



**T.E.D.**  
Ageing Better  
in East Lindsey

# Everyone's Business? A Review of TED in East Lindsey's Age-friendly Business Accreditation 2021

## About TED

Talk, Eat, Drink (TED) Ageing Better in East Lindsey is part of Ageing Better, a programme set up by The National Lottery Community Fund, the largest funder of community activity in the UK. Ageing Better aims to develop creative ways for people aged 50 and over to combat social isolation and loneliness. It is one of five major programmes set up by The National Lottery Community Fund to test and learn from new approaches to designing services which aim to make people's lives healthier and happier.

Commencing in 2015 and originally running for 6 years until 2021, the programme has been extended to include a seventh year. TED in East Lindsey is one of fourteen 'local' programmes funded by Ageing Better. TED in East Lindsey is grounded in the experiences of various stakeholders in the district, importantly including people aged 50 and over. Businesses in East Lindsey have been, and remain, crucial to TED in East Lindsey. Engagement with these stakeholders' dates back to project inception, and is one of the three original defining strands of the programme. These include:

- The TED in East Lindsey Age-friendly Business Award
- The start-up and establishment of Friendship Groups
- Specialist delivery partner projects (which, over the life course of the programme have included a focus on citizens advice, fitness and food, digital inclusion, men-specific activities, breakfast and lunch clubs, and befriending



TED is funded by The National Lottery Community Fund and is managed by YMCA Lincolnshire

## Introduction

In this report we focus on the first strand, documenting work with businesses in the district and the start-up and growth of the Age-friendly Business Award. This includes distinct milestones: the challenges and achievements over the programme life-course which takes into account working face-to-face and at distance, especially during COVID-19. These shifting contexts capture not only the experiences of the TED team, but also the interface between businesses and their consumers. Discussion extends to the role(s) of people aged 50 and over in informing TED's flagship Age-friendly Business (AfB) Award.

Volunteers have played and continue to play a crucial role in the (ongoing) design of services and programme learning across all strands of the aforementioned 'pre-COVID-19' activities, and the changes in delivery that have resulted from the benefits of utilising an iterative 'test and learn' approach. Some of these issues have been observed across aspects of delivery and are documented in a number of TED in East Lindsey Learning Reports. During the pandemic these reports have included subjects such as:

- Community relationships and resilience
- Digital inclusion during COVID-19
- Adaptation in the sector – focussing on working with people aged 50 and over
- Telephone befriending
- Overarching 'shifting sands' in how the programme has thought about, and engaged with, people aged 50 and over (reflecting on 6 years of Ageing Better)

For this report we draw on learning obtained from desk-based research, observational, interview, and survey methods, as well as case studies. To start with the terms of reference for the Age-friendly Business strand of the programme are introduced. The report explores the rationale for focusing on business communities and how these are integral to 'Ageing Better' broadly. In this sense including: the national Ageing Better programme; the role of businesses in community life and harmonies with the wider case for promoting 'age-friendly' agendas being played out locally (in the district) and nationally.

For example, in the work of the Centre for Ageing Better and the Ageing Better programme. Transnational contexts also feature, specifically with reference to the World Health Organisation's (WHO) advancements on Age-friendly Cities and Communities, and their emerging work focussing on businesses (WHO, 2007, 2021).

This report also documents the processes of the 'TED experience', tracing the Age-friendly Business Award (AfB) chronology from start-up to becoming embedded in East Lindsey, currently with over 100 Award-holders. It looks at the assessment process for the AfB Award that has evolved from the TED in East Lindsey programme as part of a test and learn approach.

We therefore reflect on both 'what works' (including what changed) and the 'where or what next', whilst also being mindful that the current funding stream for Ageing Better is drawing to a close.



The implications of these factors are explored in relation to the age-friendly business legacy and how this can be both reinforced and carried forward by the programme locally in the East Lindsey District and the wider county of Lincolnshire. It finishes by looking at opportunities for collaborating with other Ageing Better programme areas who have shared expertise on businesses. It also takes account of wider stakeholders beyond Ageing Better. First we explore conceptualisations of ‘age-friendly business’ and how this sits with ‘age-friendliness’ in some of the other spheres already mentioned.

## Terms of Reference for Age-friendly Businesses: Definitions and Implications

*“it’s not necessarily about age, it’s about inclusivity... and really making sure there’s equal opportunities for all, and I think that’s what you guys are standing for, particularly the older people in the community, as we’re based in that community and are really passionate about helping people” (AfB, non-retail)*

*“(my taxi driver), he is amazing really friendly, always brings in my shopping and tells me to ring him anytime. Nothing is ever too much for him” (Consumer)*

The development of terms of reference for engaging with Age-friendly Businesses are reflective of TED in East Lindsey’s core aims and objectives, mirroring those of the Ageing Better programme nationally. These are summarised below:

- People aged 50 and over will be better connected with volunteering, social, leisure and health improving activities leading to an enhanced quality of life
- More people aged 50 and over will report that they do not feel lonely or isolated
- People aged 50 and over will feel positive about the opportunities that getting older presents
- People aged 50 and over will have more opportunities to influence the design, delivery and evaluation of services and businesses available to them



Defining an ‘Age-friendly Business’ remains complex. Potential variation has been noted by Ageing Better partners, such as Ageless Thanet, in their AfB toolkit (see Ageless Thanet, 2021). Some of the prior commentary on AfB’s has focussed on specific sectors. For instance, Age UK (2017) have reported specifically on valuing and including older customers in supermarkets and similar retail outlets. TED in East Lindsey operationalised the following definition to guide AfB work and business accreditation when developing the AfB Award:

*“An Age-friendly Business understands the community, in which it is placed, and will make a vital contribution to community life whether it is a cafe, post office, hairdresser, supermarket or transport service. It also understands the need to be accessible in both the physical environment and communication and attitude, and is motivated to make its facilities available to everyone. There are many aspects of being an Age-friendly Business...”*

This definition also echoes in the Government of New Zealand's approach to AfB's which features on the World Health Organisation's website. It asserts the benefits of AfB's for all and is not restricted to 'older people' specifically:

*"An age friendly business or service is person centered. It aims to create an environment that is accessible and provide a customer service experience that is inclusive and respectful. It offers products and services that meet the needs of all of its customers and clients irrespective of age, life stage and ability."*

TED in East Lindsey's definition, however, resulted from a process of refinement, becoming embedded over time. The AfB strand of the programme has also been influenced by different post-holders over time with key responsibilities for this work. Other national agencies have contributed to the momentum of the AfB agenda. In their 2017 report, Age UK painted an especially problematic picture of businesses and how ageing people felt they perceived 'older people':

*"...many people feel that businesses do not seek out older people as customers or meet any practical needs they have. Four in ten (40 per cent) of people aged 65+ agree that businesses and retailers have little interest in the consumer needs of older people...People told us they feel 'invisible', unwanted, 'not the kind of customer' shops want."*

As a result, and perhaps also reflective of the retail sector emphasis of their research, Age UK outlined 'top tips' for being age-friendly – a mnemonic which covers:

- Toilets and seats – to provide facilities which support
- Online – well designed, user friendly for all online services and websites
- Paying – support for people with dementia, manned checkouts (and options of payment)
- Telephone – and potential for various approaches to contact businesses
- Don't Ignore or make assumptions about shoppers needs and preferences and self-perceptions of (not) identifying with being 'old' or 'elderly'
- Point out – design a safe environment, with clear signage (including pictures and symbols) to help people find what they need
- Service – including polite, helpful and patient staff

There are therefore a range of similarities across a number of publications of practical examples that promote 'age-friendliness' broadly. This includes work on Age-friendly Communities and Cities by both the Centre for Ageing Better and the World Health Organisation – especially the latter's emphasis on 8 domains of age-friendliness that can be applied to communities. These are: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings; Transport; Housing; Social Participation; Respect and Social Inclusion; Civic Participation and Employment; Communication and Information and Community support and Health Services (see WHO, 2007; and: TED in East Lindsey/ELDC, 2021).



There are linkages between defining what constitutes an AfB and also thinking about ways in which ‘performance’ of age-friendliness in businesses can be both conceptualised and monitored. Identifying key thematic areas, such as those given in the ‘top tips’ mnemonic also has implications for the ways individual businesses meet age-friendly assessment criteria, at the same time as continuing to fulfil the AfB Award status and the ‘community spirit’ focus of accreditation. Ultimately these processes become integral in evidencing progress at a programme level, namely by thinking about if programme activity captures, responds to and conveys ‘what matters’ when thinking of age-friendly expectations of different businesses.

These points are engrained into the logistics of developing TED in East Lindsey’s AfB Award assessment through the chronology of creating, embedding and forecasting future opportunities of AfB’s at and beyond the local level of the East Lindsey district. Before turning to the pragmatics of the AfB work the report seeks to provide profile information on the economic contexts of the district and a subsequent (approximate) snap-shot of the current Award holders.

## **Economic Profile and Key Business Sectors in East Lindsey**

The 2021 East Lindsey District Council Economic Baseline reports that East Lindsey has just over 6400 businesses. It makes comparisons with the Local Enterprise Partnership, the county of Lincolnshire, the East Midlands Region as well as national data. Between 2010 and 2020 growth in terms of the number of firms was slower than these comparator areas. The Economic Baseline shows the highest proportion of businesses can be found in the following three sectors; first is the agriculture, mining and utilities sector (1225 businesses); second is the business, financial and professional services sector (1045 businesses), followed by wholesale and retail (980 businesses).

It is important to note, however, that East Lindsey’s geography has a make-up of both coastal and inland communities. These feature towns, villages, hamlets and places with a small number of dwellings, or a sole dwelling. The Centre for Towns (2020), as well as national indices of deprivation, have recognised both the seasonal nature of income (through tourism and agriculture) and significant areas of deprivation concentrated within parts of the district. The budget announcement in March 2021 allocated the coastal towns of Skegness and Mablethorpe (the latter incorporating neighbouring settlements of Sutton-on-Sea and Trusthorpe) significant sums of investment from the Government’s Towns Fund with £24.5 and £23.9 million earmarked respectively to these communities.

These places have issues relating to disproportionately higher than (national) average ageing populations, with health and wider inequalities that include difficulties in gaining access to key services. Yet these co-exist with opportunities for innovation. Examples include models of self-employment for (comparatively small-scale) independent care provision, and use of the coastal/rural complex to situate a key ‘hub’ of learning about health and ageing in these contexts (a Campus for Future Living at Mablethorpe acting as a regional, national and transnational ‘Centre of Excellence’). The development will see the regeneration of part of the town, providing temporary accommodation for students to visit the area, stay and study.



These examples highlight that even within the district there is variability in the business make-up, particularly when accounting for these different locations. Furthermore, the Centre for Towns (2020) has shown that some of these areas have a potentially increased vulnerability when it comes to recovering from COVID-19 lockdowns. These intersect with the comparatively higher dependency of coastal geographies on specific sectors. Projections in the early stages of the pandemic emphasised Accommodation, Non-food retail, Pubs and restaurants and Arts and Leisure sectors as anticipated to be most impacted. All of these can be seen to contribute to the 'tourist economy' referenced in ELDC's 2021 Economic Baseline. It shows total expenditure in East Lindsey's visitor economy was just over £733 million in 2019 and that visitors staying in non-serviced accommodation accounted for two-thirds of this total expenditure (ELDC, 2021). Patterns of work also accompany this understanding:

*“Wages in East Lindsey are also lower than the regional and national comparators for both part-time and full-time workers in the district. In terms of hours worked, East Lindsey has both a part-time and a long hours economy when compared to the wider areas, potentially reflecting the different demands of key sectors such as the visitor economy, care and agri-food... East Lindsey has a higher proportion of people in self-employment than the Lincolnshire, regional and national averages.”*

On the surface the district seems a particularly trying place to grow both as an ageing person and as a business, yet the Economic Baseline also found:

*“The district has a higher rate of 2-year, 3-year, 4-year and 5-year business survival than Lincolnshire, the East Midlands and the UK, however business start-ups as a proportion of all active enterprises and per 10,000 working age people were lower in East Lindsey in 2019 than in all the comparator areas”*

We later consider survey research of our AfB's undertaken for TED in East Lindsey by the University of Lincoln's International Business School and economic regeneration specialists Rose Regeneration. Taking place during the earlier stages of the pandemic, it shows behind these headline issues are explanations that signal common ground between why AfB's have Award recognition and how resilience, success and viability of businesses can be considered. At the core of understanding both of these is their community belonging and embeddedness. Through this integration, businesses maintain their consumer base, in-part by understanding barriers and enablers to securing and sustaining consumer engagement. The relational aspect of their trading facilitates this sensitivity to knowledge, including changes in customer preferences, routes to market and spending patterns. Ongoing 'buy-in' by businesses and customers is demonstrated through formal (and perhaps more importantly) informal communication.

This includes business to business networking between different people and organisations engaged in supply chains. These components are complex to measure quantitatively, specifically if these 'gains' are restricted to the parameters of cost-benefit analyses of financial profit.

Knowledge generation does remain an issue. Information across a number of available resources does not contain standardised definitions of business sectors (according to ONS classifications). Cumulatively, comparability is restricted and these various sources of information present a patchwork of potential 'economies' existing in different parts of East Lindsey. Ramifications from this include a need to acknowledge that two forms of homogeneity/generalisability limit understanding of AfB's in distinct ways.

Firstly, behind homogeneity inferred by ‘rural and coastal’ references exist a wide range of diversities. In addition to factors mentioned already, these cover profiling of businesses and defining and distinguishing between ‘rural’ and ‘coastal’:

*“East Lindsey’s rural inland area has a considerably higher proportion of the District’s information and communication; manufacturing; and transport and storage jobs than the Coastal area. The Coast has a higher proportion of employment in the accommodation and food services and the arts, entertainment, recreation and other services sector” (ELDC, 2021)*

This also ties with observations made by the Centre for Ageing Better (and others) that coastal communities sometimes share similar issues nationally, rather than with nearby localities that are a relatively short distance inland (see also Chief Medical Officer’s Annual Report on Health in Coastal Communities, 2021). Indeed between 2015 and 2019, employment increased by 750 posts in rural inland area and decreased by 450 in coastal areas. An important caveat is that there are further complexities in trying to define what is meant by both a ‘rural’ and a ‘coastal’ community and additional plurality may result due to areas’ idiosyncrasies.

Secondly, using ‘older people’ as a ‘50 plus’ catchment does not do justice to understanding ageing populations across a range of intersecting variables, demographics and preferences (not to mention vibrancies). This is particularly so when framed into our understandings of markets and the ways in which ageing consumers value aspects of businesses (and vice versa). It also relates to assumptions of ageing populations in the community that result in ‘hidden’ or ‘neglected’ populations (see, for instance, the growing movement of people Ageing Without Children or ‘AWOC’, [www.awwoc.org](http://www.awwoc.org)). This also has ‘knock-on’ effects in how a business can strive to be ‘age-friendly’, tailoring its relationship to a range of consumers. These two distinct areas underpin observations made throughout this report.



## **AfB Award Holders Snap-shot**

Having given an introduction into the profile of businesses and some of the key lines of inquiry for the district, drawing on the data from a sample of 102 AfB Award-holders the report aims to give a snap-shot of the profile of businesses. The highest proportion of businesses can be found in the following three sectors: first is the wholesale and retail sector which accounts for over a quarter (28%) of businesses; second is the accommodation and food services sector which accounts for almost a quarter (24%) of the businesses; and third is the arts, entertainment and recreation sector (17%). 3 businesses were found to belong in more than one sector and so were not included in the separate sector totals. Through this assessment we can see clear reflections with the profile of East Lindsey and with some of those businesses that were included in the Centre for Town’s (2020) report that were highlighted as ‘vulnerable’ sectors in being able to recover from the pandemic.

## Stereotypes and Oversights? Marketing 'Age-friendly' in businesses, services and products

This section focusses on the market rationale(s) for recognising 'age-friendly' in businesses against the background settings of a diverse district of business profiles, ageing populations and other community characteristics (including geography, demographical make up and socio-economic variables). The approach here is two-fold. On the one hand this concerns how markets for 'aged' (sic) or 'elderly' (sic) people are failing to recognise the spending power and preferences of ageing populations – in brief 'hitting a target' (by proposing a range of services and goods for stereotypes of 'old' people) but missing the point (in that those businesses, services and products can be designed to be age-friendly and mainstream and desirable (Centre for Ageing Better, 2021)). On the other hand, and following on from this, is a case for being age-friendly which recognises the problematic nature of stereotypes, such as those aforementioned, but appreciates market opportunities that ultimately advantage businesses. Here there are a range of benefits for AfB's which include finance and profit, but also the strengthening and joining of different stages in the supply chain by being relational or 'community-spirited' in approach:



*“It’s so nice to see the results of what you do because you’re based in the community you serve, we actually get to meet people regularly, speak to them on the telephone – you get to find out about their experiences and the memories they’ve made... Many people who work in our business were of the 50 plus category so we really understand what we’re doing for people in that age range” (AfB, non-retail)*

*“As a family run business, being going so long...they’re really hands on, involved in every aspect of the business throughout the (pandemic) changes that have gone on. They’ve been really keen to make sure we’re as up-to-date as possible, that we’re serving people in the best way that we can” (AfB, non-retail)*

Cumulatively these benefits negate a deficits approach to ageing, one in which the focus is on ageing as a financial burden and one that contributes to (and is expressive of) a group of people that Dixon (2020) refers to as the 'doom-mongers'. In places parts of the Government's (2021: **emphasis added**) plans for health and social care chime with this vision:

*“An ageing population with increasingly complex needs is putting ever more pressure on the social care system. So alongside providing a path to long-term financial sustainability, the White Paper for adult social care that we will develop with care users, providers and other key stakeholders will focus on proposals for system reform”*

Not under-appraising the challenges of ageing (including experiences of ageing in 'rural' and 'coastal' areas like East Lindsey) there are strong examples of the financial and cultural vibrancy that ageing and life experience brings:

*“Our analysis shows that ageing also brings economic opportunities which are currently being neglected, including the growing spending, working and earning potential of people at older ages... Spending by older consumers will rise from 54% (£319 billion) of total consumer spending in 2018 to 63% by 2040 (£550 billion)” (International Longevity Centre, 2019)*

In 2020 The Guardian published an article on a number of observations made by the International Longevity Centre (ILC). They reported increases in spending by retirees compared to decreasing spending by younger people. Importantly, more so for the core business sectors of East Lindsey identified in this report, this includes increases in spending on ‘non-essential’ products and services. The leisure industry is a key example here, something that the ILC highlight, but is also mirrored in commentary from stakeholders in the sector (see Spa Business, 2021; also, on spending power and trends across age groups: Experian, 2019).

This observation also intersects with a need for a more thoughtful approach that takes account of the subtleties of different spending trends in addition to those mentioned such as ‘ageing’ and ‘rural’/‘coastal’ communities. For example, in an article focussing on the ‘silver pound’ – a stereotype itself – Spa Business (2021) reflected on a 2019 report that showed group exercise was more popular with older leisure centre members and swimming was the reason for 8% of 16-24 year old’s visits to leisure centres compared to 30% of 65-74 year olds. Sport preferences also varied within the broad population of ‘older people’. For example, badminton was popular with a range of ages up until the age of 65. At this age onwards health and wellbeing become a primary focus, linking-in with consultations with staff and referrals from general practice, and demand for rehabilitative sessions.

Essentially markets remain misunderstood, misrepresented and greatly ‘untapped’. This is despite people aged 50 and over spending more on all categories of goods and services, aside from footwear and clothing (ILC, 2019; Centre for Ageing Better, 2021). This ‘oversight’ (accidental at best) is potentially fuelled (in-part) by stereotypical perceptions of ‘old’ people, services and needs. They are also associated with barriers to engagement that relate to emotional and practical issues.

Here the role of language and practical issues of design and environment can coincide (see the Centre for Ageing Better, 2021). The Centre for Ageing Better (2021) draw on the University of Cambridge’s definition of ‘inclusive design’ as an antidote to targeting age-specialist designs for businesses, services and products. In this conceptualisation ‘mainstream’ products are those which can be used by the most people “without the need for special adaptation or specialised design” (Centre for Ageing Better, 2021). Yet mainstreaming ‘age friendly’ goes beyond appealing to necessity, it extends to appreciating and meeting desirability. Examples are appeals to ‘stylish’, contemporary designing of products and services that can be linked to age-friendly broadly.

In East Lindsey accessible, comfortable buildings like public toilets, as well as transport appeal to users from a variety of ages (TED in East Lindsey/ELDC, 2021). In the same sense, in retail, clear displays and information, thoughtful product placement and the ‘end to end’ consumer experience benefit from inclusive design for all (Centre for Ageing Better, 2021). From their research into kitchen and bathroom goods and fittings, the Centre for Ageing Better (2021) too identified language as having a major role as both an enabler and barrier. They give the example between calling a washroom a ‘wet room’ rather than an ‘accessible shower’. There are implications for the imagery and language used in advertising and how a person may feel supported to make independent, yet informed, choices as consumers that resonate with a wide range of age groups.



Therefore, the economic case for attracting the spending power of people aged 50 and over remains strong. However, the case for AfB's goes beyond exploring and attracting the spending power of people aged 50 and over that is limited to visions of 'retirees' indulging in luxury and non-essential purchases. A significant piece of economic participation includes the employment of ageing populations and how being 'age-friendly' also relates to accessing the job market, employee retention and appreciating the contribution that can be made to the labour market by people aged 50 and over. This can include endorsing flexible working practices and recognition of significant life changes, including the menopause (see Centre for Ageing Better, various; and TED in East Lindsey and ELDC, 2021).

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) Market Overview published on the 21st August 2021 demonstrated some signs of uneven recovery during the pandemic relating to employment trends, providing further context to the issues highlighted above:

*"Following a period of employment growth and low unemployment, since the start of the pandemic, the employment rate has generally decreased, and the unemployment rate increased. However, since the end of 2020 both have shown signs of recovery. In the latest period (April to June 2021), there was a quarterly increase in the employment rate of 0.3 percentage points, to 75.1%, and a decrease in the unemployment rate of 0.2 percentage points, to 4.7%. The economic inactivity rate is down 0.2 percentage points on the previous quarter, to 21.1%... with the relaxation of many coronavirus restrictions, total hours worked increased on the quarter, however, it is still below pre-pandemic levels. The redundancy rate decreased on the quarter and has returned to pre-pandemic levels..."*

The Overview also reported substantial increases in job vacancies to a record high. However, an ONS Business Insights report (also August 2021) has shown similarities in that the focus of recovery weighs on some sectors more than others. For example, transport and storage were the industry with the lowest number of businesses still trading (though it is worth noting that 'trading' does not necessarily mean a return to pre-COVID-19 methods and levels of trade). Nevertheless, businesses have shown adaptation and collectively ONS resources indicate remaining possibilities for recovery that are accompanied by a need to fulfil workforce requirements. Despite these observations and opportunities, the Centre for Ageing Better and Learning and Work Institute (2020) have shown that these impact differently. Age is associated with an intrinsically more difficult set of experiences facing those aged 50 and over specifically:

*"The number of older workers seeking unemployment related benefits doubled during the lockdown. The number of claims increased by over 280,000 between February 2020 and June 2020, rising from just over 300,000 in February to over 580,000 in June."*

They also highlight that the experience of unemployment is disproportionate. People aged 50 and over are more likely to 'slip into' long-term unemployment being twice as likely to be unemployed for 12 months or more compared to younger workers. Part of this relates to a number of factors, ageism broadly, but an interaction with: the lack of flexible working arrangements; a lack of person-centred and age-minded employment support programmes; resources available to support re-employment rather than reliance on pensions; patterns of part-time work (especially for women); and attitudes and perceptions held by ageing workers about maintaining a presence in the labour market and possibilities of returning to work.



On the latter, the Centre for Ageing Better and Learning and Work Institute (2020) found five challenges that older workers cited they thought they would face in returning to work 'post-pandemic'. These are: 1. Skills gaps in applying for jobs and being able to secure work; 2. Developing new skills to transition into new roles and sectors; 3. Finding flexible work; 4. The role of negative stereotypes in society and perceived to be held by employers; and 5. Confidence issues and developing and achieving aspirations. The report also recommended there was a need for work to be done to promote understanding of 'financial wellbeing' in ageing populations.

Additionally, The Centre for Ageing Better's (2021) Good Recruitment for Older Workers (GROW) guide is a response to emerging pandemic and Brexit contexts wherein 36% of 50–69-year-olds perceived themselves as being at a disadvantage in applying for jobs due to their age. Even though research by Ageing Better and YouGov has highlighted the experience and insight ageing workers bring to employers.

The guide is both predicated on and reaffirms 5 key actions:

1. **Put age into Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I)** – ensuring that age as a protected characteristic is taken into consideration in ED&I policies
2. **Know your numbers** – regularly collecting and scrutinising age data from the recruitment process
3. **Debias your job adverts** – emphasising employer benefits that might appeal to older workers, and ensuring that the wording of job ads isn't age-biased
4. **Check your process** – structuring the interview process using multiple decision-makers and pre-defined questions
5. **Build awareness and confidence** – ensuring that staff are aware of how best to reduce bias and avoid discrimination.

The GROW guide states that a 1% increase in the number of people aged 50-64 working could increase GDP by £5.7 billion per year, further supporting the argument of the actual and potential greater economic power ageing populations have by linking employment and spending.

So far, this learning report has summarised different, potentially interacting contexts. These comprise of East Lindsey's communities (in the sense of both geography and people), the economic (key sectors/industries, spending headlines and work), and, in addition, challenges and opportunities that bear significance to experiences of ageing. The focus now moves to document key milestones in the chronology of the AfB strand of the TED in East Lindsey programme. This reflection looks back at both the proposed route ('the approach') and that taken to date ('the distance travelled'). It takes on board the pandemic, but appreciates the significance of the 'test and learn' approach in shaping this journey.



## TED in East Lindsey: AfB and the AfB Award

### 2015-2022: The Vision and A Reality?

*“We found out about it because we were actually nominated for an Award in the East Lindsey area, for one of the business awards and then we found out about the TED in East Lindsey Age-friendly Business Award and it wasn’t until that point we were that knowledgeable about it, but once we found out about what it did, it really aligned with what we do as a business, it made sense to get involved” (AfB, non-retail)*



AfB’s and the AfB Award were a fundamental foundation of the original programme vision. Businesses were also part of engagement in the original Talk, Eat, Drink (TED) themes that emanated from early survey research and focus group information collected as part of bid preparation, including interacting with people through ‘teas with TED’ events. Part of the rationale for targeting businesses rested on the premise that talking, eating and drinking presented opportunities for business ‘buy-in’. Namely, where promotion of businesses together with ‘age-friendliness’ was seen as cognisant with harnessing varying forms of engagement with people aged 50 and over. Doing so, financial profit and business sustainability opportunities were predicted.

‘The Vision’ of the programme was that an ‘internal’ paid programme team, featuring coordinators, would initiate and popularise the role of volunteers, intended to have the identity of assessors of businesses (as ‘experts by experience’). At the outset, programme projections were that by the end of six years, TED in East Lindsey would have achieved the following:

*“[To] create and deliver training packages which enable older people to develop skills to evaluate and review businesses and other services; and to deliver the training to others.*

*Recruit and train 120 older people as volunteer Community Researchers, to evaluate and review private businesses, voluntary sector provision and social care services; and the work of the TED project.*

*The volunteer Community Researchers will meaningfully and effectively **measure the impact of services** designed to combat loneliness and/or social isolation, enabling older people to **scrutinise and challenge** local activities and public services” (TED in East Lindsey, bid document: **emphasis added**)*

These 120 volunteers would form part of a wider ‘TED network’ of stakeholders, and a total of 550 volunteers programme-wide. ‘Community Researchers’ would gather and produce evidence which would assist businesses and providers in development of age-friendly provision, whilst also contributing to ongoing ‘gap analyses’. These would indicate where new development of provision and services would be required (and hence also evidence ‘demand’). Over time volunteers would self-sustain volunteer recruitment, retention and training. Interrelating to this, a latter dimension would see the development of a social enterprise ran by up to 30 older people. It would provide training, evaluation and engagement services that work both with and on behalf of people aged 50 and over. This would sit alongside a virtual component, envisaged as:

*“... a consumer-style website promoting accredited services and businesses; offering info for older people on social, leisure and healthy activities, including jobs and volunteering opportunities” (ibid)*

However, by 2018 the TED in East Lindsey programme would be ‘refreshed’. This was not on an isolated date or solitary exercise, but rather the accumulation of utilising testing and learning programme-wide on ‘what works’ (and what doesn’t). These shifts have been addressed in detail by way of a prior learning report and have featured (in some capacity) in a number of TED learning reports. Briefly they include:

- Learning from attempts to embed the aims and objectives of ageing better in the TED programme
- Recognising and challenging stereotypes of both services and users; working with rather than ‘for’ or ‘in’ communities
- Utilising the importance of engaging with people through grassroots activities as well as strategic or ‘top-down’ engagement
- Utilising initial resource to harness ongoing participation



These shifts have specific meanings and implications for AfB’s and the AfB Award. The role of paid staff coordinators across the programme with dedicated support staff for administration, project management and communications were essential in being able to recruit and retain ‘volunteers’. Yet ‘hitting targets’ proved problematic and this paid-for-resource has had to work in numerous challenging environments, including recognising different stakeholders’ identities in developing meaningful relationships with communities when recruiting and securing volunteers. In a forthcoming learning report the programme will reflect more deeply on the role of volunteers, but language used can lead to people perceiving a formal commitment. Similarly, ‘volunteers’ may not see ‘work’ they do as such, or view themselves as providing a dedicated service. This has been a feature of some of the interviews of Friendship Group members’ conducted early in the pandemic.

The ability to recruit and retain stakeholders broadly has required considerable resource with unforeseen complexities. Part of the ‘test and learn’ approach has meant developing and securing sustainable services and relationships. Ensuring ongoing business participation required groundwork and ‘bespoke’ approaches. Over time, these have been the result of turning attention to ‘grass work’ levels, proactively being out in the community to build reputations, to overcome stereotypes of businesses, services, products and activities that ‘older people’ both ‘want’ and ‘need’. The TED in East Lindsey programme therefore changed focus from hitting targets for numbers of Community Researchers and ‘scrutineers’ to one that prioritised engaging with businesses collaboratively. The case of the Hildred’s Shopping Centre in Skegness is an example:



#### Case study 1: The Hildreds Centre: Retail, Innovation and Togetherness in a Coastal Context

*“It is an absolute pleasure to work with Steve and his staff at the Hildreds. The interest shown in working with TED and the commitment to ensure older people are welcomed and accommodated is outstanding” (AfB Officer)*

*Opening in 1988, the Hildreds is a main retail shopping centre situated at the heart of Skegness, a key seaside town in East Lindsey that attracts large numbers of tourists. The Centre is an integral part of community life at all times of the year, including the busy summer season when people from outside of the area are drawn to the town for a traditional English seaside holiday. The Hildreds continues to be an exemplar AfB and one of the earliest holders of the AfB Award. The partnership between the Centre and the TED in East Lindsey developed when the manager, Steve, viewed people on the tube in London wearing badges “Tube-friend - Happy to Talk”. From this the idea to create “Banter Benches” grew.*

*Staff at the Centre remain aware of their ‘locals’ who continue to shop with them during ‘out of season’. Staff are conscious of isolation in their coastal communities, particularly noticeable during this time of the year. Staff reported a significant number of ageing people who used the shops who also mentioned they live alone and had no family. The bench provides an opportunity for people to rest knowing that other users are happy to strike up a conversation. Working with new AfB Officer post-holders from 2018, the ‘age-friendliness’ of the Hildreds has thrived.*

*This includes ‘themed’ benches with artwork, banter buddies who are willing to talk and provide advice and information on the local area, quiet shopping times where background music and other noise is minimised and trained staff who give an unpressured, yet friendly and proactive service. This includes clear signage and a clutter free shopping experience and places to rest. Earlier programme learning has shown that shopping centres and retail provide great opportunities or ‘bumping spaces’ where many people can be connected within a short time-frame. They have a strong role in the community which also generates benefits that go beyond simply ensuring return custom.*

*A local resident said “It was so nice to have someone different just come and show an interest in me and want to talk to me” and the Centre continue with their commitment to being age-friendly since the manager originally reporting that “the feedback I have received has been fantastic on all social media platforms and I honestly think that this is something that could grow and morph into something more permanent”. Subsequently a large proportion of businesses within the Hildreds Centre became AfB’s and the Centre has gone on to work with the community in creating community garden features and linking schools with the experience of older people in growing vegetables as the manager commented “I’m pleased to say that some of those schools are still having connections with the care homes which is really nice so again we’re a conduit that’s helped other people grow and that’s the way I think we’re gonna go in the future, we’re going to try and help make connections with other businesses in town to feed out and help the care homes and older generation if possible.”*

As the case study indicates recruitment of a new AfB Officer took place in 2018 with the post eventually being held by a two people for a period of time from early 2019 on a job-share arrangement. These key staff invigorated the AfB strand of work and the promotion of the AfB Award in ways that were in line with the general ‘refresh’ of the TED in East Lindsey Programme mentioned in the earlier stages of this report. Both Officers brought experience and contacts to the role and a refreshed plan commencing in 2018. From 2015 to April 2018 there had been 34 assessments with 29 still current. Some of these businesses had closed.



From May to August in 2018 18 Awards had been granted, with 7 further registrations in the process. New post holders were able to enact the new plan guided by four key principles:

1. To increase profile of the programme and the AfB strand in the communities of East Lindsey
2. Increase the volume of businesses registering for the Award
3. Increase team working opportunities
4. Increase volunteer numbers and participation



Until the time of writing, over 100 AfB's are Award holders. Key learning has been collected which demonstrates the importance of raising the profile of the TED in East Lindsey programme and the AfB-strand. Media contact has been one avenue utilised, but like other areas of programme activity, grassroots engagement has been crucial. Here the role of AfB and Programme Manager presentations to providers, complete with window stickers and certificates have snowballed membership and communication pathways with businesses and wider communities in the district.

Relationships with 'volunteers' or 'experts by experience' still remain a central part of the process though, with members from the community still being able to nominate businesses for the Award. During lockdowns this saw a partnership with Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce's Business Hero's Award, where businesses were nominated for their efforts in 'reaching out' and 'going beyond' to support communities during COVID-19. The focus on relationships has also made gains from having a stronger emphasis on quality. As noted, the pandemic has involved substantial change, operating 'at (physical) distance' with people that applies not just to businesses working with consumers, but also TED in East Lindsey programme delivery. Our AfB interviews described the challenges of the pandemic:

*"It's been extremely challenging, extremely difficult. We've stayed open right the way through because we've had five essential shops, the main issues believe it or not was the mental health of my staff because they went furlough first of all, because nobody had heard of the word furlough, nobody knew what furlough was, everybody thought they were going to lose their jobs so it was my responsibility to kind of convince them that wasn't going to happen. We did furlough staff, we did so for three weeks at a time and we did it on a rota basis so everybody came back. I took a mental health first aid course so I that could sit down with staff and talk through any issues they'd got, not just work issues but home and anything else and we're a very tight knit team anyway and that's now led on to the shops as well. So we talk to shop staff and managers as well and we help them out too, it was extremely difficult but we got through it and it's made us stronger, we've just won a national award for what we've done as well, we've also been nominated for another award in November for COVID resilience for the way we kept the centre open, kept it clean, tidy and hopefully virus free"*  
(AfB, retail)

*"Obviously because we rely on volume of people and the volume of people just wasn't there"* (AfB, retail)

*“We’re not at the same numbers (of bookings) that we were, post pandemic, but we’re grateful, we’re grateful for the customers’ support” (AfB, non-retail)*

As the quotes highlight, logistical and emotional challenges existed but both of these have been met with innovation. Maintaining presence has been complicated but elements of the proposed activity in the ‘AfB vision’ have been undertaken by other delivery partners. Magna Vitae, our commissioned delivery partner that specialises in leisure and cultural services, who currently run the Fitness, Food and Friends programme have also led on the development of a platform of services developed with ELDC, as part of their wider organisational brief: [Looking after ourselves and each other - Magna Vitae.](#)

Had the AfB consumer-style website been produced this would have arguably led to aspects of duplication, both of web content and also resource needed to maintain the timeliness and validity of web content. Furthermore, TED in East Lindsey is included on this resource, with links to the programme website.

‘The Vision’, or at least an impactful version, has still been realised. The accreditation scheme for AfB’s has progressed and diversified and assessment criteria has too evolved over time. The processes for prospective AfB Award holder encompass built environment, accessibility, pragmatic and aesthetic issues that relate to comfort and user-friendliness (including toilet provision, and suitable rest areas/seating), but it extends to people having what Ageing Better Camden refer to as a ‘warm welcome’. Therefore, the assessment takes account of staff/customer relationships, staff attitudes, and being courteous and understanding of issues (which broadly cross over to age-friendliness for all, as well as being anti-discriminatory).

Throughout the programme there have been elements of the vision which have continued and some which have had to adapt to change. Building on the discussion the assessment process for the AfB Award would be informed by policy and emerging information on ‘age-friendliness’ and AfB’s. In-particular this drew on sources such as World Health Organisation, Centre for Ageing Better and Age UK (2018), fellow Ageing Better partners, but was also embedded in the programme’s experiences of working with businesses and consumers in East Lindsey.

Volunteer mystery shoppers would be drawn on (pre-COVID-19) but the role of assessment would be a core responsibility of Age-friendly Business Officer role holders, and, more recently, the Communities Officer post. Where place-based assessments could be undertaken, the officer would conduct this, but since COVID-19 businesses have piloted and undertaken their own assessments, with post holders working with businesses to ensure the process remains accessible and has continuing long-term validity/relevance. This has been subject to ‘test and learn’, with online events planned in partnership with Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce. These were breakfast meetings featuring speakers and themes. However the timeline for these has been altered subject to feedback from stakeholders on preferred dates for these to take place, and after a period of post-lockdown adjustment/continued trading.



The following section will focus more closely on developments in the assessment process for the AfB Award. It is important to note that an aspect of the original vision remains strong, namely that the focus of the Award accounts for 'businesses' in the widest sense. For example, not-for-profit retail premises (e.g., charity shops) have inclusion.

## The AfB Award Holder Assessment Process and the COVID-19 Pandemic

*"We had a lovely lady come out... and she did an assessment, came and spoke to us directly had a look round what we do and found out a bit more about the services, what we offer, it was quite an eye opener for me as well because I didn't know how many employers we had in the over 50 category so and yeah it was really a good experience and it was nice to find out much more about you guys and what you wanted to do and what you wanted to achieve locally and as I mentioned before it aligned with what we wanted to do as a business" (AfB, non-retail)*

The AfB Award assessment originally took place at the place of business between the AfB Officer, involving a survey-style interview with the business owner or manager as well as an observational assessment. An important point of clarity regarding the assessment is that a business has demonstrated a consideration of ageing populations in their day-to-day operation. This may mean there are still issues in being able to cater for everyone, but efforts at reasonable (and also, at times innovative) adjustments have been made. The criteria are set out in the following thematic areas and had yes, no or not applicable options on how the business was perceived to reach the areas broken down in each theme:

- 1. Respect and Inclusion** – staff visibility, courteous and helpful staff, training relating to older people's needs, engagement with the local community, listening to consumers about how the business could be improved
- 2. Customer Comfort** – places to sit and rest, minimal background noise, quality of lighting, clean and accessible toilets or staff who can direct people to the nearest toilet, staff being able to respond to customers who are unwell and/or require assistance, staff being knowledgeable about the local area
- 3. Clear Marketing and Communications** – information on signs and printed material is clear and easy to read, publicity material and social media communications and material are easy to read/navigate, publicity materials portray a positive image of older people or is age-neutral, there is a mixture of printed and digital information, customer contact takes place via a range of options, as well as quiet times and/or discounts for older people
- 4. Accessibility** – clear access to premises, people with limited mobility able to access the premises including with staff assistance where required, adequate space in the business for customers to move around or alternate help is available, trip hazards not present or clearly marked, level flooring with slopes and steps clearly marked, products/items placed so customers can easily reach them or help is readily available, advertisement of hearing loops (if installed)



**5. Older Employees** – are ageing population represented in the employee cohort and/or is the business positive towards older workers

**6. Trade Bodies or Associations of Statutory Regulation Scheme**

**7. Assessment** – a section reserved for general comments and points for development

Due to the onset of the pandemic and related measures the assessment process was paused for a period of time. However, contact with businesses was maintained. Immediately prior to the first lockdown the YMCA Lincolnshire TED in East Lindsey team commenced scoping of all AFB's. This involved a courtesy call to each business to gain an update on their plans to trade and/or continue customer contact during the impending first lockdown. It also provided an opportunity for businesses to consider if the TED in East Lindsey programme could support them, even though responses were marked by uncertainty about 'what next'. This information was recorded on the VCS Tracker database used by the team and wider YMCA Lincolnshire. As the pandemic and lockdowns became more entrenched and protracted, the post holder of the AfB Officer role also changed. More recently the post has filled with a change in role title to Communities Officer (Business).



During lockdowns the AfB/Communities Officer post-holders sought updates on if businesses were trading (and if so how), but face-to-face networking which was crucial had to cease:

*“(The) TED team are brilliant, I can’t fault them, they’ve always been in contact, I know it’s been difficult during the pandemic for obvious reasons but now that we’re getting back to some sort of normality, they’ve all been in touch, it’s nice when they get in touch with me, they say are you okay, how are you, you know which is lovely, you know and I don’t think there’s any more that they could do” (AfB, retail)*

The approach to assessment was refined accordingly. Realising the role of social distancing and lockdowns a self-assessment process was piloted with five applicants for the Award. This took place after the initial period of pausing the Award process. In the absence of placed-based assessment, criteria in the existing themes were streamlined and the revised approach included a cover letter from the Programme Manager, asking businesses to provide photographs of their premises (where relevant) and consider action points for how they might improve.

The self-assessment is detailed in the [AfB toolkit](#), but also includes the promotion of relevant staff training, such as dementia awareness. With the reintroduction of face-to-face assessment, new businesses to the Award scheme have seen a return to the Communities Officer visiting representatives in the community. Nonetheless, self-assessment remains part of the sustainability of the AfB legacy, particularly when the Ageing Better funding stream closes. This may be a feature of stand-alone self-assessment or a blended form of delivery combined with 'outreach'.

COVID-19 has therefore provided a context for deeper learning. TED in East Lindsey commissioned the University of Lincoln International Business School and Rose Regeneration to undertake a programme-wide evaluation for two years that ended in March 2021. As part of the contract AfB's were surveyed in the early months of the pandemic. The full programme evaluation report is available on the [TED in East Lindsey website](#), but headlines from this work are given in Case Study 2:

Case Study 2: Reflections on being an Age-friendly Business COVID-19 (Source: University of Lincoln/ Rose Regeneration, 2021: 45-46)

*“Interviews with Age-friendly Businesses in May and June 2020 explored their resilience and response to the COVID-19 pandemic and explored what TED could do to further support them. The evaluation team found that around half of interviewed businesses were still trading as before, with the remainder operating their business at a reduced capacity – e.g. via online deliveries, being open for key workers only, or having just one side of their business open (e.g. a shop selling essential items open, but a restaurant on the same site being closed). The responses revealed a strong degree of early adaption to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, which suggested a high degree of flexibility.”*

*The adaptations businesses were making included:*

- *Conducting business over the phone or internet*
- *The introduction of doorstep deliveries*
- *Ensuring social distancing and sanitising measures were in place in their premises*

*“From a TED perspective, **the impact of these adaptations was reduced customer contact on lonely and vulnerable groups** and the increased physical challenges (due to social distancing) in accessing some of the services for people with mobility challenges. These were, however, **offset to an extent by the extension of a more personally focused service** which provided a more tailored response (through doorstep delivery in many cases) to people's needs.*

*Businesses were asked in what ways TED could support them with their trading. Around half identified that **TED could help promote and market their business**, to make sure that customers knew that they were still open, alongside the types of services that they were now offering. A smaller number also indicated an **interest in business support**, including business grants and support to look for new business development opportunities.”*

*Many businesses identified that they foresaw continuing with some of the adaptations beyond the period of the pandemic. Of particular relevance to TED was the intention of some of the interviewees **to continue to provide a delivery service to people's homes, particularly for older people**, and that this type of service was quickly becoming the norm. In summary, the interviews with Age-friendly Businesses suggested that:*

1. *It is clear that the Age-friendly businesses supporting TED clients are very resilient.*



2. *Some form of marketing and promotion of the services of the businesses, as the pandemic continues, will be helpful.*
3. *There are opportunities to develop further the interface between good neighbour and community response initiatives and making the services of the age-friendly businesses more accessible.*
4. *The moving online of many services suggests digital inclusion in terms of access to both broadband and ICT hardware/software, as well as training, is key.*
5. *There may be merit in developing a post-pandemic good practice and future organisation planning network process to engage interested age-friendly businesses in maximising their impact through working together going forward.”*

The findings of resilient, flexible businesses and strong supply chains appeared to run somewhat contrary to projections made by the Centre for Towns (2020) and national media on impending economic deterioration resulting from COVID-19 and difficult financial recovery. Some of these findings indicate the ‘community spirited’ and ‘local’ aspect of businesses were interwoven with their age-friendliness, all characteristics of being integrated into their communities.



It is also a possibility that this resilience and ‘community spirit’ reflects significant numbers of businesses are small to medium enterprises and possibly family-oriented, which meant there were abilities to draw on a flexible and committed workforce with an element, potentially, of unpaid work. The Centre for Towns (2020) did acknowledge that these communities may already have strategies and capabilities for survival and recovery, obtained from their prior experiences of austerity.

To summarise, the experience of creating and embedding AfB and AfB Award has been a patchwork of contexts, challenges and achievements. The final section this report anticipates the future journey for this strand of work, looking at uncertainties and opportunities. Doing so, it considers threats and challenges to the ‘age-friendly’ legacy post-2022.

## **Learning about legacy: planning a future journey in the here and now**

Research by the University of Lincoln International Business School and Rose Regeneration and work that has been done by a number of TED learning and evaluation leads, along with that of the wider TED in East Lindsey Team, other stakeholders and businesses, indicates there is a strong appetite for age-friendly businesses to continue as a programme legacy in the district. The momentum for ‘age-friendliness’ is evident too in the county, regional, national and transnational settings. Work with the Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce has demonstrated the possibilities of AfB to adapt, to underpin partnerships and promote the involvement of more organisations and consumers in shaping services and products.

AfB’s and the Award have been core to the TED in East Lindsey Programme and remain so to the broader efforts involved in making the district ‘age-friendly’, in-line with policy initiatives and strategic contexts outlined in this report.

The interface of the programme with policy is exemplified in examples that include the work of the Age-friendly Principal Officer in producing a baseline assessment of the district (jointly funded between YMCA Lincolnshire and East Lindsey District Council). The strong commitment of ELDC to embed learning from the programme in emerging policy, as well as ELDC being an active advocate of TED in East Lindsey and Ageing Better generally. On the latter, this is signalled by having a district councillor as a Better Ageing portfolio holder and a senior management team member of the council chair the multi-agency Programme Management Group meetings which provide strategic programme oversight.

Some obstacles remain and these have been identified through the adoption of a 'test and learn' approach. There is work required to popularise the 'AfB Award' brand, courted with continued engagement with businesses post-Award:

*"I think it'd be easier to say what are the pitfalls (of being age-friendly), because there aren't any, the benefits are everything. It makes us or helps us to be closer to the community, helps us be able talk to people more, to gather information to support our community, it's a win win" (AfB, retail)*

Businesses remain integral to future societies that strive to reach 'age-friendliness'. Part of this is how businesses and communities talk and think about products, services and the spending power of people aged 50 and over. It also features alongside realisation of the benefits of attracting, recruiting and retaining employees in the 50-plus age group. Evidence of this appreciation is already evident in the district and wider county.

In the final case study, an outline is given of Age-friendly Futures (AFF), a separate project managed by YMCA Lincolnshire that originally commenced in summer 2020. Working amidst the challenges of furloughing and 'remote' working, AFF was made possible through funding from the Employment and Skills European Social Fund Grant Programme. It acknowledges some of the issues impacting on ageing populations and is a response to gaps in existing information, advice and guidance for those aged 50 and over and encapsulates the benefits of bespoke one-to-one support.

### Case Study 3: A Part of Legacy: Towards an Age-friendly Future?

*Age-friendly Futures works directly with people aged 50 and over in the county of Lincolnshire, supporting them back into work through training, confidence building activities and CV preparation. As well as providing motivation, team working and interpersonal skills, the project supports people with job searches based on both newly acquired and existing skills. The project is person-centred and collaborative, tailored to the individual and addresses gaps in existing support for people in this age group:*

*"Before I took part in the (Age-friendly Futures) project, I wasn't very confident in my CV, also in my abilities to sell myself to a possible employer. The project has given me the skill to write a CV to target a particular job, also to write cover letters and personal profiles... I'm more confident in my writing skills and in contacting possible employers. Without doing this course I would still be using the very limited CV and cover letter... I wouldn't know how to target possible employers and to be able to tailor my CV letters and profiles to give the best" (Age Friendly Futures, Case Study Feedback)*



AFF has shown the value of one-to-one support and appreciates perceptions of ageing as a significant factor in employability issues faced by people aged 50 and over. These include accessing new job markets and training providers. However, the project also identifies strengths and opportunities that ageing brings for clients. As part of the project participants are also encouraged to develop their social skills, building their confidence:

*“The project workshops have produced for me a much-improved CV, a format for “Cover Letters”, made me think as to what I would like to do workwise, three certificates in “Health & Safety”, “First Aid” and “Lifting & Carrying”, interview techniques, assistance with job applications and given me back a level of confidence. Without AFF, I probably would have already surrendered to early retirement on a tight budget. AFF has enhanced my job seeking options and efforts. My guide and mentor through this process, Elaine, was exceptionally helpful and professional throughout. Thank you.” (Age Friendly Futures, Case Study Feedback)*



AFF is part of a wider context in which strategy, policy and grassroots practice is, and can be, more mindful of the value of ageing populations. Interviews undertaken by the Communities Officer (Business) illustrated this too, with participants thinking about the potential ways the AfB legacy could be taken forward:

*“I’m really pleased that TED has got in touch with us and did this because it’s really enriched my life personally and also the other members of staff because it now becomes the norm, it’s not something that’s special it’s just we do things because that’s the normal thing to do and I think that’s the greatest compliment I can pay because when things become normal you just do them because you’ve set a standard and that becomes a norm, that’s the best thing that could happen I think” (AfB, retail)*

*“I understand we were one of the first shopping centres, if not the first shopping centre to be awarded it as status, well it’d be nice to get a whole town that had got that status, well it would be nice that when people came to Skegness the whole of Skegness was age-friendly and that’s, I think the next kind of step-up, we’ve just got to educate businesses that it’s in their interest to do that” (AfB, retail)*

Through test and learn the programme has highlighted the need for promoting the AfB-Award in further, but quite specific, ways. It is clear businesses who have been recognised to date have a strong community spirit and a dedication to working with their communities. This has value in the sense of financial profit and social value. Yet there have been instances where AfB’s have not promoted the Award by displaying their TED AfB window-sticker. Being in the later stages of the Ageing Better programme there might be possible ways to ensure legacy by invigorating interest in what the AfB and the AfB Award stand for, and ongoing engagement.

The idea of an AfB network offering peer to peer support, sharing learning between businesses has been alluded to by the University of Lincoln and Rose Regeneration’s work (2021). This may provide one possible route to incentivising ongoing contact with an age-friendly agenda. Importantly, we found a desire for an ongoing relationship with both the ‘TED brand’ and ‘TED team’ and networking opportunities:

*“It may be nice to get a bit of an event and get businesses together who are part of it... almost like a mini conference or something and some really good speakers about what’s going on locally and best practice and that sort of thing because I always find it useful and if you know a bit more about the other people who are in the group then it almost regenerates those conversations and you get to learn more so that would be nice, but other than that I think what you’re (the TED in East Lindsey Programme) doing is a cracking job... if we could have more events where the ag-friendly businesses could get together, and obviously it’s so difficult to make those decisions at this time, you know I’ve only been to my second in-person event since COVID’s happened, so it may be a bit early” (AfB, non-retail)*

There are existing AfB exemplars and these have already promoted advantages of the TED in East Lindsey programme. Utilising this advocacy offers one way to ensuring perceptions of expense or cost occur from being an AfB and involved in the AfB-Award assessment are negated. Businesses should continue to be thought of as an essential ingredient in policy and practice that promotes ageing better. From this standpoint, key learning from the report is highlighted along with feasibility of recommendations in line with timescales.

## Key Learning and Recommendations:

### Learning from TED in East Lindsey: for the short to medium term

- **Being an Age-friendly Business does not necessarily mean major adjustments or costs** which are detrimental to income. COVID-19 has shown there are ways businesses can adapt (e.g. through home delivery, providing different forms of contact) that can be beneficial to business reputation with possible financial and social value outcomes. We heard examples of businesses who developed relationships with older people who lived alone and lacked contact. Making phone contact with these consumers can provide a way of keeping ongoing customer engagement as well as giving an access point for further support, if required.
- **There are strong economic and social rationales in embracing the market potential of ageing populations.** This includes thinking about their spending power, preferences for products and services, and contributions ageing people make as employees.
- **Mainstreaming ‘age-friendly’ in businesses, products and services.** There are greater opportunities to develop services and products which attract mainstream markets that are desirable and age-friendly, without being ostensibly ‘ageist’ or ‘elderly-orientated’.
- **Charging for AfB membership and AfB-Award Assessment.** Ageless Thanet have worked on a reward card that people aged 50 and over can use. They initially explored the potential to charge a small fee for this card which would give discounts to ageing populations with registered businesses. Like Ageless Thanet, TED in East Lindsey should not currently look to charge those who are looking to become an AfB and display the AfB Award. This is partly due to ongoing recovery from COVID-19, but also being mindful that rolling out AfB through partnerships in the county and East Midlands might be a more measured way of scaling-up the brand and generating greater ‘buy-in’.



- **In the shorter-term TED in East Lindsey may wish to consider hosting a business networking event as part of end of funding celebrations.**
- **Opportunities could exist via developing partnerships** with Greater Lincolnshire LEP, ELDC and other councils – as the University of Lincoln and Rose Regeneration (2021) highlighted. This will require working in tight timescales and gaining access to networks.

### Learning from TED in East Lindsey: for the medium to long term

- **Useful future research would establish a conservative figure on the gains for businesses for being an AFB.** This could take the form of exploring financial profit which is linked to being age-friendly for key sectors/industries. Social value may be a compelling alternative or accompanying analysis that could incentivise business engagement in the future.
- **Networking, peer to peer support and sustainability.** As the funding stream is coming to an end for Ageing Better the potential to network across Ageing Better partners to scope the potential for a national AFB network are limited. However, there may be potential for TED in East Lindsey to contribute to a small exploratory study with partners to assess the appetite, opportunities and foundations available for a longer-term strand of work focussed on developing a business community. This could share experiences from locations with diverse demography, geography and consumer experiences. Preliminarily this could be a virtual network with a focus on resilience, recovery and strengthening businesses.

### Learning from TED in East Lindsey: longer term, bluer skies?

- **Businesses should make allowance for ageing diversities in line with their policies on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. In large institutions this will form part of their Corporate Social Responsibilities.** Whilst flag-ship businesses in East Lindsey have shown some signs of this, small to medium enterprises in the district might not have capacity to develop bureaucracy and systems to support these processes. This is despite principles being drawn-on in day-to-day practice in informal, undocumented, ways. These diversities include people with experiences of Ageing Without Children, those who identify as Men and/or LGBTQIA+.



# About East Lindsey



# T.E.D.

Ageing Better  
in East Lindsey

East Lindsey is a large, sparsely populated district within the county of Lincolnshire, which includes the popular coastal seaside towns of Skegness and Mablethorpe.

East Lindsey has a higher than average ageing population with 29% of people aged 65 and over. High numbers of older people move to East Lindsey in their retirement years and many have multiple chronic health conditions and few social and familial connections in the region. Public transport across East Lindsey is poor and therefore accessing services can be challenging, especially for older adults.

The overarching aims of the TED Programme are to:

- Reduce social isolation and loneliness
- Help older people to become better connected with volunteering, social, leisure and health improving activities
- Provide opportunities for older people to influence the design, delivery and evaluation of both the services and businesses available to them

We currently have over 1800 registered TED members, and over 100 businesses across East Lindsey hold an Age-friendly Business Award.

## Further information...

To find out more about TED or to get involved visit our website [www.tedineastlindsey.co.uk](http://www.tedineastlindsey.co.uk) or start a conversation and share your views online: Twitter: [@ted\\_EastLindsey](https://twitter.com/ted_EastLindsey)



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