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## Coproducing to overcome times of crisis: How Bristol Ageing Better have ensured coproduction remains at the heart of their programme

Bristol Ageing Better are ensuring coproduction remains an integral part of their programme and consider the what's, where's and how's of engaging people during this time of separation.



This week's blog from the **#ABCOPRO – Coproducing in a Crisis series**, comes from [Bristol Ageing Better](#) aka **BAB**, who have chosen to focus specifically on how projects and services can continue to be coproduced when staff, volunteers and clients are all physically separated.

Claire Chivers (Learning & Monitoring Officer) together with the BAB team, have been reflecting on how to keep things going. They highlight the importance of finding new ways of coproducing activities and services with older people, believing that it is important to continue including the voice of older people at this current time.

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*with so many other things to focus on and adapt to, it could be easy for organisations to temporarily side-line coproduction and slip into a way of working that involves 'doing to' or 'doing for' older people instead of 'doing with'. We are continuing to learn as we go along but would like to share some of our learning so far to support the collaborative approach of Ageing Better.*

## **Some of the ways that people have been engaging and what to consider:**

### **Group video meetings**



Our older volunteers have been using platforms such as Zoom which has worked well for them. Our Community Researchers, for example, continue to meet on a fortnightly basis to reflect on their co-evaluations of the BAB programme and to steer new research being undertaken by University of the West of England.

We have learnt that we need to proactively offer a variety of ways that individuals can be involved in video meetings, such as via computer, smartphone or landline, offering an audio only option. It's helpful to circulate clear instructions for each method and offer to do practice run-throughs beforehand to enable everyone to take part.

### **Over the telephone**

Some of our small community groups which are led by older people are continuing to engage with their members over the phone.

To ensure that everyone, especially within larger groups, can be involved, the organising committee has divided up members between themselves so that they can continue to gather views and hear individual experiences. This ensures that older people's opinions and ideas can be used to inform the group's activities and their future direction.

### **Audio and video clips**

The logo for 'The Babbers Show' is centered on a red background. It features a large blue circle with a white border. Inside the circle, the text 'The' is at the top in a white serif font. Below it, 'BABBERS' is written in a large, bold, white serif font, underlined with two white horizontal lines. At the bottom of the circle, the word 'Show' is written in a white serif font.

# The BABBERS Show

This has proved to be a great way to directly share older people's voices more widely. The local Bristol-based radio show [The Babbers](#) and the national radio show [Primetimers](#) are both run by and for older people. These shows are successfully being produced throughout Covid-19 by guests recording audio clips from home. Similarly, our [online workshops](#) for setting up a bereavement peer-support group involve audio and video clips submitted by members of the [Stockwood STAR group](#).

## Written stories and experiences

Good old-fashioned ways of sharing ideas and reflecting on experiences, combined with the use of social media, has been a fantastic way for organisations to engage with older people. Some organisations in the BAB programme have been actively sharing older people's written stories and experiences. [Bristol Older People's Forum](#) (BOPF), for example, have been publishing regular 'Corona Diaries' written by their members and sharing them through their social media.

## What we have learnt

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Although there are challenges, for some these new coproduction options may lead to a higher level of engagement between organisations and individuals, enabling a more proactive empowering relationship. We have found that people are choosing to submit content and suggest ideas for the first time.

However, it is important to remember that, for others, the opposite might happen. For example, if someone has not previously had any contact with an organisation (perhaps you have discovered them for the first time during the Covid-19 pandemic), then being asked to join an online meeting or to submit something you have written can be highly intimidating. It might be a step further than a person's confidence allows.

## Our challenge to you

We are still learning and would love to know how other organisations are supporting individuals in this situation? We know that individual phone calls are an option, but there must be lots of other options out there too and we are eager to hear about them.

*So, our question to you is – what have you been doing to coproduce with those who have less confidence, who are new to your service and who you can't meet up with in person?*

A big thank you to Claire and the team for sharing BAB learning so far and for posing that great question – we would love to hear your responses and create a collaborative blog on **how to build people's confidence to engage with us during this time!**

**Please email ideas and suggestions to me at [v.odonoghue@syha.co.uk](mailto:v.odonoghue@syha.co.uk)**

For more info on what BAB, in collaboration with Age UK Bristol, have been involved in to support older people and their families during the current COVID-19 situation, click [here](#) to link to the Bristol Support Hub.

Next up are Ageing Better in Camden, reflecting on how their members are supporting one another through a member-led network and sustaining their founding principle that “older people are their greatest asset”!

Blog co-written by Claire Chivers of Bristol Ageing Better and Vicky O'Donoghue, Co-production Project Lead, Age Better in Sheffield.

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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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