' which might be local cafes where the owners are community spirited.
- Activities funded are wide-ranging including a community café, a community bus service (funded through subscriptions), a community radio show, an annual festival, a friendship group, evening walks and a Shed workshop (initially for men but expanded).
- A panel of older people was empowered to select and fund eight projects to the tune of £170,000.
- Several of the projects are now self-sustaining.
- A group of older people worked on a Positive Ageing Charter - a way of "changing the conversation" about what services and facilities are provided to the older population which statutory bodies and organisations have been asked to sign up to.

- Age Well Torbay are in the process of setting up the Torbay Over 50's Assembly to represent the views of older people at all levels of governance.

“Enjoyed. Age well Torbay, good to hear about their success, but just as important the challenges they faced. Rivena FM sounds FAB.”

Dr Sharron Hinchcliff, University of Sheffield

Intimate relationships and sexual health in the over 50s

Torbay's highly interactive workshop invited attendees to play the Ageing Well Torbay interactive board game and learn how Ageing Well Torbay has put Torbay on the map through creatively engaging communities. The workshop celebrated the successes and learned about the pitfalls and challenges they have encountered.

Key learning points

- There is a lot of ageism around sexual health – absent from campaigns and not receiving appropriate sexual health care
- The subject is often not spoken of – partly through embarrassment for this age group. Sex wasn't on the agenda when young for many and then "shouldn't be doing it now"
- Sexual health often focuses on reproduction and contraception but STDs are on the increase amongst older people and need to look across the life course
- Professionals need to talk more about sexual wellbeing and keeping healthy rather than just issues like how to get through the menopause.
- Some programme areas are being asked to look at setting up a dating agency – it was felt that this gave rise to both challenges and opportunities.
- Leeds – identified specific issues for LGBT+ people. Banter of some men which some women uncomfortable to hear. Many gay men very aware of STD. Sexual health for lesbians is very different with a lot of misunderstandings within the medical profession.
- Appreciation of intimacy increases as get older.
- Long term conditions and medication can affect sexual health (doctors don't always discuss the side effects when prescribing).
- The research shows that it's a stereotype that older men want sex and older women don't – main determinant is your own health (in US survey sexual desire declined from 75).

"There wasn't time to do full justice to this topic! Sharron Hinchcliff gave an excellent presentation and is clearly an expert in her subject."

