

Shifting sands and different look-outs?

Perspectives from TED Ageing

Better in East Lindsey 2015-2021



2021

Thematic Bulletin 3: Working With Communities Collaboratively

About TED in East Lindsey

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. Nationally the £87 million programme has a specific focus on the experiences of people who are aged 50 and above in relation to tackling loneliness and social isolation and creating 'togetherness' through a range of activities and initiatives.



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

TED is grounded in the experiences of stakeholders in the district including people aged 50 and over, but the programme also recognises the wider international and national strategy and policy contexts. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic the 'TED service offer' was characterised by three distinct strands of activity:

- 1. The creation and facilitation of Friendship Groups** which grew from the initial 'Teas with TED' meetings. These Friendship Groups are established and supported with a paid Community Officer with a view to becoming self-sustaining past the lifetime of the current funding for TED. These groups recruit and draw on a significant number of volunteers
- 2. The promotion of Age Friendliness in Businesses via the Age-friendly Business Award.** Over 120 businesses in the district now hold the award, which recognises the efforts of businesses in acknowledging the role of age and ageing in how they design, deliver and sustain their services and products
- 3. Diverse projects delivered by 'specialist' Delivery Partners.** These projects range from a focus on Digital Inclusion, to activities for Male Carers, Citizen's Advice and Food, Health and Wellbeing projects

As a result of the pandemic and social distancing, the programme as a whole diversified to include forms of engagement and belonging that can be captured in a shift from 'getting out and getting together' to 'connecting despite distance'.

In this series of bulletins taken from a more detailed report we reflect on over 6 years of learning from TED. Our partners, the University of Lincoln International Business School and Rose Regeneration have reported on research which the programme commissioned for a period of 2 years. Their detailed final evaluation report in line with HM Treasury's Magenta Book, features process, impact and economic components: collecting quantitative and qualitative data utilising mixed-methods approaches (University of Lincoln and Rose Regeneration, forthcoming). In contrast, this bulletin reflects on learning reports and case studies the programme has produced to date. It does so by principally detailing core ways, or 'shifting sands', in how we both think about, and engage with, ageing populations from different perspectives (or lookouts). Other bulletins in this series include:

- Embedding Strategy: The Aims and Objectives of Ageing Better
- Challenging Stereotypes and Changing the Narrative
- Enhancing Togetherness Through 'Grassroots Best Practice'
- Shifting to Sustainability? Maximizing Resource and Harnessing Participation

Before turning to each of these thematic areas some headline characteristics about East Lindsey can be noted to give context to the findings of this report.



About East Lindsey: Rurality, sparsity and coastal populations

East Lindsey is a rural area that contains a number of towns, but also has a significantly sparse population made up of smaller towns, villages, hamlets and individual dwellings. A substantial part of the District comprises of coastline and The Wolds, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It has as an ageing population which is significantly disproportionately higher than the national average. Challenges for the population include: pockets of high deprivation in a national context, access to and use of (affordable) transport, access to other public services, leisure and town 'hubs', issues with internet connectivity and mobile phone signal in a number of areas, and an inward migration of people that move into the district to retire. This includes a substantial number who present with and/or develop health issues or transport needs.

For this bulletin's thematic shift (as with others) we start with an overview of its key dimensions or characteristics.

Working With Communities Collaboratively – Key Dimensions

- Engaging through accessible design and communication
- Sharing ownership of aims and objectives
- Supporting innovation

“We are so pleased to be an Age-friendly Business; it is so positive to be recognised for making the older generation feel welcome and comfortable” (Age-friendly Business Owner)

“We are a fairly new group, set up to assist the LGBTQ+ community in Skegness. Prior to our set up, every member of the LGBTQ+ community was on their own as there was not even a bar or café [in Skegness] aimed at them. We are now providing a weekly meeting, usually held in a Skegness pub. Having just found you online I was wondering if you could help us in any way, if only by letting folks know we exist.” (Key contact from the Skegness LGBTQ Meet-up Group)

These opening quotes illustrate core aspects of being able to work with rather than doing work for or in communities. This subtle turn of phrase can mean quite distinct differences in forms of engagement. Our learning on the relational nature of resilience and wider engagement has shown how activities can bring people together, create dialogue, and both provide platforms for ongoing collaboration, future co-design and coproduction of services. Ultimately, these factors contribute to the potential for sustainability and reinforce the legacy of ongoing services. **Accessible design can have ramifications both for the literal physical design of space and place, but also a deeper emotional resonance, whereby established groups and activities are seen as inviting (as captured in the idea of a 'warm welcome' by Ageing Better Camden).**



Lorraine, a lead volunteer on one of TED's coastal projects has highlighted how TED has 'reach' via resource and networks:

"... but TED has the money to actually advertise and link up people. There are a lot of people out there that could access these groups and whether it is transport problems or health problems, they've got to realise that we are open for everybody. Obviously we can take on board what we can as long as we know what we're dealing with and if LGBT people are coming to us then we need to be putting things in place to make sure we are being inclusive and they feel included." (Lorraine, Volunteer)

Across our learning, and as is covered in the earlier bulletins, **activities are crucial to supporting collaboration. They enable exploration of dialogue and prospects to test ideas that can be refined and potentially scaled up. The shift of learning about language and developing service offers which encourage shared communication also merges with age-friendly design of place and space.** This features in the TED learning report on the role housing plays in reducing social isolation. The Time Out Friendship Group at Barratt Court Central Café in Skegness is part of a wider complex of accommodation, designed with the perspectives of ageing people and 'community' in mind. Martha a lead TED volunteer describes this:

"... I thought well it's a nice place. I thought it would be nice to get some of the residents, some of them that I knew, down to this meeting. And I thought that would be good for them not just to stay in their room all the time. I think that spurred me on getting it [the Time Out Friendship Group] going and we do get a few of them come down now. It's nice to see them - it is. Yeah it's an ideal place to meet. I mean they have only got to come downstairs but there's a huge community around here lots of houses. And we do get people coming in from the community as well. It just seemed like the ideal place to have a friendship group. There's the café and there's things going on in the other rooms and it's ideally situated really." (Martha (pseudonym), TED Volunteer)

Designing groups and activities so they are emotionally as well as physically accessible creates two ways of enhancing participation in the programme. Some of this related to dementia friendly awareness and wider age-friendly design, including 'hubs' reachable by public transport. **The combination of emotional and physical access considerations were over-arched by references to 'safety'. This ranged from people feeling able to engage in an environment that minimizes risks to health, is aesthetically engaging and convenient, and at the same time, 'safe' in terms of having emotionally supportive and welcoming in-group dynamics. These provide foundations on which to build collaborative work and ongoing participation:**

"You've got a cafeteria that sells gluten free for me, I am a coeliac. You've got tables and if you feel trapped or claustrophobic you can move about. It's just a nice place. It's much easier with my walking stick." (Grace, TED Service User)

"You can have a coffee and then when it's finished, as I am on my own, I stay and have my lunch here. It is nice and clean and the toilets, yes - nice place." (Mabel, TED Service User)



“You don’t have to worry here, it’s [the building] purposely made so that you can get around without causing any trouble, you know. It’s something that you have to think about more when you get older, falling, tripping. You don’t get any trouble here, it’s nice, safe and the people are all good people and it’s secure and you can do your exercise and learn about your cooking, all the different types [recipes], and it’s all healthy. It’s designed that way, to be good for the older people. You know some of us have health illnesses.” (Peter, TED Service User)

“Here it is more open and people can just come in and join in and have a laugh and what have you, it’s lovely. I’ve had my life threatened a lot of times so I don’t like people sitting behind me. I can sit with my back towards the room and I don’t feel there is anybody near me because there is space. If I’m on the bus I have to sit with my back away from people because it just worries me. I mean I suffer with PTSD, low moods and anxiety. And it’s hard, it really is especially when I have been through what I have been through... People will join in. If you want to talk to somebody privately you can because you’ve got your group and it’s safe. I mean it’s lovely in here, look how the sun is shining through, it’s beautiful.” (Grace, TED Service User)

Accessible design also relates to participatory research methods employed as part of test and learn approaches which capture lived experience, promote feedback at different levels, and considers dissemination to community stakeholders. The role of a dedicated lead on social media, marketing and communications within the YMCA Lincolnshire TED team has been crucial to capturing and implementing different approaches. Management of formal project communications supports ‘informal’ ‘word of mouth’ that influences the recruitment and retention of TED members:

“People in [our market town] are very special, they know other people, have brought other people with them to the group” (TED Friendship Group lead volunteer)

These approaches have been useful foundations for ongoing motivation to share original aims and objectives. They promote ownership between dedicated TED resource and community members as part of sustainability and legacy prospects. This is reflected in the work of TED on a rural and coastal theme for a national Ageing Better Coproduction Toolkit. The development of group belonging and activity was the inspiration for TED’s approach to coproduction. The creation of a Quality Mark with Friendship Group volunteers and chairs provides an indication of shared ownership for strategic aims, particularly increasing participation:

“We would love to be the first officially approved TED Friendship Group, it would make us extremely proud to have the official stamp of approval.” (Susan, TED volunteer, The Over 50s Youth Club)



Delivery partners, like Carer's First, have been working with participants on looking at ways men can 'take over' the design and delivery of the project's activities:

"The project has been great in helping isolated and lonely older men build or rebuild social relationships and networks. We have even had men want to come along to events that we have put on knowing that they may not be able to partake but simply wanting to be with the other guys. For me it is these intangible, personal and social benefits that are the real cornerstone of projects like this, and I am lucky to be able to give these men the opportunity to do things that they may have thought they were no longer able to do or access." (Carer's First, Men Do Facilitator)

"Carry on with the planning, I don't get out very often, meeting friends, going to different places. I look forward to the next one...or two!" (TED Member, Men Do)

Men Do create co-design through ongoing opportunities. The dynamic service offer has included, air rifle shooting, snooker masterclasses, brewery trips, foot-golf and a trip to International Bomber Command. Their activities during the pandemic included receiving gift packs that contained a Ukulele and the opportunity to learn a song and play this as a group on social media, as well as men establishing a profile on a contact directory so they could call each other during social distancing. Men Do has gone on to hold COVID-19 compliant events, including activities at Cadwell Race Track. They have recently drawn up a proposal for plans commencing in the summer of 2021 and learning from Men Do has already been applied to wider networks in Carer's First, promoted via the organisation's website. Examples include the development of a 'chat' directory where men can call each other through having a profile which can feature interests, hobbies and occupational backgrounds.

COVID-19 presents real obstacles for collaborative work, but also shows abilities to adapt and to progress, guided by the clarity and ongoing relevance of the original Ageing Better aims. As has been touched upon, clear strategic direction and programme management are fundamental components for programme 'success', but in the context of collaborating with communities examples of grassroots 'best practice' and the unification of these two strands has been, and continues to be, essential.

Key Findings:

- **Work in ways which are inclusive, focussing on citizenship, strategic development and designing of services that appeal across age groups. Internationally there are models of shared accommodation that can be drawn on, as well as projects like Men's Sheds to promote shared positive experiences of ageing that have a 'doing together' as well as a 'getting together' ethos**



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 or start a conversation and share your views online: Twitter: [@ted_EastLindsey](https://twitter.com/ted_EastLindsey)



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