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Promoting an age friendly culture: How Time to Shine are driving forward their Age Proud campaign

Vicky, Ageing Better's Senior Co-production lead, joined the Time to Shine steering group, gaining insight into how our West Yorkshire based Ageing Better programme are upholding their age-friendly narrative.

Time to Shine, led by the **Leeds Older People's Forum** are pressing ahead despite current COVID-19 restrictions, demonstrating their passion to raise awareness around ageism and change negative attitudes towards older people.

Invited to join their steering group last month, I was inspired by how this group of age friendly ambassadors have seamlessly transitioned to collaborating online. Their focus was to ensure that strong age friendly messages are continuing to be heard and that community engagement is still at the forefront of their work.

After checking in with each other over the trials, tribulations *and* highlights of lockdown, a quick lesson on Zoom functions and a review of online meeting etiquette, the steering group got straight down to business. The questions on today's agenda were; **How can we promote age friendliness during this crisis?** And **what do we want to see included in the next Decade of Healthy Ageing?**

The group were asked to reflect on three questions linked to an upcoming Age Friendly Communities Conference to be attended by Sarah Prescott (Time to Shine's Community Officer). Based on a hypothetical journalist visit to Leeds, to find out about how the city is contributing to a world where people can live longer and happier lives, members considered, ***who they might like the journalist to meet, what examples they would like to communicate and what specific things they would like to see featured in the article.***

Time to Shine

Discussions concerned the setting up of an **Age Friendly Facebook page** to promote what was already happening around the city, helping to bring people into the conversation and provide a platform for the sharing of personal experiences.

The group also explored how older people might be encouraged and supported to write articles for the new [Shine Magazine](#), which has been created as a response to COVID-19. This publication is available online and is also being distributed in partnership with Leeds City Council and 33 hubs across the city, to reach those who are the most lonely and isolated. They agreed that its success very much relied on connecting to the hearts of older people. One member talked about how cathartic putting pen to paper could be and how this current time created an opportunity to nurture people's writing potential. The magazine certainly provides a space for older people to share their reactions to what is happening in the wider world.

Care homes were another hot topic and members were keen to connect with care home residents to let them know that there is a world out there "that cares" and the importance of looking directly in to a

shine

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person's eyes; considering the best ways of doing that within this new digital world.

Alternative ways of offering telephone befriending were thought to be one option to connect such

Alternative ways of offering **telephone befriending** were thought to be one option to connect, such as offering an intergenerational approach; the consensus was to tap into what was already happening across their networks rather than totally re-inventing the wheel.

When turning their attention to the **Decade of Healthy Living**, which focuses on the *healthy ageing* agenda over the next ten years, the group are keen to promote all the great things that Leeds has to offer such as green open spaces, and felt it important to showcase what older people in Leeds are already busy doing. One way was through interviews with older people and third sector organisations such as the Older People's Forum who are invested in supporting the Ageing Better movement. Age friendly imagery was considered key, demonstrating the very essence of "age friendliness", which would encourage others to take age friendly action.

Time to feel good about ageing

The general vibe was definitely "*nothing ventured, nothing gained*" and the group see their role as **identifying** the good things that are already happening, **sharing** what's out there and **enabling** others to tap into models of good practice.

ers to tap into models of good practice.

Time to Shine members have also been taking part in “Community Conversations” on their local community radio programme with [Chapel FM](#) as part of their [Age Proud Campaign](#), and are keen for other members to take part in radio interviews to help change ageist perspectives.

The meeting highlighted what can still be achieved despite the current lack of face to face contact and below are some key messages/insights.

Key insights

- Great ideas are created when we are forced to stop, step back and deliver things in different ways
- Reflective questions are a great way to help spark ideas before getting together online, or offline for that matter
- It’s most definitely possible to consider present moment priorities and how best to respond, whilst keeping a keen eye on what’s coming up in the future
- A structured agenda is essential to keep everyone on track and good facilitation ensures that everyone has an opportunity to take part, feel included and reflect on their own wellbeing
- A well-rounded meeting ensures that a lot of ground can be covered in a very short space of time

Despite overcoming their own individual challenges, Time to Shine’s steering group members are more determined than ever to promote positive awareness around ageing and reach those who are the most lonely and vulnerable. A big thanks for the opportunity to gain an insight into your work and I’m looking forward to finding out more.

Next up: We will be talking **Co-Production Week** and looking at how we can better engage with those who are less confident or new to our programmes & services, as per the [BAB Challenge](#)!

Written by Vicky O’Donoghue (Co-Production Project Lead for Ageing Better) on behalf of the Time to Shine Team

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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.

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