



Strengthening diversity of engagement via outreach and co-production

A Good Practice Mentors case study with:

Dudley Council Public Health's Healthy Ageing Team

The Healthy Ageing Team (HAT) in Dudley Council Public Health approached the Good Practice Mentors (GPM) with the aim of strengthening their engagement work with local older people. Conscious that they weren't reaching diverse voices, they were looking for support to reach and engage older people not known to services.

The GPM team delivered support that:

- aimed to build the knowledge and confidence of Healthy Ageing Champions and partner organisations in using co-production and outreach approaches
- supported staff to understand what is important to the community, by exploring how to capture insight from 'seldom heard' and diverse groups.



From building knowledge to practical application

GPM's bespoke support initially focused on the work of the Healthy Ageing Team, increasing knowledge of:

- informal outreach and co-production models and principles
- identifying seldom heard voices and exploring related barriers to engagement
- co-designing Outreach and [Street Outreach for Social Action Research](#) activity (SOSAR)

This was followed by in-person, multi-agency, GPM supported SOSAR, sharing practical skills and approaches to reach, engage with, and capture the insight of seldom heard older people.

Finally, a bespoke online session for the wider Healthy Ageing Team network included:

- exploring barriers and preconceptions to engagement
- psychological impacts of loneliness and social isolation
- informal conversational strategies.



This multi-faceted approach was effective for the HAT team:

“We particularly liked the format of learning and support, first to find out what we were doing in Dudley regarding healthy ageing which then moved to the theory and building our knowledge base and followed up by practically applying the learning in real life.”

Meeting people where they are

GPM introduced the Dudley HAT team to informal street outreach approaches. By identifying ‘bumping spaces’ in the town centre, staff were able to engage local older people and share information about their upcoming pop-up event, which resulted in the following:

- **94 unique interactions**
- **30 people interested in pop-up, 18 planning to attend**
- **11 ‘special conversations’ (where the person shared something about their life and/or the engagement becomes a substantial interaction)**
- **7 people shared something that indicated isolation**



Informally capturing insight via Street Outreach as Social Action Research

After collecting insight from older people, the Good Practice Mentor collated and analysed the SOSAR information before sharing with the Dudley HAT.

Number of conversations = 41 14 men 27 women		
Indicators	Responses	Insights
Isolation	12 (6 women and 6 men)	Feels isolated. <i>“The world has changed so much. It feels like everything has moved on”</i>
Live alone	10 (6 women and 4 men)	<i>“Would like to get out of home more, not stuck between 4 walls”</i>
Loneliness	8 (2 women and 6 men)	
Health	8 (5 women and 3 men)	
Mobility	7 (4 women and 3 men)	
'How do you spend your time?'	35	The majority of people met and engaged via SOSAR shared everyday activities including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coming into the town centre • walking • shopping • to get out the house Only 4 people mentioned attending formal groups and activities
'Do you feel you are meeting enough people?'	36	Yes 16, No 15, Other 5
'What do you do to look after your health?'	33	19 people walked everyday, 3 people mentioned social interaction

The final part of the community engagement process was the hosting of a 'pop-up' event in a local shopping centre. The comms shared during the street outreach invited people to this informal event, and further insight was captured from attendees via light-touch co-production methods. In total, 30+ people were met and engaged during the street outreach. GPM shared creative engagement methods when supporting staff to ask attendees:

- Where are the good places to go in your area?
- What brings you into Dudley Town Centre?
- What needs improving?



Increased confidence and new engagement methods

As a result of GPM's training, Dudley's HAT increased their skills, and gained practical, informal, outreach and co-production tools and techniques.

“We have all grown in confidence and feel more comfortable in approaching and talking to people on the street, and this has helped us reach a more diverse group of people.”

Via new engagement methods - which they have continued to use when engaging with local older people - the team captured meaningful insight about social isolation, connection and health and wellbeing from seldom heard older people.

“We have added a new tool to our toolbox for doing engagement work. We are applying street/outreach engagement tools and running pop-up events during our Dudley ageing well festival.”

Attendees learned how to create ‘outreach friendly’ communications, which are jargon-free and avoid presenting social risks or anything that may be perceived as a barrier to engagement.

“We have simplified the way we collect data and we make sure our flyers and posters are worded well and we are more aware of anything that might put people off.”

Overall, the already present skills of staff were strengthened and developed, building on the techniques the team were already doing and enabling them to reach a more diverse range of older people, including those seldom heard from.

“the team have reflected on the support we have had from GPM[s] and we have improved on the way we do things”



If you would like to discuss how GPM could support you to reach, engage and connect with your community then please drop us an email:

✉ GPM@syha.co.uk

For more information and resources please visit our website:

🌐 [GPM Website](#)

Please see our Eventbrite page for our upcoming workshops

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