

AGE BETTER  
IN SHEFFIELD



Creative collaborations are  
inspired within the Age Better in  
Sheffield Programme

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**Change is often a catalyst for innovation and ABiS have channelled their creativity to find resourceful ways of linking with community partners. Third sector services & ABiS volunteers have united to co-create meaningful connections for older people through a co-delivered community initiative.**

**The “Moments of Joy” campaign harnesses people’s passions and interests to help them remain positive and feel connected, and it’s certainly raising smiles across the city.**

**Edyta, Age Better in Sheffield Programme Manager, reflects on what the team have learnt from this experience so far:**

**How did you first respond to the lockdown situation?**

As a small team we realised that we couldn't do this on our own and almost overnight became part of a community hub set up by Voluntary Action Sheffield (VAS), bringing third sector services together, each of us with our own unique set of skills.

We wanted the people of Sheffield to be able to tell us what they needed and trust that we would find a way to match that. Working within the wider network of South Yorkshire Housing Association (SYHA), enabled us to act quickly, linking with SYHA's volunteer team. We assumed different roles from our norm, providing telephone support and overseeing a new befriending service.

### **What are you doing to ensure that the Ageing Better programme can still be delivered successfully?**

We were conscious of the vulnerability of older people living in care homes, facing the prospect of long-term lockdown. Our first response was to act quickly to the changing landscape, but we realised that a different type of support would be needed weeks' down the line, to prevent a decline in mental health.

Working with several care homes across the city, we co-designed "a check in and chat" service, offering a 15-minute daily phone call to residents through a team of volunteers, supported by a Telephone Befriending Service Guide. This enabled us to listen to people's needs and as a result our "Moments of Joy" campaign was born.

So, we developed a "hello Sheffield neighbourhood box" with Sheffield inspired memorabilia, activities and tips for the community. The activity packs were tailored for care home residents and included items such as wool, crafts and colouring books, truly co-designed to meet with specific need.





Unable to see live theatre and music, people wanted a creative outlet and as part of our campaign we teamed up with local artists to bring live performances to the care homes, whilst following social distancing guidelines.



Volunteers are also holding creative conversations with residents online and on the phone, tailored to the individual, such as sharing a sonnet, a chapter in a book or the planning of a future trip!

### **What are you most proud of as a team?**

We are proud of what we have been able to achieve with very few tools, by stripping things back to a simple conversation and asking, "what do you need"? This has shaped more creative ways of working which has inspired energy and enthusiasm within the team.

### **What's been the greatest gift?**

The ability to work flexibly, try things out and learn from them. We are thankful to our funders the National Lottery Community Fund who provide us with the flexibility to do the job we are passionate about. Our collaborations come from the heart and I think people see that. We have had many offers to get involved with our new initiatives during this time. VAS have been instrumental in pulling things together and feeding back to Sheffield City Council and other key stakeholders around what communities need the most.

## What top tips can you & the team share with us?

You don't have to fix everything on your own! Ageing Better is not a crisis service so put your boundaries in place. Consider what you can do and what your limitations are. An understanding of local networks ensures you can signpost someone to the best available support.

The recovery stage takes more planning so don't go head-first into this; tap into the knowledge around you and focus on your part within the bigger picture. Take a step back, be clear on the skills and strengths that you can offer and then place yourself within the web of collective skills, this is how co-production works best!

By simply asking older people what would bring them joy and collaborating with organisations that you can trust, you can achieve a lot in a short space of time.

Thank you so much to Age Better in Sheffield for such inspiring insights on how to co-produce in a crisis!



# **Age Better in Sheffield**

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