

The National Lottery Community Fund

Commissioning for Older Adults

1st March 2022

Insights Pack

The session

Our objective

To share some of the approaches, tenets and ways of working adopted through the Ageing Better programme and share learning about what enables effective commissioning for older adults.

We touched on:

- The importance of coproduction in commissioning
- Strengths based commissioning
- Supporting innovation
- The role of microfunding

We also discussed some of the key areas in which Ageing Better had learning to share on commissioning, including

- Commissioning for prevention
- Crisis response during Covid-19

Flow of the session

- Welcome and housekeeping
- Opening perspectives
- Breakout Groups 1
- Opening perspectives 2
- Breakout Groups 2
- Closing reflections

Welcome from The National Lottery Community Fund

Ruth provided an overview of the Ageing Better programme and the range of commissioning approaches used. You can view a recording of Ruth's talk below and Ruth's slides [are here](#).



Ruth Bamford

Funding & Relationship
Manager Strategic
Programmes, [Ageing Better](#)

Opening perspectives from Ageing Better partnerships

Chris McClelland

Project Manager, Brightlife Cheshire

Carly Urbanski

Head of Programme, Bristol Ageing Better

Rebecca Smith

Programme Manager, Ageless Thanet

John Hannen

Chief Executive, GMCVO

We asked:

What has been the key learning about good commissioning through the Ageing Better programme?

What is different when you use these commissioning approaches?

How do they deliver better outcomes for older adults?

Chris McClelland

Chris provided an overview of using co-production partners in the contract and commissioning process. You can view a recording of Chris' talk below and Chris' slides [are here](#).



Chris McClelland

Project Manager
Brightlife

Carly Urbanski

Carly spoke about Bristol Ageing Better's experience of commissioning over 30 delivery partners across the city. You can view a recording of Carly's talk below and Carly's slides [are here](#).



Strengths of Commissioning

- Ensuring that older people were at the heart of all funding decisions
- Balance between what older people needed but also what they *wanted*
- Community Researchers model
- Pausing commissioning until it was 'right'

The slide includes two photographs: one of an elderly man in a dark jacket sitting in a chair, and another of a group of five people wearing high-visibility jackets and helmets standing with their bicycles outdoors.



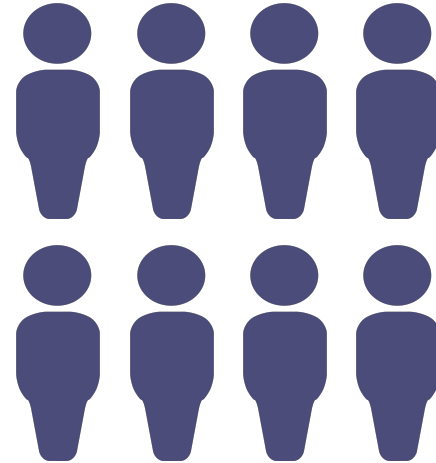
Carly Urbanski

Head of Programme
Bristol Ageing Better

Breakout groups 1

We went into breakout groups to discuss participants' questions and own experiences of commissioning for older people.

Discussions are summarised on the following slides.



Breakout groups 1 - Summary (1/2)

Co-production:

- Good co-production and being inclusive is key, particularly with marginalised communities, but it takes more resources and time. It is about more than asking people what they want.
- Coproduction can impact commissioning processes as well as what is commissioned - involving people in deciding how to engage
- Key principles for good co-production include: meeting people where they are; involving people from the start; starting without an answer in mind and trusting the process to bring forward good solutions; engaging people around issues that matter to them
- Local authorities often don't know how to weave co-production into their practice. There can be a fear of starting this process, doing it right and sharing power.
- Large organisations can struggle to give up control to enable co-production with people with lived experience. Trust in other people's capabilities and views is essential.
- Need to work through wide networks to find people with the right skills to take forward co-production.
- The CQC assessment process now requires co-production approaches to be used.

Microfunding:

- Smaller grassroots organisations can miss out in traditional funding approaches, so micro-funding can be very beneficial.

Test and learn:

- Taking a test and learn approach allows organisations to try things out and build on what is working.
- Being given the permission to have the test and learn approach is a challenge - means moving away from pursuing KPIs to enabling a open focus on learning.

Evaluation:

- Having an outcomes evaluation framework at the start is important.

Breakout groups 1 - Summary (2/2)

Build trust and relationships:

- Trust is key and organisations may have to prove themselves to people and communities.
- Sometimes you have to breakdown people's negative perceptions from previous engagement
- Relationship and trust building takes time.

Time and resources:

- Time and resources are limited so the challenge is to make these approaches work within the time available
- There is a balance between wanting to do the best job vs. something practical
- Due to time and resource constraints, we often engage with people about the practical side of services and do so in a rush, rather than talking about the needs and wants of older people.

Needs and wants:

- The commissioning cycle is focused on identifying population needs, but perhaps it is more beneficial for older people to focus on their wants.
- Having space to allow for questioning and reflection on older people' needs, and how they are changing, and reflecting on how these relate to service models is essential.

Public contracting:

- Public contracting regulations and timescales can be a barrier to moving to new ways of commissioning

Opening perspectives from Ageing Better partnerships

Chris McClelland

Project Manager, Brightlife Cheshire

Carly Urbanski

Head of Programme, Bristol Ageing Better

Rebecca Smith

Programme Manager, Ageless Thanet

John Hannen

Chief Executive, GMCVO

We asked:

What has been the key learning about good commissioning through the Ageing Better programme?

What is different when you use these commissioning approaches?

How do they deliver better outcomes for older adults?

Rebecca Smith

Rebecca outlined the importance of test and learn, evaluation and a partnership approach for commissioning. You can view a recording of Rebecca's talk below and Rebecca's slides [are here](#).



Rebecca Smith

Programme Manager
[Ageing Better](#)

John Hannen

John outlined the importance of market engagement, involving older people, and common bidder/delivery mistakes in the commissioning process. You can view a recording of John's talk below and John's slides [are here](#).



GMCVO

Supporting voluntary action in Greater Manchester since 1973

Common Bidder/Delivery Mistakes

- Unaware of wider market
- Bidding approaches are disappointing considering the focus on capacity building in the last decade
- Complex partnerships had the weakest performance
- Recruitment risks

GMCVO

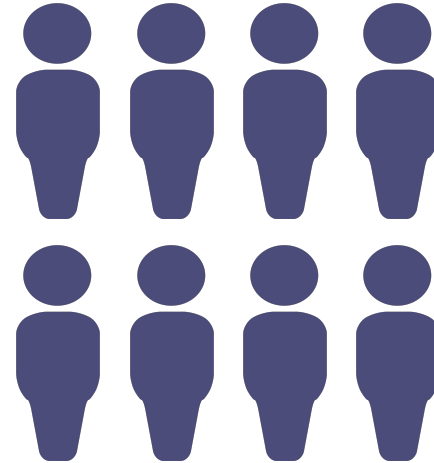
John Hannen

Chief Executive
GMCVO

Breakout groups 2

We went into breakout groups to discuss participants' questions and own experiences of commissioning for older people.

Discussions are summarised on the following slides.



Breakout groups 2 - Summary (1/2)

There are no shortcuts:

- At the moment, it feels like organisations are coming out of 'incident mode'. Now, we have a chance to reflect and change. We are still evolving and that takes thought, time and investment. How can we use this opportunity to do more meaningful work?

Outcome based commissioning:

- If you don't have a baseline to measure against, it's very tricky to monitor progress against intended outcomes. So until (if ever) the world stabilises, it's hard to smooth the variation out and a lot of outcomes are hard to judge. You need to just have confidence in the approach and that it is well evidenced.

Volunteer commissioners:

- This is an exciting way of being clear about the role of people with lived experience
- People need support people in these roles - e.g. staff with experience in commissioning supporting people with lived experience.
- We need to focus on the skills that are needed and design the process to make use of people's skills

Continued relationships:

- True co-production takes time.
- Maintaining relationships even after the funding period is important.

Breakout groups 2 - Summary (2/2)

Organisational partnerships:

- Allow partnerships to form between different organisations, particularly for larger contracts, for example by creating spaces for collaboration through engagement events.
- This also helps to build organisational capacity, particularly for smaller organisations.
- Some organisations may not have a bank account and simply need larger organisations to hold money for them.
- A referral route to partner organisations can also be very beneficial.

Tendering documents:

- Small organisations may not be able to apply due to restrictions and barriers in the forms and tendering process. It is important to make it easy for small organisations to complete tender documents, particularly in collaboration with larger organisations. It is also important to keep iterating and improving tendering documents.

Support with writing bids:

- One partner said they held sessions to support people and organisations to write better bids and show people what they were looking for and mistakes to avoid.

Microfunding:

- It is important to include a micro or community funding element to enable local grassroots organisations to get funding.

Thank you

Thank you for such constructive input to the session - we really appreciate it.

For more information, please see [The National Lottery Community Fund Ageing Better webpage](#).

Evaluation

100

% of respondents would recommend an event like this to a colleague

Average Score (/5):

4.9

100

% of respondents found the event relevant and useful

General reflections on the event from participants

- “Very useful to find out what other organisations are doing”
- “Good examples of best practice and people speaking from experience”
- “We have been involved with the Ageing Better locally for the last 5 years and are having to 'move on' - these events are good to keep reflecting on what we have done.”
- “Really informative and to the point, easy to access, well facilitated,”
- “Great way to access a broad range of information, experience and learning from a range of speakers and other participants”
- “Allows me to hear from experts in their field, gain new ideas, hear from the wider sector in which I work, and inspire me to do more!”
- “Well organised, fast moving with great information and examples.”

Information and resources

About Ageing Better

Ageing Better is a 7-year test and learn programme. We are collecting information and insights from across 14 partnerships to identify learning that will be useful for other programmes and organisations delivering activities aimed at reducing social isolation in people aged 50+. To date our partnerships have worked with over 134,000 people. **Ageing Better national learning can be segmented into three clearly defined areas: context, connections and ecosystem. These three interconnected segments build a picture of the macro and micro factors, services and support systems, that help us to better understand loneliness and social isolation in people aged over 50.**

Context: There are a range of risk factors that can occur, often in combination which lead to people finding themselves becoming socially isolated. These include mental health issues, lack of confidence or self-esteem, as well as transition points (e.g. retirement, illness, bereavement) and environmental and physical factors that act as a barrier to someone being able to connect with their community and support systems.

Connections: Understanding someone's unique situation is key to engaging with them as individuals and identifying the barriers they face in making connections. The people who are most socially isolated (where isolation is entrenched and embedded) will need some level of one-to-one support to help address their isolation. This support is person-centred and holistic and involves taking the time to develop a relationship with the individual and at their pace to build trust.

Ecosystem: The Ecosystem is fundamental to addressing social isolation as it is the space where individuals connect with the community. It works preventatively to keep people socially connected and steps in when social isolation occurs. It includes interventions that people 'need' as well as the activities and groups people 'want' to engage with; opportunities and provision for people to set up their own groups and community development, that includes age friendly activity. This Ecosystem will vary from place to place and recognises the importance of people working together as no one organisation can "fix" social isolation and loneliness. It also recognises that as important as specific interventions are, they need to be part of something wider.

Ageing Better Resources

An index of all of our Ageing Better national learning reports are [here](#). A specific report relating to [Commissioning is here](#). Additional relevant reports include [Tenets of Ageing Better](#) and Test and Learn ([full report](#) and [learning snapshot](#)).

Partner Resources

[Leeds \(Time to Shine\): Creating a Cohesive Programme \(Toolkit\)](#)

[Leeds \(Time to Shine\): Supporting Wellbeing and Independence for Frailty](#)

[Greater Manchester \(Ambition for Ageing\): Looking Back Whilst Moving Forward](#)

[Greater Manchester \(Ambition for Ageing\): Changing a place: Microfunding, co-production and community development](#)

[GMCVO: VCSE Commissioning Framework and Delivery Plan](#)

[Bristol \(Bristol Ageing Better\): Kick-Start Evaluation Report](#)

[Bristol \(Bristol Ageing Better\): Understanding the context report](#)

[Ageless Thanet: Community Fund Report](#)

[Brightlife \(Cheshire\): Legacy Report](#)