

Shifting sands and different look-outs?

Perspectives from TED Ageing

Better in East Lindsey 2015-2021



2021



Thematic Bulletin 5: Shifting to Sustainability? Maximising Resource and Harnessing Participation

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 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.



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

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'
- Working with Communities Collaboratively

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.

Shifting to Sustainability? Maximising Resource and Harnessing Participation – Key Dimensions

- Building confidence: Designated resource, employed team members and design
- Relationships, listening and longevity
- Flexibility during pressure

In this final bulletin reflecting on the last 6 years of learning reports and case studies from TED in East Lindsey we highlight issues implicit in the other bulletins. A key Ageing Better aim (nationally and locally) is to create sustainable impact following the end of the current funding stream (a final end date is March 2022, but for some projects and partners this is sooner). In the setting of this theme **shifting to sustainability has two core sub-themes. The first concerns highlighting the abilities of the programme to use resource to generate 'impact' that can be mainly conceived of in relation to all Ageing Better aims and objectives, and specifically in the sense that services are able to continue and move to self-sustaining status from initial investment. The second, which is closely related to the first, is the ability to evidence ways in which participation in the 'TED offer', or future evolutions of the programme, have the potential to keep engaging stakeholders (crucially people aged 50 and over) in relation to their needs and wants. A key element of this is volunteering:**

"We know that the role of volunteers has been instrumental in service design, delivery and sustainability and to the overall success of our programme, but we also recognise that this success has required dedicated resource in the form of the TED staff team and associated commissioned VCS partners. This investment has created capacity in communities, volunteers and beneficiaries through sharing specialist knowledge and expertise, experience and training. Community members, groups and volunteers have been supported by our team to build on this investment in order to transition to self-sustaining status." (Director of Communities YMCA Lincolnshire, July 2020)

A key asset of Ageing Better nationally and TED in East Lindsey has been the ability of areas to invest resource in designated roles that are not necessarily fixed in terms of person specification and role development. The programme in East Lindsey has staff employed via YMCA Lincolnshire. These include:

- A TED Programme Manager
- An Age-friendly Principal Officer (jointly funded by TED in East Lindsey and East Lindsey District Council)
- An Age-friendly Business Officer
- A Friendship/Communities Officer



- A dedicated Communications and Marketing Project Support lead
- Designated Administrative Support, data inputting and lead telephone befriending
- A TED Learning and Evaluation Officer (contracted through the Health Advancement Research Team at the University of Lincoln to YMCA Lincolnshire)

All roles had a strong relationship with communities: designing, promoting and delivering the programme in varied ways. These included working with community stakeholders that ranged from Council representatives, VCS organisations, statutory services, businesses, people aged 50 and over in the community, and existing volunteers. Communication methods varied, and intersected with the programme's wider strategic dialogue and focus. Administrative support were also proactive, promoting the Common Measurement Framework (CMF) during group/place-based events and liaising with wider stakeholders to secure data returns in addition to inputting data into the Ecorys central database and bespoke spreadsheets.

COVID-19 and the accompanying changes in delivery built on these existing roles and approaches to community development and stakeholders roles diversified to ensure the embedded aims and objectives of Ageing Better maintained relevance. **Employed programme staff went beyond their original person specifications and job descriptions. This was especially the case for the telephone befriending service set up by the first lockdown. For one staff member, whose main pre-COVID-19 tasks involved CMF data inputting and administrative support this represented a change in capacity and developing and applying varied skills. As the service became established their passion for their changing role and supporting people developed greatly.**

Building confidence in community members was not just the remit of the YMCA Lincolnshire team members. Delivery partners, AfB's and Friendship Groups were all key participants, but the investment of dedicated time and employed staff were important triggers in building relationships, confidence and sustainability.

A more general pattern that the TED Community Officer and lead Friendship Group volunteer described:

“New Friendship Groups will begin to widen their scope by including pet friendly groups and to work with other agencies such as the fire service, local businesses and the waste collection crews within East Lindsey who are in regular contact with the vulnerable in the local community. All friendship groups will have a full sustainability plan put in place to ensure the groups can continue beyond March 2020 and still provide the vital support needed in rural communities.” (TED Community Officer (pre-year 7))



“We need to go back to the drawing board and look at what a friendship group should be. What expectations we should and need to engender. We need to respect each other so individual contributions aren’t lost and we need to get to a point where people feel encouraged to come forward with their own ideas. So it is about engendering trust. We need to make people feel safe. Think about how we get people there and focus on promoting and recruiting. For the next two years we need to focus on getting it right. Whenever activities are planned we need structure. We need structure or the group will be lost. We need to leave a legacy!” (TED Volunteer, prior to pandemic)

Ongoing design of dynamic services as ‘age-friendly’ is an important trait in engaging people aged 50 and over. **Building confidence to move to sustainability and leave a legacy are also intrinsically linked to developing relationships, as covered in this theme so far and underpins wider programme learning:**

“Ro (Community Officer) is brilliant, she’s there, she phones me, comes along... they (the group members) relate to her she tells us things and we tell her things, can phone her if you’ve got a problem” (Coastal Friendship Group lead)

“Good to see that some of the CHAPS are now phoning me during the week and not always waiting for my weekly call. It indicates that they feel relaxed enough to do this and that they don’t have to phone me for anything but just to have a chat. One of the CHAPS had completed the Grand National quiz we posted on the website and then rang me to reminisce about the event” (Magna Vitae, CHAPS)

TED in East Lindsey reports during COVID-19, referred to the idea of ‘community sensitivity’. This was incorporated in understanding processes of adaptation, yet can also be applied to building confidence and relationships. This involves appreciating peoples’ needs and preferences in an ongoing nature (the ‘demand aspect’), and adapting relationships and service delivery. This includes during reductions in place-based and face-to-face/ group activities as well as working with short-term, uncertain, contexts. Hence **part of these relationships involves listening, doing so ‘in the moment’ but at the same time being mindful of longer term issues and planning.** Citizen’s Advice Lindsey, a TED in East Lindsey delivery partner, gave an example:

“The client was at a loss when I first met him; he was having financial difficulties and also struggling with his health issues due to recently losing his partner. I helped him sort out his finances, apply for additional benefits and helped him to manage his budgeting. This was only part of his problem as he was also feeling lost and lonely due to his recent bereavement. He started calling into the drop in centre on a weekly basis just to have a chat with people at the drop in sessions. This was his only point of contact with others but it was slowly bringing him out of himself. The first day he attended he had his head down and wanted to get out of the place as soon as possible, but now he comes into the centre of his own accord. He has also started to attend a local cafe with some of the other groups he has met at the centre. He has started volunteering on a weekly basis and feels his life is starting to get better and feels as if he is useful once again.” (TED Delivery Partner, Citizens Advice Lindsey)



Resource and building confidence were instrumental in developing relationships and contributing to longevity. In the above case all of these strands came together with a 'ripple effect':

"During the lockdown this year... you have been unceasingly kind and thoughtful with your phone calls, and, as well as hearing your friendly voice it has helped me just knowing that you were someone I could contact if I needed your help in some way, so thank you. If we ever come out of this pandemic it would be really great if you were to arrange another course like the first one (before the pandemic)"
(Magna Vitae, Good News Story)

"... our service crosses over many services already there and we can, with our experience and expertise, cover many services while offering a one stop shop to the person. This will benefit the person and the funder, as our service level is extremely cost effective as there doesn't need to be a variety of organisations involved with the person. Feedback from our learners is they trust and have confidence... we can resolve and support their issues. They are asking for these services to continue within a face to face drop in centre. We are currently working on a new extended offer for a full funding bid. We now have a new working plan we are developing for a new service for future delivery" (Lincs Digital, project case study)

Even prior to the pandemic initial signs of sustainability were evident. An example of this is the "take over" of gym sessions by men only:

"Okay so it's the last session today and fortunately the guys at the gym are going to keep the session on. So it's gonna be from the same time, so 2:00pm to 4:00pm on a Thursday afternoon. And it has been free for the last 12 weeks as part of the TED project. However there will be a small charge of £4.10 for two hours which is the same price usually for one hour so they can use the gym, sauna and steam room and the lifestyle consultants will be able to show them the equipment and things like that. So it's great that it has stayed sustainable. And we've been having six [regulars], but we have had up to 12 people at once and I think there's been about 21 [men aged 50 and over] through the project in total, so 21 different individuals. It's definitely been worth it - absolutely." (TED Delivery Partner, Magna Vitae)



It is important to also acknowledge that this does not necessarily imply that a short(er) duration or single activity cannot have meaningful, long term impact:

This journey of change for the TED in East Lindsey programme has already led to aspects of sustainability and legacy. Friendship groups have commenced their own applications for further funding bids, delivery partners are too exploring funding opportunities to keep running projects. CHAPS, ran by Magna Vitae, a delivery partner, have sought to continue their features despite not being funded past March 2021 by TED in East Lindsey Ageing Better monies. Delivery partner and Programme Management Group meetings have been arenas in which maintaining 'person-centred' services for people in East Lindsey going forwards have been (and remain) the subject of discussion.

The Age-friendly Principal Officer and Communities Officer (with the wider team) have been working with a person with lived experience of ageing without children, drawing on Friendship Groups alongside commissioned projects, to raise awareness of these experiences and establish an interest group. This includes working with the Healthy Ageing Research Group at the University of Lincoln to establish a small-scale research project.

The AfB award has been piloting self-assessment during the pandemic and membership continues to grow. Award holders continue to grow and these businesses have been a feature of two projects. Age-friendly Futures, an EU European Social Fund and The Education & Skills Funding Agency funded project specifically focusses on employability for people aged 50 and over. AfB's are a core element of this project, providing work experience opportunities and CV development. Age-friendly training is also in the early stages of being established and business stakeholders are a key avenue of interest to test and learn from this initiative. These indicators of legacy reaffirm that there are already opportunities to consider further future shifts in how we think about ageing in the district and the different positions from which these perspectives are formed and understood.

Key Findings:

- **Consideration of joint bids and searching out of further 'seed corn' grants to continue 'testing and learning' about ageing populations, particularly in 'emerging' situations. This would require contractual and logistical considerations if partnering to submit and manage bids, commissions and also establishing responsibilities. Ongoing sharing of aims, objectives and outcomes alongside engaging a range of stakeholders remain important ways to clarify and secure 'buy in' to the approach**

Based on the learning accumulated to date there are opportunities for future learning. They are:

- **Age-friendly Businesses.** As the Award continues to grow we will be reporting on progress made and next steps in terms of how the Award can continue and diversify
- **A report on Friendship Groups and volunteering** – the successes, challenges and ability to secure the spirit of friendship(s) into the future- harnessing volunteer and attendees ongoing participation
- **A summary learning report on incorporating Age-friendly training in AfB's** (as a feasibility study)
- **A summary learning report on the experiences of ageing without children** to include ageing diversities with rural and coastal complexions
- **A learning report on aspects of legacy** which will include looking at the aforementioned activities to consider opportunities in East Lindsey, the wider county and beyond. This includes the strategic relevance of the programme to ongoing and planned community development projects in local, county and national contexts



About 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



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