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Co-production blogs

Co-producing in a Crisis: How Ageing Better in Birmingham have harnessed the internet

This is the first of a mini blog series, "Co-producing in a Crisis", that we will be sharing over the next few weeks as part of The Ageing Better Co-production Project. We will share how Ageing Better programmes across England have risen to the challenge of the Covid-19 pandemic, to ensure that communities can continue to work together to meet the needs of older people.

By Imogen Parker · May 7, 2020

All 14 Ageing Better programme areas are finding ways to adapt & evolve through the storm of this pandemic. As part of our learning around co-production, we wanted to share some examples as, after all, the national co-production project is all about sharing what we know. Over the next couple of months, we will publish blogs featuring how community partners are working together and continuing to be connected at this time. This series will also highlight “**top tips for co-producing in a crisis**” and **key things to consider** when responding to the unprecedented.

First up are **[Ageing Better in Birmingham](#)**. I was fortunate enough to sit in on their Network Enabler’s meeting at the beginning of this journey. **[Neighbourhood Hubs](#)** across Birmingham jumped on Zoom to find effective ways of communicating Covid-19 guidance and sharing ideas on how to respond.

Miriam Aslam, Relationship & Contract Manager, tells us what has been happening since then and how groups have been taking the plunge to move online.



AGEING BETTER IN BIRMINGHAM

As a result of Covid-19, the way in which Ageing Better in Birmingham achieves co-production at the different levels of the programme has, like everything else in life, had to change.

The biggest change is of course to our delivery. Community groups are working closely with their participants to come up with new and innovative ways to continue interaction through these times of social distancing.

One great example of people coming together during this time, and changing the way they deliver

One great example of people coming together during this time, and changing the way they deliver their activity, comes from our **City-Wide hub**. Prior to social distancing, the hub was a music group who would meet twice a week to listen to and create music together; each session comprising of a programme of live music by professional performers, followed by an opportunity for community members to come on stage to perform in a supportive environment.

As a result of the outbreak of Covid-19, the group has found a way to come together using WhatsApp and Facebook to keep the activity going. Around 75 people now use the online hub to communicate daily by sharing and receiving messages. This also offers a way to discuss music, interact and is a source for information about coronavirus as well as debunking misinformation.

The group also uses Facebook to share live concerts and videos and this has grown in recent months to around 275 members from across the globe. This creates a much larger opportunity to connect with people beyond the restrictions of a physical meeting space.

Our co-production cohort, The Age of Experience Group, have been trialling Google Hangouts as a way for them to chat and video call one another. They also receive weekly packs in the post which include regular programme updates. As we move into the next quarter, we will be conducting lots of meetings via zoom so that everyone can make a valuable contribution to the direction of our programme together.

What to consider when moving group connection online?

When moving activity online, it's important to consider digital inclusion so not to leave those that are disabled or not technically savvy behind. To combat this, we have been working with a local CIC (Community Interest Company) called **[Digikicks](#)** to provide technical support to our Age of Experience members to help them get online. For some of our hard of hearing members we are making key adjustments such as sending documents out in the post for them to comment on.

Our TOP TIP to keep people working together!

The key to continuing co-production is supporting effective communication, empowering and supporting those members that want to move online, listening to the different reasons or barriers that mean others may not want to, and finding a range of alternative means that include everyone.

A big thank-you to Miriam & the team for sharing their insights. [Here](#) are some of the other ways in which communities across Birmingham are coming together!

Next up is Age Better in Sheffield who will be providing a snapshot of their co-created community initiative "Moments of Joy", sharing why this has raised so many smiles and how adapting to a crisis has sparked a creative streak!

Co-written by Miriam Aslam of Ageing Better in Birmingham & Vicky O'Donoghue Ageing Better's Co-Production Project Lead.

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Age Better in Sheffield

Age Better in Sheffield was set up in 2015 with funding from the National Lottery Community Fund with a remit to reduce loneliness and social isolation amongst people aged over 50 in Sheffield. In the 7th year of the programme, we are taking the learning, resources, partnerships and projects forward with a renewed focus and passion towards building an Age-friendly Sheffield.

What we do

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