

Outreach Friendly Comms

**Using comms as a tool to help you
find, speak to and engage the
people not looking for you**

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Contents:

- Using outreach friendly comms as a tool to find and engage the people not looking for you
- Exploring motivation and self-identification with your offer
- Addressing barriers and preconceptions through language
- Practical tips for creating and using your outreach friendly comms
- Other resources

Using outreach friendly comms as a tool to find and engage the people not looking for you

Often the people we hope to reach and engage about our offer are not thinking about or looking for us. Outreach friendly comms can help you to:

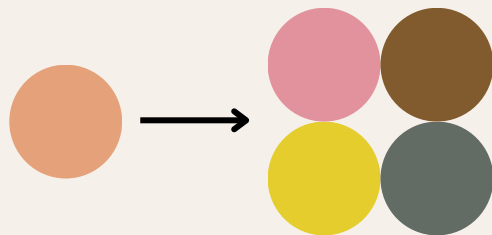
- Proactively find and engage the people 'not looking for you'
- Address 'it's not for me' barriers and preconceptions to engagement
- Reach people not already known to groups, activities and services
- Provide an effective 'nudge' or steppingstone to engagement



By approaching your comms and language from the perspective of the people you want to engage, you can reach a wider diversity of voices.

Whatever your experience or role in producing comms, this toolkit will provide you with 'pickup and use' tools and methods, based upon evidence-led approaches from the Good Practice Mentors (GPM).

This toolkit can help you produce additional flexible and low-cost comms to use as a specific tool for engagement.



Traditional comms approaches often:

- Speak to and engage the people we already know
- Communicate several messages simultaneously - e.g. raising awareness about your cause, communicating your branding/messaging, acknowledging funders
- Focus on the ask or offer from the perspective of the organisation and what they would like to deliver or achieve
- Use formal language to describe the offer
- Rely upon unspoken understanding of your offer and a readiness to engage

Overview of the Outreach Friendly Comms Method

Understand the Barriers

- Who is missing and why?
- What are their likely 'it's not for me' barriers and preconceptions?
- What language might trigger preconceptions?

Clear, Welcoming Information

- Avoid institutional descriptors that carry preconceptions
- Use simple, transactional language

Speak to Motivation

- Help people to self-identify themselves within the offer
- Speak to their aspirations
- Describe the benefits not the vulnerability



Practical Reassurance

- Anticipate and answer questions without people needing to contact you
- Use clear, transactional language
- Avoid using service language or jargon
- Describe what people will be doing

Reduce Social Risk

- Avoid creating social expectations
- Emphasise informal, relaxed, drop-in
- Remove pressure to join or commit

Provide a Steppingstone

- Make it easy for people to engage
- Reduce the social risk and expectations
- Enable autonomy and control to be retained



Approaching your comms from a different perspective

We often present and talk about our offer from the perspective of who we are, what we want to do, deliver, or provide.

This approach is likely to be effective with the people already known to you and familiar with the offer.

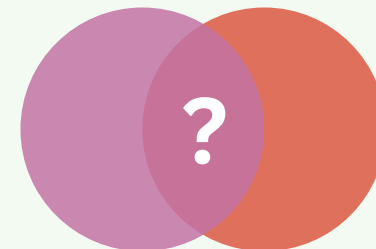
However, for people who've never taken part in a formal service, group, or activity who may not self-identify as your target population this comms approach is less likely to resonate or engage.

Exploring motivation and self-identification with your offer

Useful prompts to help you create your outreach friendly comms:

- What might be people's motivation to take up your offer?
 - *The people we want to reach might be interested in looking for new things to do/places to go and finding out what's going on locally*
- What could help people identify themselves with the offer or ask?
 - *Be clear about who your offer is for. E.g. 'For local people aged 50+', is clearer than 'older people', which is likely to disengage anyone with preconceptions around ageing*

- What are their likely 'it's not for me' preconceptions and barriers to engagement?
 - *Focus groups might create expectations around formality and what's involved. E.g. it's for people with special skills or experience who know about or have experience of the subject*
- How can you make it easy for people to get involved and understand the ask?
 - *Use your comms as a tool to address barriers and preconceptions*
 - *Describe the opportunity and what people will be doing*

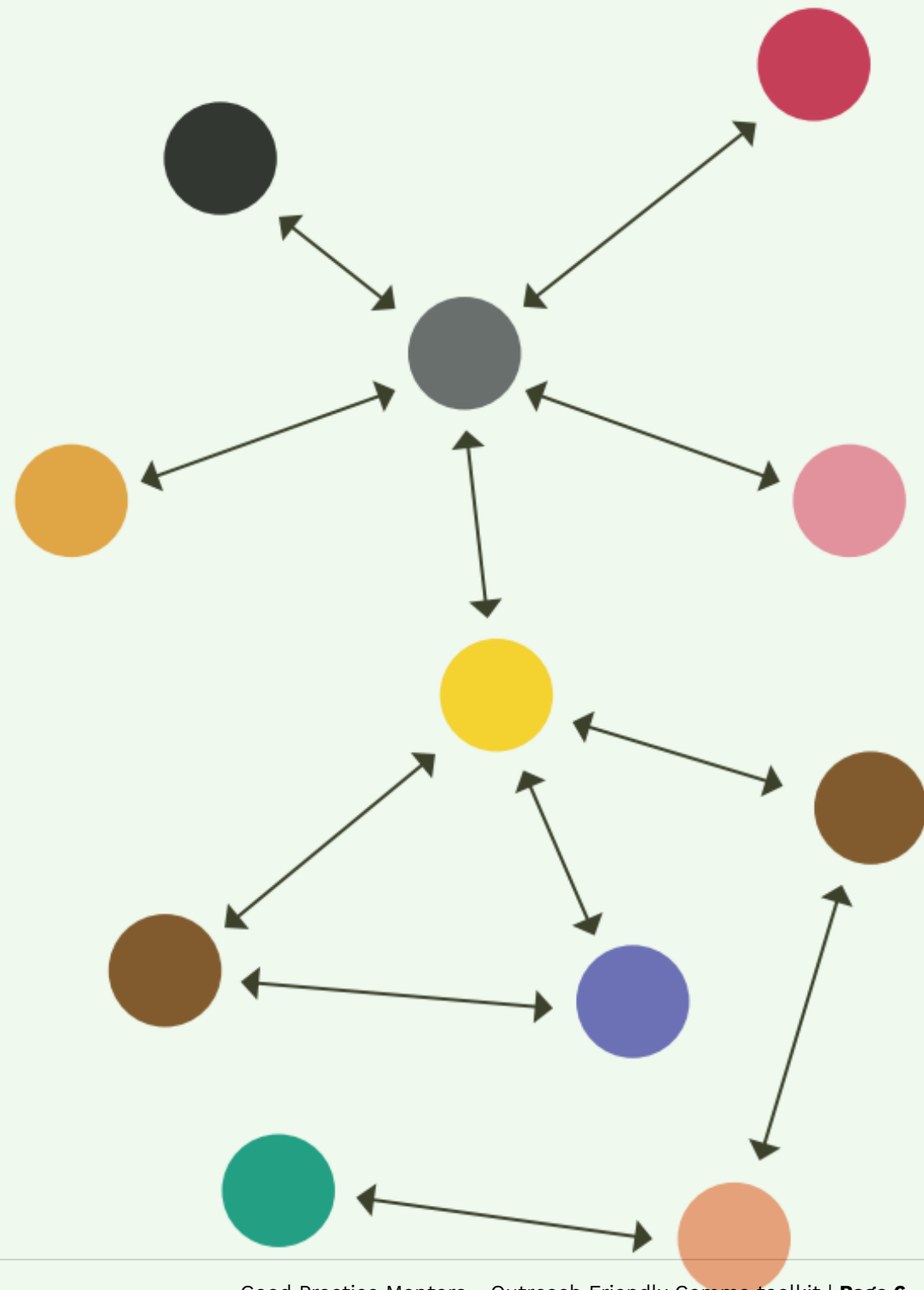


Exploring 'is this you' and a motivational approach further

Example comms content - how to engage people not looking for or less likely to self-identify as a 'volunteer', to support recruitment to a befriending service

Is this you?

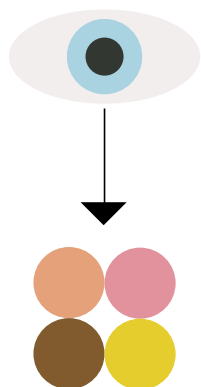
- *Do you find it easy to chat to people?*
- *Are you interested in people?*
- *Do you have an hour or two to spare during the week to spend with someone who would enjoy your company?*



Focus on motivation for different audiences:

E.g. students:

- Are you looking for an opportunity to develop your listening and conversation skills and gain knowledge and experience of working with older people?
- Are you far from home and miss spending time with older family members?



Useful prompts for reflection to help you to create your outreach friendly comms:

- Who are the people missing from your work?
- What stops those people from engaging with you?
- What stops you from finding and engaging with them?



Addressing barriers and preconceptions through language

'It's not for me'

People can be quick to decide whether your offer of support is 'for me'.

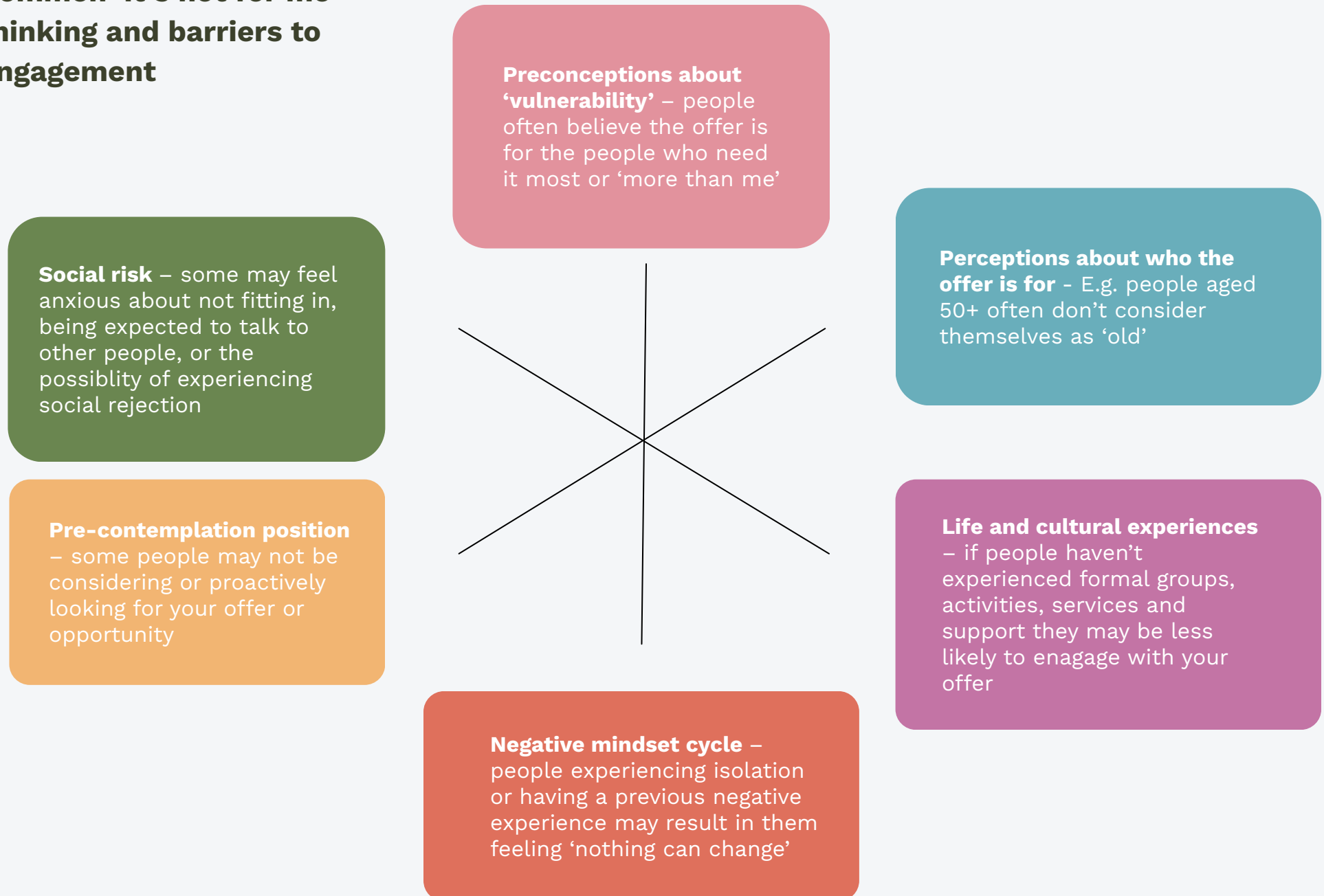
The images, language and how the offer is presented can reinforce 'it's not for me' preconceptions, leading people to disconnect from your comms and offer.

'It's not for me' barriers and preconceptions

We often make assumptions about the people not engaging with our offer, why they choose not to engage, their needs, and what that looks like in practice.

The people we want to reach and engage may have their own preconceptions about who we are, what we do and who it's for - which may prevent them from accessing our offer.

Common 'it's not for me' thinking and barriers to engagement



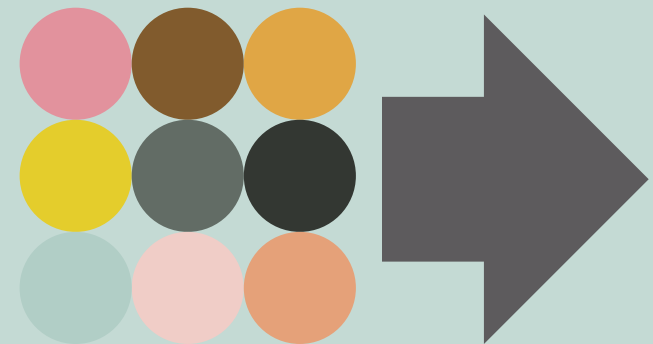
Using strengths-based language

Language that focuses on the benefits of your offer rather than reinforcing the vulnerabilities, can speak to a wider audience and reduce the stigma and need to self-identify with the 'vulnerability'.

- 'Falls prevention' → 'improve your flexibility and balance'
- 'Support for people in low incomes' → 'ways to save money on your food and energy bills'
- 'Loneliness' → 'an opportunity to meet new people'

Something to consider:

- If your ask or offer references a 'vulnerability', turn this around to describe the 'benefit'



Useful prompts to help you create your outreach friendly comms:

- Is there anything in your current comms and messaging that might trigger ‘it’s not for me’ barriers and preconceptions?
- What’s your comms balance between communicating your branding/funding and speaking to the people you want to reach?
- How much input do you have around the design of your comms?
- Thinking about your ask/offer – what social risks does it involve/pose?
- How could you adapt your messaging to reduce the risks?

Consider the social risk

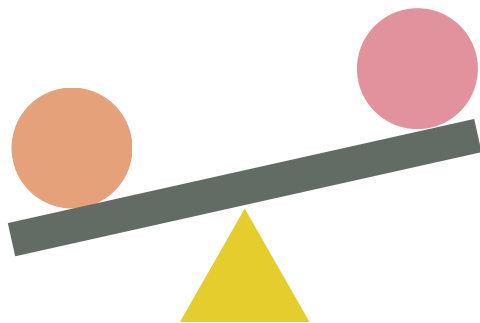
‘Social risk’ – If people are isolated within their community, then having to go somewhere new, meet new people, make small talk, make friends and/or experience social rejection, can be overwhelming.

Rather than inviting people to ‘have fun, make friends, chat or socialise’, reduce the social risk by inviting people to drop-in and have a look or pick up information.. This removes the expectation of needing to make a commitment or have a conversation.



Using comms to create an effective 'steppingstone' to engagement

The people furthest away from accessing formal groups, activities, and services are unlikely to immediately make a commitment to your offer at the first point of engagement. Comms can provide a 'nudge' towards participation.



What's fixed and what's flexible about your offer?

By thinking about what's fixed and flexible within your ask or offer, you can explore the ways you can make it easier for people to take easy and smaller steps towards engagement.

Examples of what might be fixed:

- Your opening hours
- Who your offer is for (e.g. people aged 65+)

Examples of what might be flexible:

- Do people have to book in advance?
- Do people have to sign and share their contact details with you straight away?

'An example of an outreach friendly comms 'steppingstone' to engage men at 50+

An invitation for men aged 50+
Drop in for a free tea or coffee



**Bradford Industrial Museum Moorside Mills,
BD2 3HP**

Tuesday 24th March

Drop in anytime between 12 noon and 3pm

Drop in for a free tea or coffee and have a look at **photographs
from Bradford's past and present**

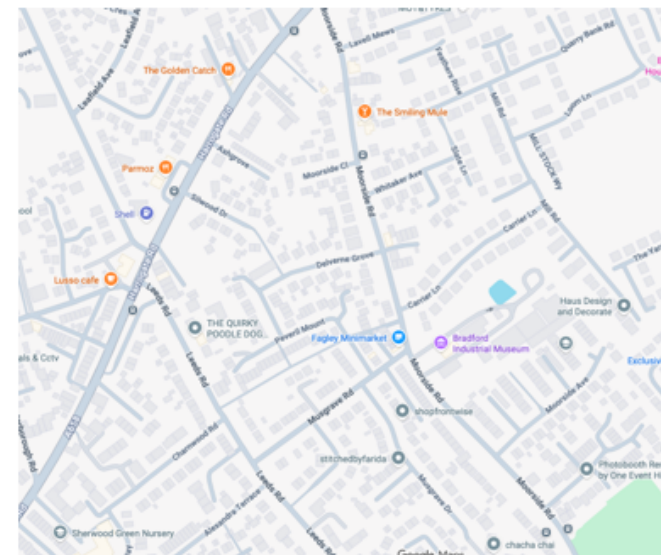
**See how Bradford has changed over time, have a look around
this interesting old building and new area of the museum**

**It's informal, easy going and relaxed
just turn up on the day**

Everyone is welcome

How to find us...

The Bradford Industrial Museum site is located on Moorside Road, directly opposite the end of Musgrave road. The 660 bus stops just across the road from the museum, or the 645 stops at the end of Moorside Road a short walk away. There is a metal sign above the fence, and large, black metal gates at the entrance to the site. The Heritage Craft Room is in a separate building to the main museum – enter the gates to the Bradford Industrial Museum site, turn right and it's the first building opposite with green doors.



**If you can't make it on the day or for more information
please call Tony on 0100 430900 or email tony-museum@bradford.gov.uk**

How to pitch and present your offer

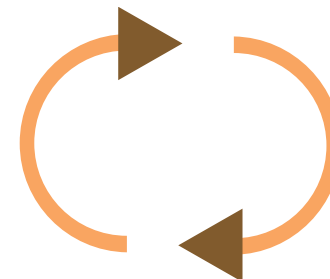
To use your comms to actively address barriers and preconceptions to engagement: and 'speak to' the people you'd like to reach:

- Avoid using service language or jargon to name or describe your offer
- Think carefully about how you name your offer and what it signals. If you were meeting friends or family for a meal that's how you'd describe it rather than calling it a lunch club
- Consider if the people not already accessing or with preconceptions about formal services and support, will understand what the offer is and what they will be doing?
- Use clear 'say what it is on the tin' transactional language to describe your ask or offer in a natural way

'Knit and natter' → 'Do you knit already or would like to learn?'

'Roadshow' → 'Find useful information about X in one place'

'Carer' → 'Do you help a family member or friend around their health?'





‘Coffee morning’ or ‘Warm Welcome’ space → an invitation to drop in for a free tea or coffee or to a pop-up cafe

Social or community group → an invitation to meet other local people

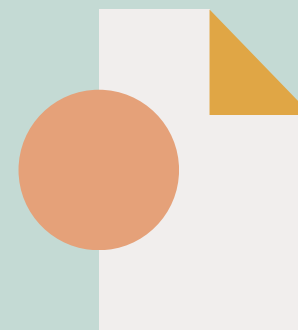
‘Loneliness and isolation’ → ‘Do you feel you are meeting enough people?’ or ‘Would you like to meet more people?’

Practical tips for creating and using your outreach friendly comms:

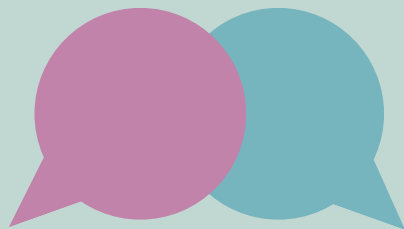
- Outreach friendly comms do not need to be professionally printed - for some people slick and glossy makes your offer appear too formal or institutional, which can trigger mistrust
- The offer or ask is more important than your branding - use your branding discretely



- Keep your comms simple and focused on a specific offer, ask or invitation – a leaflet mentioning everything you provide can feel overwhelming, or like a commitment do to more than just the initial engagement is required
- Keep your language and approach informal – inviting people to ‘drop in’ or ‘drop by’ gives them a sense of autonomy and control



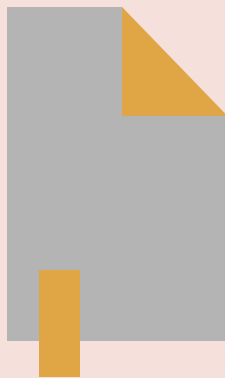
- Anticipate and answer questions people are likely to have about your offer. For example - is it free? Do people need to sign up in advance? How long will people stay? Do they need any special skills or equipment?
- Go big! Print on A4 and use both sides of the paper to share information



- Avoid brightly coloured text and backgrounds that can make it difficult for people with sight loss and neurodiversity to read



- Make it easy for people to see what your offer is by using font size 14 as a minimum and keeping things simple
- Contact details – including tear off telephone slips can make it easy for people to take away your information and to contact you



- Make your images practical and useful – rather than a picture of people, an image of the place or building can help people to find you, provide reassurance and address practical barriers for people around ESOL, memory loss and literacy.



What to avoid in your comms

Organisation logo/branding



Community Fun Day X Community Centre

**Saturday 7 September from
10am to 4pm**

Face painting, board games,
bingo, dancing, music and BBQ,
Talk to an adviser from X about
help and support for residents on
low incomes

**Have fun, make friends and
socialize!**

Branding is prioritised



Image features people who audience may not
identify with



Activity is named without describing the offer



Listing all activities available can be overwhelming



Highlights a 'vulnerability'



Creates a social ask and expectation to talk



Outreach friendly comms checklist

✓ Use a legible font, like Arial

✓ Include a picture of the front of the venue

✓ Make sure there is adequate spacing between lines and paragraphs

✓ Use 14-point font size as a minimum

! Make sure your poster or flyer is accessible for everyone



Include a map and directions to the venue



An invitation to join the AGE UK Camden Outreach team for free afternoon tea/coffee and cake at the new Kentish Town Library social space



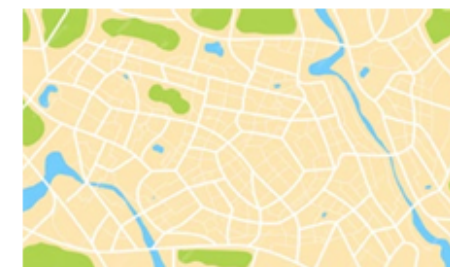
Thursday 27 February, drop by from 1.30-3.30pm at Kentish Town Library
262 - 264 Kentish Town Road NW5 2AA

Come along as our guest and meet your neighbours over free tea/coffee and cake at the newly created social space at the front of the library. Relax, read the papers, access the free to use tablets/computers/Internet in the library and find out about the recent transformation and plans for your library.

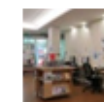
Meet Lorraine, Katharine, AnneMarie and Jo (outreach) and the AGE UK Community Connectors team, pick up information about the fantastic range of free trips, visits and activities including free swimming, or learn to play the ukulele, available for people aged 60+ across Camden.

Kentish Town Library
262 - 264 Kentish Town Road

Meet us in the new library social space immediately on your right as you enter the library.



All welcome. No need to confirm in advance.
For more information please contact: Lorraine, Katharine, AnneMarie and Jo at the AGE UK Camden Outreach team 020 7239 0421



Don't use coloured text on top of coloured backgrounds

Bad contrast

Bad contrast

How and where to use your comms to find and engage the people you want to reach

Consider and identify the ‘bumping spaces’ - the places people you want to reach go as part of their daily lives, such as bus stops, cafes, pubs, dog walking routes, hairdressers, takeaways and local shops.

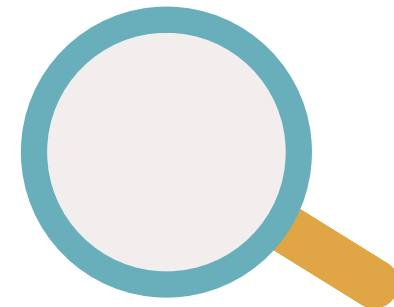
To find out more and for practical street outreach tips, take a look at our [Street Outreach toolkit](#).



- Display your comms in ‘bumping space’ locations – ask if you can put your information up in a window, or put leaflets up yourself at bus stops
- Call on community assets to share your information
- In rural areas, consider taxi companies, supermarket delivery drivers, local newspapers and schools
- Accompany your comms with a conversation - for the people with the most barriers and preconceptions to engagement, outreach friendly comms are more effective alongside a ‘nudge’ towards participation

Other resources

- [Community Outreach and Warm Welcome toolkit](#)
- [Informal conversational strategies toolkit – engaging people less likely to access formal groups, services, activities and support](#)
- [Street Outreach as Social Action Research](#)
- [Ageing Better in Camden Outreach Learning Report: Enabling resident engagement and community building within sheltered housing communities](#)
- [Ageing Better in Camden: ‘It was a day of friendliness’ – Older people’s views on outreach in sheltered housing](#)
- [Ageing Better in Camden Outreach Learning Report: Connecting older men to their communities](#)
- [Learning paper: Outreaching to find and engage older people ‘no-one knows’: a necessary element of work to address social isolation and loneliness \(Emerald Insight website\)](#)





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

👉 [GPM Eventbrite](#)