



Connections project, Time to Shine, Leeds

Ageing Better



Ageing Better: Learning from our COVID-19 response to enhance future delivery

The Ageing Better programme

Ageing Better, originally a six-year programme, has funded 14 England-wide partnerships to address the issues of loneliness and social isolation in communities of people aged over 50. Commencing in 2015, Ageing Better was entering its sixth year when the COVID-19 pandemic struck, resulting in the programme being extended for a further year.

This learning paper builds on a series of rapid reviews, which summarise key features of Ageing Better partnerships' responses, in reorganising their support to reach people over 50 most affected by the pandemic. The learning paper summarises primary research undertaken with Ageing Better stakeholders (partnership leads, project leads and volunteers). The research was designed to plug gaps in the review of wider policy and practice, and products (including self-reported data) published by the Ageing Better partnerships, to inform delivery during the pandemic and potentially beyond. The research took place in a rapidly evolving contextⁱ, between early August- early October 2020, and the paper was produced during October, before the second national lockdown was announced. Please visit:

<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/strategic-investments/ageing-better#section-2> to view the rapid response papers and technical ‘methods note’.

The pandemic and areas to be explored in the paper

We know that before the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, social isolation and loneliness presented enduring challenges for society. Research suggested that 17% of older people were in contact with family, friends and neighbours less than once a week; 11% reported this contact is as infrequent as less than once a monthⁱⁱ. Of people aged 55 and over, more than one quarter of men and two fifths of women reported feeling lonely always or some of the timeⁱⁱⁱ. The impact of lockdown policies on people over 50s experiences of loneliness are not yet known^{iv, v, vi}.

COVID-19 presents a significant challenge for communities across the country, including those where Ageing Better partnerships work. Although the initial national lockdown eased, some areas reinstated local lockdowns, and everyone is subject to some restrictions on their social activity. As a result of the uncertainty created by COVID-19, some people over 50 are experiencing fear and anxiety leaving home and mixing with other people within physical distancing guidelines^{vii}. During the pandemic, Ageing Better has reached people experiencing new needs as a result of being disempowered by the COVID-19 restrictions who were not in need before, and people who were already in need but previously unidentified by local support mechanisms. Partnerships are increasingly aware of local people becoming physically frailer (particularly people shielding who may have limited options for outdoor exercise), experiencing bereavement^{viii} and enduring hardship as the pandemic continues. These experiences appear to be increasing feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and depression amongst some cohorts^{ix}. This context has created challenges around bringing people together for activities, but Ageing Better partnerships have quickly adapted their delivery models to support people over 50 experiencing social isolation and loneliness during the pandemic.

Ageing Better is a person-centred, asset-driven programme, based on Test and Learn principles^x. Participants play a central role in the design and development of the Ageing Better programme. In response to the pandemic, partnerships are adapting their outreach and delivery models, testing new combinations of approaches, and utilising learning from overcoming previous challenges to respond to the current context. Partnerships, volunteers and participants alike have demonstrated an entrepreneurial spirit, embracing change to improve connections during these challenging times.

This paper explores how local solutions are helping communities build foundations for longer term recovery and renewal. New evidence from the Ageing Better programme shows how partnerships are adapting their approaches developed over the past five

years in response to the pandemic. The paper identifies learning about how people over 50 can be supported to maintain connections in the current context, focusing on the following themes:

- Volunteering contributions and developments during the pandemic
- Reaching a wider range of people through blended delivery models
- Trusted individuals facilitating change

Collectively, this learning demonstrates how communities can support each other, empowering local people to respond to change by connecting in new ways, and breaking down barriers, enabling networks and organisations to work together more effectively.

Volunteering contributions and developments during the pandemic

Ageing Better volunteers have informed programme developments over time by researching gaps in provision, contributing to management and governance structures, securing funding to run their own groups^{xi}, and supporting others. Ageing Better has also developed volunteer training and support models and explored associated challenges, including the language associated with ‘volunteering’^{xii} and triaging need^{xiii}.

Asset-based approaches supporting local people to connect

Ageing Better has demonstrated the value people place on being able to volunteer in the local community and on being supported by others from their own community. Informal volunteering opportunities have increased during the pandemic, through approaches known as ‘neighbourliness’, ‘reciprocity’ and ‘mutual aid’, whereby people are both helped and help others^{xiv}. By investing in asset-based approaches, Ageing Better volunteers were ready to support vulnerable community members when the pandemic began. Outreach and delivery approaches were adapted to ensure that people could connect safely and within the government’s social distancing guidelines. Maintaining volunteering inputs during the pandemic is a priority, with partnerships across the programme using alternative delivery mechanisms where possible. For example:

- Ageless Thanet continued involving people over 50 in programme governance activities by moving sessions onto Microsoft Teams^{xv}, and weekly online volunteer drop-in sessions were held on Zoom and publicised on Facebook, to help volunteers stay connected^{xvi}. Similarly, Connect Hackney’s Older People’s Committee transitioned onto Zoom, and found this works best with small groups as it can be difficult managing larger groups online. Connect Hackney also convened the Committee’s regular summer social, observing social distancing guidelines, in a

garden with outdoor seating. This was the first outing for some Committee members since the initial lockdown, and gave them confidence to go out.

- Bristol Ageing Better adapted a BAME^{xvii} wellbeing project, training existing group leaders as volunteers to support local groups remotely. Volunteers from BAME communities are supported to provide peer support locally during the pandemic.

“Volunteers in each of the communities were trained up to deliver those sessions...This model has been really successful.” (Partnership management team)

Ageing Better responses to the pandemic suggest that some asset-based approaches can adapt to virtual delivery. However, it can be challenging to maintain the volume of inputs, some individuals may need IT support, and only some types of support can be delivered remotely^{xviii}.

Recruiting volunteers and coordinating local responses

Ageing Better partnerships have adapted their recruitment mechanisms during the pandemic, to process an influx of new volunteers. Initially this group consisted of some people on furlough, people who were still working, and retired people. More recently, it has included people made redundant during the pandemic. Ageing Better partnerships, local authorities and other partners are collaborating, pooling their volunteer systems and resources. Coordinating efforts was essential to provide a speedy response, minimise duplication, and reach the most in need. For example:

- In Leeds, 8,000 volunteers were recruited through Voluntary Action Leeds. Time to Shine Leeds trained around 250 volunteers as telephone befrienders and the local authority helped connect them to local people needing support.
- In Torbay, volunteers already DBS checked^{xix} by the local authority or Ageing Well Torbay’s delivery partners joined the community helpline and provided practical assistance. A hyper local referencing model was also developed to vet new volunteers, whereby two referees were required for each person, who could vouch for them from their existing networks. The neighbourhood approach was central to this, ensuring references were based on ‘trusted relationships’ and any issues could be quickly addressed.

A key feature of the pandemic has been the rise in neighbourliness and reciprocity^{xx}. Individuals have increasingly recognised their abilities to self-organise, collectively building capacity to support local communities. Building on asset-based approaches^{xxi}, local people have utilised and developed volunteering skills. Ageing Better partnerships have linked up with the rise in local action, often associated with community hubs set up in response to the pandemic.

“We went on a massive volunteer recruitment drive. We’ve linked up with local activists setting things up... [we’ve] been good at pulling together. It has made us

cross boundaries which is more efficient and effective. Now we have those community hubs in place...we are better placed to respond to the second wave.”
(Partnership management team)

However, the influx of volunteers has created challenges. Ageing Better partnerships have drawn on their learning to manage challenges, including developing inclusive messaging with local people and adapting training and support options, to ensure volunteers are well equipped to assist others during the pandemic.

- *Inclusive language*

Ageing Better partnerships have worked hard to diversify their volunteering base over time. In this way they aim to represent their local communities, utilising and developing the assets of a wide range of people. The partnerships have highlighted the importance of using inclusive volunteering language to help widen the volunteering base and consulted a range of people on the language associated with ‘volunteering’. Terms such as becoming a ‘member’ or ‘helper’ are more appealing to some people, encouraging contributions on a flexible basis^{xxii}.

“I think it’s the actual word...people don’t like the word ‘volunteer’ and its more than that, its more supporting people through your own lived experience, that’s what makes it peer support.” (Project lead)

“I don’t regard myself as a volunteer, I’m just a participant, I’m part of the community... and I’m a recipient as well.” (Volunteer)

Ageing Better partnerships also highlight the importance of using culturally appropriate language to reach BAME communities during the pandemic. This resonates with Ageing Better approaches developed over time. For example, the Bristol partnership co-designed culturally sensitive messaging with BAME community volunteers. The BAME Wellbeing project had co-designed courses and trained BAME group leaders to deliver these courses, on topics such as sleep, and dealing with grief. Over time, the project coordinator had built trusted relationships with the BAME groups and their leaders. This meant that when the pandemic struck, the project coordinator could reach out to group leaders and guide them in supporting members of their community on a one-to-one basis. This included the project coordinator providing telephone support for group leaders, empowering them to support their peers and signpost them to useful services.

“They co-designed the sessions with each of the groups, taking into account beliefs and cultures, so it was what those groups wanted to see. The volunteers [were] trained up [to deliver sessions]”. (Partnership management team)

- ***Support and training for volunteers***

Pre-pandemic, volunteers commonly supported face-to-face delivery, which provided natural ‘recharging’ breaks on journeys, and volunteering often provided general companionship, confidence-building and/or practical assistance. Some people may feel more comfortable reaching out to a volunteer, particularly a peer from their local community, rather than a staff member or community worker. However, the pandemic has intensified demands on existing volunteers, and led to an influx of new volunteers, underscoring the need for rigorous support and training.

As the pandemic evolves, volunteers are supporting people with increasingly complex needs, which combined with the transition to remote working, can make the volunteering experience more intense. Ageing Better partnerships have adapted their training and support arrangements for volunteers accordingly, to support their wellbeing. This includes additional training on triaging approaches, to manage need and ensure volunteers know how and when to escalate cases and can help people transition between support. Triage reduces the risk of volunteer burnout, by escalating complex cases to trained professionals for support. For example:

- In Torbay, the community helpline includes a triaging system, to ensure people receive the level of help they need. This includes more in-depth support from mental health volunteers^{xxiii} and signposting to specialist support if needed. Peer training has moved online, covering issues such as bereavement, resilience, boundaries, and suicide prevention. A ‘Hope for carers’ course helps peer volunteers support carers whose partners have recently moved into care and they are unable to visit because of the COVID-19 restrictions. The bereavement training has also helped volunteers provide telephone befriending for people who have lost their partners during the pandemic and were unable to attend their funeral.
- In Leeds, the RU OK? project supports people over 50 with high level needs. Volunteers receive additional training and safeguarding information, for example to support people with suicidal thoughts, and escalation processes are in place for referring people to more specialist support if needed. Volunteers found online training delivered by Time to Shine staff via Zoom and a telephone befriending guide helped them transition from face-to-face to telephone support.
- As part of Bristol Ageing Better, community members from the BAME Wellbeing group project can be referred into a Talking Therapies project for in-depth one-to-one telephone counselling. Coordinators signpost volunteer group leaders to advice to share with community members about the counselling option. Volunteer coordinators are providing more telephone guidance for their volunteers, to help manage risk and complex cases, and support volunteers’ wellbeing.

"The coordinator [has] one-to-one calls with each [volunteer] leader, a regular call. The coordinator [can] signpost and help them to access the right services...to make

sure the leaders aren't taking on everything themselves.” (Partnership management team)

Supporting volunteers online has helped to boost morale during the pandemic, and people find the visual connection reassuring. Although volunteers miss in-person face-to-face contact, the online alternative fosters camaraderie and belonging. Partnerships anticipate more volunteer training will take place online in the future.

“It was very hard...but we all stayed together, thanks to Zoom and our lovely [group leader]. We chatted to each other online. It's been very useful to see each other on Zoom. It keeps you connected, that's vitally important at this time.” (Volunteer)

Informal volunteering - peer support during the pandemic

Ageing Better is informing the development of local informal volunteering models linked to the rise in neighbourliness and reciprocity^{xxiv}. These approaches appear to be breaking down barriers, as informal volunteering can be provided on a more ad hoc basis than 'formal' volunteering, which focuses on fulfilling a set role at regular intervals for a group, club or organisation^{xxv}. Over time, Ageing Better partnerships have developed peer support models, which they define as:

“[People] supporting each other to solve problems and work towards a common goal.”^{xxvi}

Peer support embodies a sense of neighbourliness and reciprocity, with local people helping each other on an equal footing^{xxvii}, and has become synonymous with community responses to the pandemic^{xxviii}. Peer support can appear less daunting than formal support models, helping to reach a wider range of people. Peer support also generates wellbeing benefits for those involved. For example:

- TED Ageing Better in East Lindsey, Lincolnshire^{xxix}, highlights the wellbeing benefits of volunteering. The CHAPS project began a breakfast club held on a Monday morning at Hope House, a local charity^{xxx}. The project is attended by residents in Hope House accommodation and people living locally. During the first lockdown Hope House began providing hot meals every day for people in need in the community. Some of the men who attended the breakfast club volunteered by driving the minibus to take food to residents, helping in the kitchen area and taking telephone calls from local residents who required a meal. The project lead perceived the men involved as becoming more purposeful and noticed improvements in their mental health.
- As part of Connect Hackney, migrants who have been victims of domestic violence have initiated their own peer support model. The group has transitioned to continue supporting each other via Zoom and WhatsApp, strengthening their wellbeing during the pandemic.

“There is purpose for the women. They have connected to each other so much more. The peer support element, its combatting isolation.” (Project lead)

Highlight: Peer support for emotional and practical needs

Ageing Well Torbay’s peer support project runs mental health and wellbeing courses, craft groups, pop in cafes, home visits, and provides telephone support. Peer support is often a two-way process, with volunteers drawing on their own experiences to help others, and leading activities based on their skills set.

“It was giving back. It’s taken a long time to build up confidence but you feel really safe. It strengthens you as a person. It gave us a purpose.... It was aimed at what your strength was, to help people move forward.” (Volunteer)

The role has broadened in response to the pandemic, assisting people with practical as well as emotional needs, and this has strengthened connections.

“We could help people with shopping which we wouldn’t have done [before]...All the extras people have done to help people personally. We feel we know some of them really well now. Some of them I haven’t even seen their faces, but I feel that I know them.” (Volunteer)

Reaching a wider range of people through blended delivery models

During the pandemic, Ageing Better has adapted its delivery models to enable people to connect, initially via telephone, online, and/or paper-based methods. The programme is testing blended models, including socially distanced face-to-face methods, to inform the opening up of society when it is safe to do so. Challenges and considerations for longer-term community recovery and renewal are also explored.

Engaging people over 50 remotely

Before the pandemic, Ageing Better activities were primarily delivered in-person, complemented by some telephone and digital initiatives. The majority of face-to-face activities have been paused since the introduction of the initial national lockdown, and the programme has rapidly transitioned to blended delivery models.

During the pandemic, Ageing Better partnerships have found telephone support to be an essential, inclusive tool for reaching the over 50s, as participants find it is low-cost, accessible and familiar. In the immediate response to the pandemic, partnerships utilised telephone support to open up crisis helplines and complete wellbeing checks. This approach enabled partnerships to reach new people, as well as existing participants. For example:

- As part of TED Ageing Better in East Lindsey, Lincolnshire, a ConnectED Helpline^{xxxii} run by staff was launched to provide practical and emotional support.
- Ageing Better Sheffield distributed activity books to local residents, including guidance on how to access telephone befriending. The listening ear service is led by mental health professionals.

“I can tell you about befriending and phone lines, there’s nothing like an old-fashioned phone call. People don’t need a great deal...they aren’t hard to reach, just pick up the phone.” (Partnership management team)

The telephone is an effective mechanism for first contact, to build rapport and reduce the risk of excluding people who do not have online access. TED Ageing Better in East Lindsey, Lincolnshire, for example, uses telephone conference calls for Sporting Memory reminiscence activities, with six small tele-conference groups partaking in the activity. Tele-conferencing can help build participants’ confidence, moving some groups onto video calls over time.

Ageing Better partnerships have also adapted projects to provide telephone support for some of the most vulnerable people over 50 during the pandemic. For example:

- Telephone support provides essential mental health support and can complement longer term support. As part of Bristol Ageing Better’s Oasis Talk project, qualified therapists conducted a Coronavirus Anxiety Protocol over the telephone. The protocol took 30 minutes and the therapist assessed whether the individual required a referral into further mental health support. Participants were also introduced to CBT techniques to manage anxiety.

Highlight: Innovate models

Ageing Better Sheffield has created an innovative way to support people to maintain healthy lifestyles during the pandemic. Activity Phone Calls and Walk and Talk phone calls empower people to do the same activity whilst on the phone to each other. Activity Phone Calls enable people to have lunch together or discuss a television programme they are watching in their own homes. The Walk and Talk phone calls mean people can share their experiences whilst on individual walks^{xxxii}. This approach supports people’s emotional wellbeing and physical health^{xxxiii}.

Strengthening online connections

Ageing Better partnerships have learnt a great deal about increasing online connections during the pandemic. Zoom is the most common platform utilised by Ageing Better partnerships for online groups, offering greater useability in comparison to other software options. Facebook is also a useful communication tool for engaging people over 50. Ageing Better partnerships note that posts on this social media platform elicit strong responses from participants. WhatsApp is a common platform

for small groups to communicate, it is seen as a “short step” as many people over 50 already use it to communicate with their friends and family. Messenger groups are also helping people to stay connected. For example, Ageing Well Torbay’s peer support project sent out light-touch check-ins to participants several times a day during the initial lockdown via a Messenger group.

“That’s worked really well, keeping everyone connected, we say ‘good morning, what are you doing today?’ [We post] photos, links to groups and websites, and then say ‘good night!’” (Project lead)

Ageing Better partnerships are reaching marginalised individuals via online approaches during the pandemic. This includes people who are housebound, shielding, experiencing fear and/or anxiety about leaving home, those living with mental health issues and people with caring responsibilities. For some, accessing in-person activities has always been challenging, whilst others have needed more support during the pandemic owing to the restrictions. For example:

- Carers Leeds, a Time to Shine delivery partner, are running sessions online during the pandemic. New carers attend digitally that were unable to attend a physical meeting due to their caring responsibilities.
- Ageing Better in Birmingham’s LGBT Dungeons and Dragons group moved its group online, and linked up with other groups across the country, increasing their engagement and expanding their network.
- As part of Connect Hackney, members of the LAWA (Latin American Women’s Aid) project were already familiar with WhatsApp and Zoom. The partnership recognised that some BAME communities were already digitally connected, as they rely on these platforms to communicate with friends and family in their home countries. During the pandemic, female members are informally supporting one another emotionally via social media, as well as attending organised sessions online. Similarly, Ageing Better in Birmingham’s Moseley Asian Music Makers group has transitioned into a WhatsApp group which communicates daily. Members discuss music, chat about everyday topics, and send each other “good morning” posts. Many of the members use WhatsApp to communicate with family overseas. The group has 275 members across the world and hosts online concerts and videos. The platform is moderated and provides a virtual “supportive family” atmosphere^{xxxiv}.

“People who wouldn’t have gone out to a group because they might have access issues. Now they are coming to the online groups.” (Partnership management team)

However, the transition to digital delivery has created challenges for some people living with cognitive impairments. Ageing Better projects supporting people living with dementia have worked closely with family members to facilitate participation where possible. Similarly, projects supporting participants with a learning disability

have experienced reduced attendance with the transition to remote delivery. Digital delivery also creates challenges for some people with physical impairments, including sight loss. This highlights the value of re-starting face-to-face activities, when it is safe to do so.

- *Building digital independence and resilience*

Ageing Better partnerships have made notable inroads into increasing digital inclusion during the pandemic. Ageing Better partnerships have found creative opportunities to digitally upskill people over 50 and increase their online confidence in different ways. For example:

- As part of Time to Shine Leeds, digital champions help people improve their digital literacy and enable people to feel safe online.
- Ageing Better in Camden encourages members to develop digital skills by participating in a weekly ‘Tell your story’ session. Members interview each other, record and edit a piece, for sharing in the online newsletter^{xxxv}. In another initiative, volunteer support and trouble-shooting has helped people with different learning styles to get online. People are motivated to engage in their interests online, rather than as an end in itself. Engaging members who were previously sceptical can help to reach their peers^{xxxvi}. Ageing Better in Camden is also supported by an IT volunteer who can cycle to people’s homes to provide trouble-shooting support to help people join online groups.
- As part of Ageing Better Middlesbrough, volunteers who used to provide IT support in face-to-face tea and technology sessions have transitioned to providing IT support via the telephone. This is helping people connect digitally but requires more time than in-person support.

“The biggest opportunity has been around digital. The pandemic has given us a very big incentive for people to learn digital skills. That opens up a lot of other possibilities.” (Partnership management team)

In this way, the pandemic has provided the conditions for improving digital access and skills amongst some people over 50. These developments are up-skilling people over 50 for the future, with many providers recognising digital activities are an important part of blended approaches for maintaining connections, both during the pandemic and longer-term. However, barriers do remain, such as the affordability of purchasing digital devices and regular data bundles for internet access. Providing remote support to digital newcomers can also be challenging, as well as managing differing attitudes to risk. Furthermore, some people living with cognitive impairments may find it challenging to engage digitally^{xxxvii}.

Combining established approaches with new technologies

During the pandemic, Ageing Better partnerships increasingly engaged participants by testing a range of methods to increase access to activities. Utilising familiar approaches can provide a stepping-stone to engage people with new technologies. For example, as part of Time to Shine Leeds, a community support project introduced people to remote support and activities via landline tele-conferencing. Gradually video calls were suggested, and handbooks and guides provided, to help people access new platforms such as Zoom.

Highlight: Combining technologies

Bristol Ageing Better's shared reader project encourages local groups to utilise whichever communication mechanism they feel most comfortable with. Some volunteer group leaders run one-to-one telephone reader sessions, whilst others facilitate tele-conferencing group discussions. Some groups progressed onto Zoom sessions, whilst other groups used Zoom from the outset. This approach maximises the inclusivity of volunteers and participants alike. For example, one group initially hosted their meetings via Zoom, but only reached half their pre-pandemic participant numbers. By adding a tele-conferencing option as well, they managed to reach their cohort.

"They were face to face and have been completely adapted, so they are now running shared groups online and over the phone." (Partnership management team)

The project also provided paper copies of poems and short stories to their existing groups in sheltered accommodation.

Paper-based materials and activity packs remain a core component of combined delivery approaches. During the pandemic, these materials have been essential in reaching a wider range of people, maintaining contact with participants who are not online, as well as engaging additional people, particularly people who are house-bound and living alone. Paper based materials and activity packs are also utilised in telephone and online groups, and one-to-one activities. For example:

- As part of TED Ageing Better in East Lindsey, Lincolnshire, members of the Men Do project were bought ukuleles. The male participants all learnt a song at home and then came together on Zoom to perform it as a group.
- Ageing Better Sheffield delivered Hello Neighbours boxes^{xxxviii} to 2,500 older people. The boxes contained gifts, activities and tips, to show local people that someone was thinking of them and encourage creativity. Ageing Better Sheffield also established a volunteer pen pal initiative for people without internet or telephone access. An envelope and stamp are included for the response, and participants are encouraged to walk to post the letter^{xxxix}.

- Connect Hackney was aware that befriending calls may increase people’s anxiety by focusing on current affairs. To avoid this, activity packs were posted out, so creative tasks could be completed together during the call.

Ageing Better partnerships also demonstrate how the written word reaches people who may not be digitally connected. Newsletters provide a creative outlet for local people to contribute, building a sense of community for people experiencing socially isolation and loneliness. Newsletters were both emailed and posted out, and also available online, reaching a wider range of people. For example:

- Ageing Better in Camden encourages local residents to share their COVID-experiences by producing ‘letters from lockdown’^{xl}.
- Time to Shine Leeds’s regular Shine magazine helps people over 50 feel connected and emphasises their place within society through positive messaging^{xli}.

Re-starting face-to-face delivery

Following the initial national lockdown, some Ageing Better partnerships adapted delivery models, to enable people to meet up safely and abide by the government’s social distancing guidelines. Re-starting in-person activities are driven by participant need and willingness to re-engage. Initiatives include social prescribers providing one-to-one support, small group wellbeing sessions and social activities, mainly outdoors. For example:

- Brightlife Cheshire initiated ‘fence-time’ face-to-face socially distanced check-ins, enabling community connectors to connect with ‘at risk’ individuals.
- Ageing Well Torbay set up safe spaces in local parks and tourist attractions where vulnerable residents who were previously shielding can meet-up and remain socially distanced. This is accompanied by a buddy scheme, run by Community Builders and volunteers, to assist people and provide reassurance^{xlii}.
- Ageing Better in Camden partner Dragon Hall has resumed very small yoga sessions (up to four people per group), and are organising tours to sites including Kew Gardens. The outreach team are organising informal pop-up events in parks and socially-distanced walks which include a stop for a cup of tea where possible. Practical measures ensure compliance with COVID restrictions, including the rule of six. The park meet-ups are advertised hyper locally and amongst those reached have been men who are living alone or have been bereaved during lockdown^{xliii}.

“I’ve been back for four weeks now and every week I see someone who breaks down in tears because it has just been a relief to get out, meeting people, talking to people.” (Project lead)

Ageing Better partnerships took practical measures and produced guidance on the safeguards needed to bring people together in socially distanced ways. For example:

- Leicester Ageing Together purchased PPE kits (including masks and gloves), to increase people over 50s confidence that they could attend activities safely.
- Ageing Better in Camden provided masks at their pop-up events in parks and for people attending socially distanced walks.
- Greater Manchester: Ambition for Ageing developed a ‘challenges checklist’ including the cost of PPE and regular cleaning, and Track and Trace considerations^{xliv}.

Ageing Better has also adapted some volunteer buddying models to rebuild people’s **confidence** to move about in society. Short-term support measures are designed to empower individuals to regain their independence. For example, volunteers from the Isle of Wight: Age Friendly Island partnership support people to access essential services, by accompanying them on two visits, to the same or different places. The initiative also works with partners agencies and triages people in need of longer-term support.

“We’ve been working with Public Health on a project called Out and About...People coming out of shielding... some people are becoming very reliant on services provided during COVID. A volunteer helps a person twice to get back to a place they wanted to go to, like shopping.” (Partnership management team)

However, some partnerships have not re-started face-to-face activities given concerns about further waves and on-going curtailments to in-person activities. Ageing Better partnerships have developed innovative new ways to bring elements of face-to-face contact back to people, without physical contact. For example:

- Ageing Better Sheffield’s Moments of Joy project brings creative performance to care home residents. Regular live music and weekly dance sessions are performed for shielding residents, through windows and in gardens, providing a sense of live interaction without being in the same physical space^{xlv}.
- Greater Manchester: Ambition for Ageing initiatives are helping people feel connected to their local places, such as encouraging people to walk in their local parks. Similarly Ageing Better Sheffield’s Walk and Talk project offers companionship by matching people to chat on their mobiles about what they see on their individual walks^{xlvi}.

In this way, Ageing Better partnerships are encouraging participants to maintain healthy lifestyles during the pandemic^{xlvii}. Over time, partnerships have highlighted the wellbeing benefits of connecting with nature, through walking and cycling^{xlviii}, and local food growing^{xlix}. These activities can be continued independently, helping people to maintain a sense of purpose and control during the pandemic. Ageing Better

partnerships are also encouraging people to exercise at home to maintain muscle mass, which can reduce the risk of falls. For example:

- Greater Manchester: Ambition for Ageing encourages members to grow vegetables from seeds at home. This can help set realistic goals given current uncertainties. Similarly, as part of Leicester Ageing Together, community connectors deliver activity packs with seeds, grow guides, puzzles and other activities to participants^l.
- Ageing Better Middlesbrough encourages local people over 50 to exercise at home by following simple chair-based exercises, marching, stretching and dancing^{li}.

The future: A blended model of delivery

The pandemic has driven a need for change. Ageing Better partnerships are planning and piloting blended delivery models, to empower a broader cohort to engage, building and maintaining personal resilience and routine in challenging times. Early indications suggest a hybrid model can increase access, engaging people who feel uncomfortable engaging in face-to-face activities or are unable to travel. This includes people managing a wide range of physical and mental health conditions such as social anxiety. For example:

- Torbay may retain its Community Coronavirus Helpline post pandemic as it is reaching isolated people, particularly those living alone, people with mobility problems and mental health challenges, who were previously unknown to local providers. Ageing Well Torbay reported that it received very positive feedback from 96.27% of service users responding to a survey, and many are keen for it to continue. During the first five months of the pandemic the helpline received 12,000 calls and its rapid response team provided urgent assistance 2,700 times^{lii}.
- Ageing Better in Birmingham's LGBT mental health group Be Glad found that although some participants struggled with online delivery, others experiencing social anxiety preferred engaging remotely. Ageing Better in Birmingham produced a guide for its community groups on how to adapt their delivery models to help people stay connected and keep active. The guide includes key questions for group leaders to think through, good practice examples from the Ageing Better in Birmingham community, and practical resources such as risk assessment tools^{liii}.
- As part of Time to Shine Leeds, community members are keen to retain a hybrid model going forwards. Making a Match at MAECare are planning a four-week transition period to phase out telephone support and introduce doorstep visits. This is designed to build participant confidence, combined with tailored support for each individual^{liv}.

“We need to consider a blended model of delivery going forward. There will be opportunities for face-to-face groups but there will be a need to continue phone

calls to reach those who we talk to; some carers, some elderly who can't leave the house. We have to continue being adaptable.” (Project lead)

“Our learning for long-term delivery is that we have got to keep that going, on both fronts. For the people who don't want to join a [face-to-face] group because of anxiety or mental health issues, or people who are disabled and would find getting to a physical group difficult.” (Partnership management team)

Trusted individuals facilitating change

This section explores how project staff and community workers, well known in their neighbourhoods, networks and/or organisations can facilitate change. These trusted individuals are building on their person-centred, pre-COVID-19 learning and connections to broker new relationships and ways of working during the pandemic.

Agents of change

Ageing Better's project/group leaders are trusted individuals, who have established rapport with people over time. In the face of adversity, the consistency of their support is empowering people over 50 to adapt, rebuild their confidence, and learn new skills during the pandemic. This sense of trust and kindness gives many the motivation they need to adapt to new ways of connecting with others. For example:

- As part of Time to Shine Leeds, members of Sage at Yorkshire MESMAC opted to use Zoom to build connections, supported by a project worker they all knew. The project worker interviewed members online, and participants were encouraged to suggest questions in the chat function. Members can progress via a buddy system to spend time together outdoors, to strengthen their connections. This is organised by the project worker, to ensure COVID-19 safety guidance is followed^{lv}.
- As part of TED Ageing Better in East Lindsey, Lincolnshire, the Men Do project for male carers found it relatively easy to move online, as the group had been established for two years^{lvi}. The group trusted the delivery officer and these bonds helped members adapt.
- As part of Bristol Ageing Better, the volunteer co-ordinator for shared reading groups provides practical support, delivering paper copies and helping people get online. This support empowers both volunteer group leaders (some over 70) and participants to adapt.
- Ageing Well Torbay's 'community builders' are trusted individuals, embedded in neighbourhoods to strengthen connections^{lvii}. During the pandemic, they are supporting vulnerable residents previously unknown to local services including men living alone, ensuring they have access to essentials such as food, prescriptions, and social contact. Another group of trusted individuals employed by Ageing Well Torbay are group leaders. Some group leaders are helping older people connect

online by providing telephone support. Participants listen to the group leaders because they are familiar.

“[The group leaders] could see they were having difficulty getting online, so they would ring them and say ‘do this, press this button’. A lot of them are achieving it and haven’t looked back since!” (Volunteer)

Ageing Better partnerships demonstrate learning around two key roles which have adapted at pace to support people during the pandemic: telephone befrienders and social prescribers.

- *Telephone befrienders*

Ageing Better partnerships have noted an increase in mental health challenges amongst the over 50s during the pandemic, and some people are increasingly concerned about going out. Telephone befrienders provide a lifeline for some people and are trained to help people manage their mental health, build resilience and maintain a positive attitude. The role is designed to establish rapport and provide sufficient continuity to strengthen routines with regular check-ins, whilst avoiding dependency by preparing people to move on when they are ready.

Whilst some telephone befriending was taking place pre-COVID-19, this activity has increased and reached many people over 50 during the pandemic. Pre-COVID-19, face-to-face activities for the over 50s tended to be prioritised, but the pandemic is demonstrating the importance of telephone befriending in reaching into communities. Models are centred around a trusted individual, who builds rapport and continuity with each person and helps them navigate the uncertainties presented by the pandemic. Some schemes are delivered solely by volunteers, whilst others use staff or a mix of staff and volunteers. The model effectively signposts people to further services if needed. For example:

- Ageless Thanet has introduced a telephone befriending service, delivered by staff and volunteers. This dual-delivery approach reduced the time needed for volunteer training and means staff can focus on more complex cases^{lviii}.
- As part of Ageing Better Middlesbrough, telephone befriending has helped to maintain support for members, by building on existing trusted relationships between staff and members. Staff found that men were engaged more effectively over the telephone than via face-to-face activities, as the telephone is a familiar means of communication and offers privacy. Telephone befriending has helped to reach bereaved men. Staff focus on developing the relationship by listening and referencing discussions/events from previous calls to ensure the member feels valued and explores practical issues to build trust^{lix}.
- Ageing Better Sheffield introduced a telephone befriending service run by volunteers. The volunteer guide provides tips on active listening and conversation

topics^{lx}. Similarly, Time to Shine Leeds has produced a guide for telephone befrienders including tips and signposting resources^{lxi}.

- As part of Ageing Well Torbay, telephone befrienders build trust with people through practical discussions and activities, such as completing a craft activity at the same time.

“We have built trust through arts and crafts...that’s [their] interest at the same time, because that’s what gives you the boost and motivation” (Volunteer)

- *Social prescribers*

Over time, Ageing Better has tested a diverse range of community connector/community navigator models, to inform social prescribing schemes^{lxii}. These models range from intensive one-to-one home-based support to practical assistance to access group activities. These models have been flexed during the pandemic to maintain trusted relationships with the most in need, through remote support and in-person physically-distanced check-ins. For example:

- As part of Leicester Ageing Together, the community connectors strength-based approach has transitioned into a telephone-based model. Community connectors discuss people’s interests with them and encourage people to use resources on their website and activity packs. Participants trust their community connectors to support them to move online, increasing their motivation and confidence to connect with others via WhatsApp and Zoom groups.
- As part of Brightlife Cheshire, social prescribing continues via telephone triage^{lxiii}.
- As part of Ageing Well Torbay, community connectors visit the most in need, conducting door-step check-ins, whilst supporting the wider cohort by telephone.
- As part of Bristol Ageing Better, community navigators are working alongside other staff and volunteers on the community support helpline, assisting people with complex needs. The community navigators provide befriending support and connect people. Going forwards, Bristol Ageing Better is planning for its community navigators to provide a face-to-face buddying scheme to help people get out and about if they have been shielding.

“The community navigators were dealing initially with the calls where people were interested in emotional support or social activities, because we knew they would be more complex and need unpicking.” (Partnership management team)

Trusted individuals building relationships through networks and partnerships

Partnership working has accelerated at pace during the pandemic, helping to build longer-term community resilience. Trusted individuals within networks and organisations are facilitating change, overcoming barriers and uniting people to work towards a common goal.

“The level of integration of the different parts of the system has worked better, the sectors...have worked brilliantly. The boundaries between the different systems and structures have gone.” (Partnership management team)

The Ageing Better programme is underpinned by “*Older People in the Lead*”, a principle which emphasises asset-based community empowerment, enabling people to utilise a range of skills flexibly, around other commitments and considerations^{lxiv}. Ageing Better stakeholders are building on these tried and tested asset-based approaches to change the system, by enhancing coproduction initiatives within public sector agencies.

“It’s given the Council access to older people, the element of coproduction. [They] have now got a reliable way of consulting with older people, they are learning to listen and ask the right questions.” (Programme management team)

Over time, Ageing Better partnerships have pioneered approaches to improve collaboration between local services. The ‘test and learn’ ethos of the programme has enabled partnerships to conduct research and pilot new approaches. A wide range of local organisations have been involved in these activities, providing both strategic insight and supporting delivery. This process means local organisations are invested in joint working and developments. These foundations have enabled Ageing Better partnerships to champion local responses to the pandemic. For example, Isle of Wight: Age Friendly Island has run a series of time-limited Task and Finish groups, bringing organisations together to design collective solutions. The partnership was able to quickly establish groups to tackle challenges presented by the pandemic.

“[Partners] are very involved in the digi Task and Finish group which we have set up in response to COVID...it is made up of 15 organisations.” (Partnership management team)

Similarly, Greater Manchester: Ambition for Ageing is using its strategic capacity, learning and networks with local universities and the local authority’s resilience team to inform the local response.

“For example, early on...There was an issue for people without access to cash. A volunteer might do the shopping but then it was very difficult for them to pay that volunteer. We did a paper on alternatives to cash, we used some international [and] local examples to share learning. We have been reacting to challenges, finding solutions, a call and response approach.” (Partnership management team)

Ageing Better partnerships worked collaboratively with their delivery partners to ensure staff felt supported themselves during the pandemic. For example, Time to Shine Leeds introduced Summer Time Out sessions for staff and volunteers around stress management and wellbeing, recognising the importance of peer support during

the pandemic. Time to Shine Leeds also initiated Time to Learn fortnightly Zoom meetings with their delivery partners.

“It was important that our delivery partners felt supported not just by us, but by each other. They could share ideas, share what was working and share what wasn’t.”
(Partnership management team)

More broadly, Ageing Better partnerships have built on established relationships to accelerate collaboration with the statutory sector during the pandemic. For example:

- The local city council has supported Leicester Ageing Together’s Distanced Socialising campaign and helped to distribute leaflets.
- Following their involvement in the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum and the impact of their ConnectED helpline, TED Ageing Better in East Lindsey, Lincolnshire, were contracted to deliver the helpline across Lincolnshire, bringing new partners on board such as Lincoln City Council.

Health inequalities are being exacerbated by the pandemic, and some people are experiencing deteriorations to their mental and/or physical health. Ageing Better partnerships are drawing on their connections with local health services and advocating for people.

“A lot of people are struggling as they’ve not been having their hospital appointments. I have been ringing GPs for them, they are pretty good. I have found a lot of people have been on the mental health waiting list for two years and still waiting.” (Project lead)

Ageing Better partnerships have contributed to community hubs, often established by local authorities, in response to the pandemic. The hubs provided an immediate response, by redeploying local authority staff and charity workers to deliver food and medicine. The voluntary sector provided essential capacity for the hubs, and this is evolving into longer-term partnerships to support community recovery and renewal. For example, in Bristol, the coronavirus support hub now includes 30 organisations, providing a joined-up approach. Ageing Better partnerships are keen to develop community hubs further, to support recovery.

“There are some really trusted partners in the hub who have been involved for a long time and had some really successful [Ageing Better] projects. We are currently looking at the [hub] model for the future, there’s quite a lot of interest.”
(Partnership management team)

Developing effective partnerships over time has enabled Ageing Better to influence wider investments in delivery. This is providing continuity for local people during the pandemic and supporting longer term community recovery and renewal. Ageing Better

partnerships have responded to challenges presented by the pandemic by reaching out to their contacts and leveraging-in funding to support their communities.

Highlight: Securing funding through trusted relationships

Building on collaborative working with community partners through the coronavirus support hub, Bristol Ageing Better and partner organisations submitted joint bids to local Trusts and Foundations. This has secured funding to continue telephone groups for the over 50s.

Ageing Better partnerships have secured external funding to provide people in need with digital devices and internet access:

- Funding from the London Response Fund enabled Ageing Better in Camden to buy tablets and dongles for participants. The partnership made videos in multiple languages to show people how to use the devices. Further one-to-one sessions with an IT worker and volunteers also helped people get online.
- The local authority sought advice from Leicester Ageing Together about how best to use a £5,000 grant from an anonymous donor to help reach older people. The grant is funding digital devices and dongles for older people unable to afford them and helping them to gain internet access.
- Isle of Wight: Age Friendly Island tested a digital inclusion model which is being taken forward by a private sector partner.

*“The digital inclusion project was bought by a White Fibre tech company. Our worker went over doing exactly the same work, so its a real success story, embedding it in a private company who have also joined the steering group.”
(Partnership management team)*

- *Strategic engagement*

Ageing Better partnerships have become increasingly trusted by local authorities during the pandemic. For example:

- In Leicester, the Mayor’s office has been engaging regularly with the voluntary sector and they are planning to coproduce their next VCS strategy together.
- Connect Hackney has formed new partnerships with statutory services including working closely with the local authority’s neighbourhoods team.
- The Isle of Wight: Age Friendly Island partnership has been able to influence developments through a secondment to the local authority’s recovery cell.

“[The AFI lead] sits on the Recovery Cell [which] is hugely beneficial. That was planned before COVID, but has provided a direct ability to communicate the same messages, so we know we’re all on the same sheet.” (Partnership management team)

This has led to practical developments, such as setting up an Environmental Task and Finish group to explore the implications of the COVID-19 restrictions on people accessing essential services. The group has designed practical tools to support people over 50, informed by local people. The tools can help people rebuild their confidence, some of whom may have been shielding for some time.

“[They] have produced a set of Out and About Cards. They originally came about from an older person who spoke about how scared they were going out...[One card] is about social distancing, another is about people who may find it difficult to communicate with someone wearing a face mask because they can't lip read them.”
(Partnership management team)^{lxv}

What are we learning that can enable the longer-term recovery of our communities?

This paper summarises new evidence from Ageing Better partnerships in three key areas. Collectively, this learning demonstrates how communities can support each other, empowering local people to respond to change by connecting in new ways, and breaking down barriers, enabling networks and organisations to work together more effectively.

Firstly, it explores how volunteering responses during the pandemic are strengthening communities. Recruitment, training and support for volunteers have all adapted at speed. Triaging models are helping to prioritise support according to need, and peer support is providing essential reassurance for volunteers at this time.

The paper demonstrates how blended delivery models are developing in response to the pandemic and reaching a wider range of people. These models are likely to inform the medium term offer, with connections over the Winter being maintained mainly through remote support options. Blended delivery models offer real opportunities to increase accessibility in the longer term and are likely to be essential to help society open up safely during 2021, as they are more adaptable to changes in restrictions levels. Blended delivery models may however require increased flexibilities within staffing arrangements. This could require additional staffing/volunteer inputs and may be more complex to manage over time. This could be challenging as volunteering levels have fluctuated during the pandemic, with some levelling off from the initial rise in volunteers, as people returned to work and restrictions were eased in some areas. The resourcing of blended models will also need further consideration, as funding multi-mode delivery is expensive and complex to manage, for example reintroducing small group activities within the COVID-19 guidelines on social distancing when it is safe to do so, whilst continuing to also offer online and telephone support.

Finally, the paper explores how trusted individuals have played a pivotal role during the pandemic and are helping to build longer term resilience to support community renewal. Trusted individuals are helping people to adapt by providing reassuring support and continuity and acting as agents of change within organisations and networks, increasing collaboration to support communities more effectively.

Next steps

The Ageing Better national evaluation team will revisit how local solutions are helping communities recover in the longer term during 2021. Since this paper was written further national lockdowns have been introduced, although the vaccination rollout is proving promising and suggests society may begin to open up during Spring 2021. Ageing Better partnerships are continuing to adapt their responses as the pandemic evolves, and the themes explored in this paper and the preceding rapid response papers will be revisited over time to identify new learning. The following considerations are likely to be of interest as blended delivery models develop further:

- Some people over 50 may have experienced a decline in confidence and motivation during the pandemic and will need supporting in innovative ways to re-engage in face-to-face activities, when it is safe to do so. This includes both people who were participating in community activities before the pandemic, and people experiencing new or more complex needs during 2020.
- Blended delivery options require new staffing and costing models. For example, conference calls can be expensive and time intensive. Resourcing developments and implications are likely to become clearer in 2021. A key aspect of this work will be support and training for staff, as well as volunteers.
- The sustainability of ‘new’ volunteering models and volunteering commitments. Volunteering protocols and safeguarding procedures are developing over time.
- The rise in digital use suggests a need for further guidance on scams and keeping safe online, in addition to exploring the extent to which digital options are available/feasible for people with cognitive and/or physical impairments.
- Health inequalities have risen to the fore through the pandemic. Growing awareness of these issues and the extent to which they can be addressed through community empowerment and new ways of delivering support will be of interest.

ⁱ The complexities involved in conducting research in a fluid context are discussed in the accompanying methods note available online <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/strategic-investments/ageing-better#section-2>

ⁱⁱ Age UK (2015) cited in Age UK (2019) Later Life in the United Kingdom 2019 https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-andpublications/late_life_uk_factsheet.pdf

-
- iii British Red Cross (2016), Isolation and Loneliness: An overview of the literature <https://www.redcross.org.uk/-/media/documents/about-us/research-publications/health-social-care-and-support/co-op-isolation-loneliness-overview.pdf>
- iv Centre for Ageing Better and Ipsos MORI (July 2020) THE EXPERIENCE OF PEOPLE APPROACHING LATER LIFE IN LOCKDOWN The impact of COVID-19 on 50-70-year olds in England <https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-07/experience-of-people-approaching-later-life-lockdown.pdf>
- v However, early in the pandemic, 26% of people over 55 said they had felt lonely in the past 7 days. Office for National Statistics (2020) Coronavirus and loneliness <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/datasets/coronavirusandloneliness>
- vi Another survey, which tracks loneliness over time, found that in March 13% of people over 75 felt lonely always, often or some of the time. This figure has risen slightly since, fluctuating between 16% and 19% each month during the pandemic. Office for National Statistics (2020) Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/datasets/coronavirusandthesocialimpactsongreatbritaindata/current>
- vii Covid-19 Transition Phase – learning from Ageing Better <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/documents/ageing-better/Ageing-Better-Covid-19-Transition-Phase.pdf?mtime=20200714115157&focal=none>
- viii The Ageing Better programme has explored learning on bereavement as a risk factor for social isolation and loneliness. Bereavement – learning from Ageing Better <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/documents/ageing-better/Ageing-Better-Bereavement.pdf?mtime=20200821110028&focal=none>
- ix These issues were commonly noted by Ageing Better partnership leads and project leads interviewed for the primary research. They are also referenced in the Ageing Better in Birmingham report: Staying Connected: Guidance for Ageing Better Groups on Adapting to COVID-19 <https://www.ageingbetterinbirmingham.co.uk/media/attachments/2020/09/24/ab-guidance-sep-2020-v1.pdf>
- x Working with community assets – learning from Ageing Better <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/documents/ageing-better/Ageing-Better-Working-with-community-assets.pdf?mtime=20200519110231&focal=none>
- xi Ecorys with The National Lottery Community Fund, March 2020. Learning Paper No.5 Micro-funding: Empowering Communities to Create Grassroots Change. Available from: https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/documents/ageingbetter/Ageing_better_learning_report_5_evaluation_report.pdf
- xii Language – learning from Ageing Better https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/documents/ageingbetter/Ageing_better_Use_of_language.pdf?mtime=20200722145230&focal=none
- xiii Further learning from Ageing Better and DCMS projects focused on age-friendly and inclusive volunteering principles is available in a practical guide produced by the Centre for Ageing Better. The guide aims to support organisations to engage over 50s and widen participation in volunteering. Centre for Ageing Better: Helping Out <https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-10/Helping-out-taking-inclusive-age-friendly-approach-volunteering-A5.pdf>
- xiv Further details are available in our rapid response paper. Ageing Better: Local responses to the COVID-19 pandemic – neighbourliness and reciprocity <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/documents/ageing-better/Ageing-Better-Neighbourliness-reciprocity.pdf?mtime=20200907111918&focal=none>
- xv Covid-19: Reacting to a crisis, Ageless Thanet https://sekgroup.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Covid-19-Report_standard.pdf
- xvi Covid-19: Reacting to a crisis, Ageless Thanet https://sekgroup.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Covid-19-Report_standard.pdf Facebook post; Ageless Thanet <https://www.facebook.com/AgelessThanet/photos/a.1549136082072655/2790762454576672/>
- xvii Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities.
- xviii Further details on the challenges and limitations associated with remote support are provided in the accompanying methods note available online <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/strategic-investments/ageing-better#section-2>

-
- ^{xix} Vulnerable people need to be protected and CRB/DBS checks assist in ensuring that the most suitable people are appointed to roles working with these groups.
https://dbscheckonline.org.uk/?utm_source=Google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=AdWords&kw=dbs%20check&mt=p&qclid=EALalQobChMIhcyRjpnS7AIVBc53Ch36QADMEAAAYASAAEgJyt_D_BwE
- ^{xx} Further details are available in our rapid response paper. Ageing Better: Local responses to the COVID-19 pandemic – neighbourliness and reciprocity
<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/documents/ageing-better/Ageing-Better-Neighbourliness-reciprocity.pdf?mtime=20200907111918&focal=none>
- ^{xxi} For example, Ecorys with The National Lottery Community Fund, March 2020. Learning Paper No.5 Micro-funding: Empowering Communities to Create Grassroots Change. Available from:
https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/documents/ageingbetter/Ageing_better_learning_report_5_evaluation_report.pdf
- ^{xxii} Language – learning from Ageing Better
https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/documents/ageingbetter/Ageing_better_Use_of_language.pdf?mtime=20200722145230&focal=none
- ^{xxiii} These volunteers draw on professional experience, having previously worked in mental health, nursing, social work etc
- ^{xxiv} These concepts are explored in Ageing Better: Local responses to the COVID-19 pandemic – neighbourliness and reciprocity <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/documents/ageing-better/Ageing-Better-Neighbourliness-reciprocity.pdf?mtime=20200907111918&focal=none>
- ^{xxv} UK CIVIL SOCIETY ALMANAC 2020 DATA. TRENDS. INSIGHTS.
<https://data.ncvo.org.uk/volunteering/>
- ^{xxvi} Bridging the Digital Divide – learning from Ageing Better
<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/documents/ageing-better/Ageing-Better-Bridging-the-digital-divide.pdf?mtime=20200519104603&focal=none>
- ^{xxvii} Neighbourliness refers to local people interacting, offering practical help and resources. The Young Foundation (2010) Understanding neighbourliness and belonging <https://youngfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Understanding-neighbourliness-and-belonging-September-2008.pdf>
- ^{xxviii} Ageing Better: Local responses to the COVID-19 pandemic – neighbourliness and reciprocity
<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/documents/ageing-better/Ageing-Better-Neighbourliness-reciprocity.pdf?mtime=20200907111918&focal=none>
- ^{xxix} The Ageing Better partnership Talk, Eat, Drink in East Lindsey is abbreviated to TED Ageing Better in East Lindsey, Lincolnshire. Further information is available on the website <https://tedineastlindsey.co.uk/>
- ^{xxx} Further information is available online: <https://magnavitaie.org/activity/health/chaps/>
- ^{xxxi} ConnectED Helplines, East Lindsey <https://tedineastlindsey.co.uk/latest-delivery/>
- ^{xxxii} Ageing Better in Sheffield. The Ripple Effect – Getting creative with lockdown phone calls
<https://www.agebettersheff.co.uk/news/news-and-blogs/the-ripple-effect-getting-creative-with-lockdown-phone-calls/>
- ^{xxxiii} For further information on Ageing Better approaches to supporting healthy lifestyles during the pandemic <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/documents/ageing-better/Ageing-Better-Healthy-lifestyles.pdf?mtime=20201012125446&focal=none>
- ^{xxxiv} Maintaining social connections with older people remotely. Ageing Better in Birmingham
<https://www.ageingbetterinbirmingham.co.uk/media/attachments/2020/06/09/birmingham-ageing-better-learning-maintaining-social-connections-2020.pdf>
- ^{xxxv} Tell your story, Facebook post
<https://www.facebook.com/thirdageproject/photos/a.1851465871734339/2736971659850418/>
- ^{xxxvi} Bridging the Digital Divide: Supporting People to Get Online in Lockdown
<http://www.ageingbetterincamden.org.uk/latestnews/2020/7/20/bridging-the-digital-divide-supporting-people-to-get-online-in-lockdown>
- ^{xxxvii} Further details on the challenges and limitations associated with remote support are provided in the accompanying methods note available online <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/strategic-investments/ageing-better#section-2>
- ^{xxxviii} Hello Neighbour boxes, Sheffield <https://www.agebettersheff.co.uk/covid-19/hello-sheffield-neighbour-box/>
- ^{xxxix} Age Better in Sheffield. Live Better: Get Connected vs Lockdown
<https://www.agebettersheff.co.uk/news/news-and-blogs/live-better-get-connected-vs-lockdown/>
- ^{xl} Ageing Better in Camden <http://www.ageingbetterincamden.org.uk/letters-from-lockdown>

-
- ^{xli} Shine Magazine, Time to Shine website <https://timetoshineleeds.org/projects/shine-magazine>
- ^{xlii} Safe spaces and buddy scheme for Torbay's shielding residents, Ageing Well Torbay <https://ageingwelltorbay.com/2020/08/17/safe-spaces-and-buddy-scheme-for-torbays-shielding-residents/>. For more information see <https://ageingwelltorbay.com/shieldingsites/>
- ^{xliii} For further information, please refer to Ageing Better Camden's website <http://www.ageingbetterincamden.org.uk/>
- ^{xliiv} Ambition for Ageing website. Developing social contact models in a time of social distancing <https://www.gmcvo.org.uk/publications/developing-social-contact-models-time-social-distancing>
- ^{xlv} For example, dancers perform outside the window for shielding residents. Ageing Better Sheffield, Moments of Joy <https://www.agebettersheff.co.uk/category/moments-of-joy/>
- ^{xlvi} Ageing Better in Sheffield. The Ripple Effect – Getting creative with lockdown phone calls <https://www.agebettersheff.co.uk/news/news-and-blogs/the-ripple-effect-getting-creative-with-lockdown-phone-calls/>
- ^{xlvii} Further information is available online. Ageing Better: Local responses to the COVID-19 pandemic – promoting healthy lifestyle to build resilience <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/documents/ageing-better/Ageing-Better-Healthy-lifestyles.pdf?mtime=20201012125446&focal=none>
- ^{xlviii} The Ageing Better national evaluation team are currently researching active travel models, and findings will feature in a forthcoming learning paper.
- ^{xlix} For example, Bristol Ageing Better developed parallel projects on local food growing and cookery to promote healthy eating. For further information on adapting Ageing Better approaches to support healthy lifestyles during the pandemic <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/documents/ageing-better/Ageing-Better-Healthy-lifestyles.pdf?mtime=20201012125446&focal=none>
- ⁱ Ageing Better in Leicester provides online advice to support healthy lifestyles and build resilience <https://www.leicesterageingtogether.org.uk/wellbeing/keeping-active/>
- ⁱⁱ Ageing Better Middlesbrough website – Zoom guide and online events <https://www.ageingbettermiddlesbrough.org.uk/news/zoom-guide-and-online-events/>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Ageing Well Torbay. Reflecting on Torbay Community Helpline, and your responses <https://ageingwelltorbay.com/2020/08/26/reflecting-on-torbay-community-helpline-and-your-responses/>
- ⁱⁱⁱⁱ Ageing Better in Birmingham, Staying Connected: Guidance for Ageing Better Groups on Adapting to COVID-19 <https://www.ageingbetterinbirmingham.co.uk/media/attachments/2020/09/24/ab-guidance-sep-2020-v1.pdf>
- ^{liv} Time to Shine learning briefing (July 2020) Boosting confidence to regain independence, Leeds <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/assets.timetoshine.co.uk/Boosting-confidence-to-regain-independence.pdf>
- ^{lv} Time to Shine learning briefing (July 2020) Re-starting face-to-face support outdoors https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/assets.timetoshine.co.uk/Re-starting-face-to-face-support-outdoors_learning-from-Time-to-Shine.pdf
- ^{lvi} Further information is available online. TED Ageing Better in East Lindsey, Lincolnshire, The Carers First - Men Do project <https://tedineastlindsey.co.uk/latest-delivery/>
- ^{lvii} Further information is available online. Ageing Well Torbay. Community Builders. <https://ageingwelltorbay.com/delivery-partners/community-builders/>
- ^{lviii} Ageless Thanet. Covid-19: Reacting to a crisis https://sekgroup.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Covid-19-Report_standard.pdf
- ^{lix} Telephone Befriending – learning from Ageing Better Middlesbrough (June 2020) <https://www.ageingbettermiddlesbrough.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ABM-Telephone-Befriending-service-learning-Final.pdf>
- ^{lx} Telephone Befriending Service: A Guide for Volunteers, Ageing Better in Sheffield <https://www.agebettersheff.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Telephone-Befriending-Service-Guide-Final.pdf>
- ^{lxi} Time to Shine (March 2020) Telephone Befriending Information and resources <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/assets.timetoshine.co.uk/Telephone-befriending-information-and-resources-TTS.pdf>
- ^{lxii} For further information on Ageing Better's initiatives linked to social prescribing, please view our Community Connectors report https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/documents/ageing-better/prog_fulfilling_lives_ageing_better_learning_report_2.pdf?mtime=20181219102827&focal=none
- ^{lxiii} Learning from Brightliffe Cheshire's social prescribing approach <http://www.brightliffecheshire.org.uk/social-prescribing/>

^{lxiv} For example, Ecorys with The National Lottery Community Fund, January 2020. Learning Paper No.4 Engaging Marginalised People Over 50. Available from:

https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/documents/ageing-better/prog_fulfilling_lives_ageing_better_learning_report_4.pdf?mtime=20200313105446&focal=none

^{lxv} The Out and About cards are similar to the JAM (Just a Minute) card, which support people with a learning difficulty, autism or communication barrier. Further information is available online:

<https://jamcard.org/>