



COMMUNITY NAVIGATORS

report 2019



The Community Navigators project aims to connect older people with social activities in their communities, by identifying and mapping existing groups, signposting and supporting people to participate and creating new groups with the support of local volunteers.

Community Navigators are embedded within communities, which means they can build relationships, trust and understanding of what is needed.

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Community Navigator project

The Community Navigator project is part of an Ageing Better partnership funded by the National Lottery Community Fund Ageing Better programme which started delivery in 2015. The project is delivered by Wight Home Care.



The project aims to support older people to connect to local social activities.

The project includes the following elements:

- Referrals from Care Navigators, other local organisations and self-referrals - individuals who are isolated or interested in taking part in social activities in their communities.

- Mapping of existing groups and clubs and development of community directories.
- Signposting and supporting participants to attend groups.
- Creation of new groups and activities, depending on local need. New clubs are set up in community venues, with support from volunteers.



Participants and Reach

Since April 2015 the Community Navigators have supported 2,340 older people, an average of 580 a year.



78%

over three-quarters are female



21%

a quarter are male



51%

although the project supports anyone aged 50+, over half are aged 60-74



38%

over a third are aged 75+

Community Navigator participants tend to fall into two broad categories

- Older people who are still well and want to stay active while they still can.
- Older people who are more frail, live alone and need help to access activities in order to prevent or reduce isolation.

“They are working with a combination of people who are extremely isolated or at risk of being isolated. For example, older people who have been bereaved and have little or no local networks, people who have limitations in their lives as they are living alone or have poor mobility.”



53%

of participants live alone, with many being older widows



57%

are disabled



67%

experience some pain or discomfort



55%

over half have some mobility problems



47%

a large proportion also suffer from mental health issues; with nearly half experiencing anxiety or depression





Health conditions, low confidence or depression means it is difficult for people to access social activities and they can become lonely or isolated.

“Many couples come to retire on the Island, sadly they may become bereaved and find themselves very isolated and without networks because they haven’t lived here for very long.”

A quarter of clients meet up with friends or family less frequently than once a week. And on average, clients scored themselves as 2.60 on the De Jong Gierveld loneliness and isolation scale, with 0 being least lonely and 6 most lonely. This compares to a score of 1.80 across the older Island population, showing that the project is reaching people

who are lonelier than the average older population on the Isle of Wight.

Wellbeing levels are also low, with an average score of 21.90 being reported for the Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWS) (7 being lowest levels of wellbeing and 35 high levels). When compared to a national dataset compiled by the New Economics Foundation, this score falls between the bottom 61% and 80% of the population and is rated ‘below average’.

The baseline data collected shows that the project is reaching older people who are isolated or at risk of isolation, often with low levels of wellbeing and experiencing health conditions that limit their ability to get out and about.



Creating new activities

Between them the four Community Navigators have established 36 new groups in their areas. These include;

- ‘Pitch ups’ - these are activities which encourage people to use local venues that need support – e.g. pubs, church halls and local attractions. They offer a hot drink and cake or bacon butties with a free quiz and table top activity to encourage conversation. Attending these activities has resulted in residents mixing more and feeling more at home in these environments if they want to take families and friends out for a meal or coffee. They are more confident walking in alone due to becoming well known by the staff and given a personal welcome. This has also increased revenue and footfall for the venues.

- Adult ‘youth clubs’ - providing a range of games, bingo, seated exercise, walking football etc. in a community centre.
- Arts and crafts clubs, including photography.
- Coffee mornings - e.g. the Phoenix Centre for adults with learning difficulties. They provide a mini-bus and driver to enable older people from the community to help the clients take part in games and craft activities.
- Games clubs, including a bridge club for beginners at West Wight’s Sports Centre.

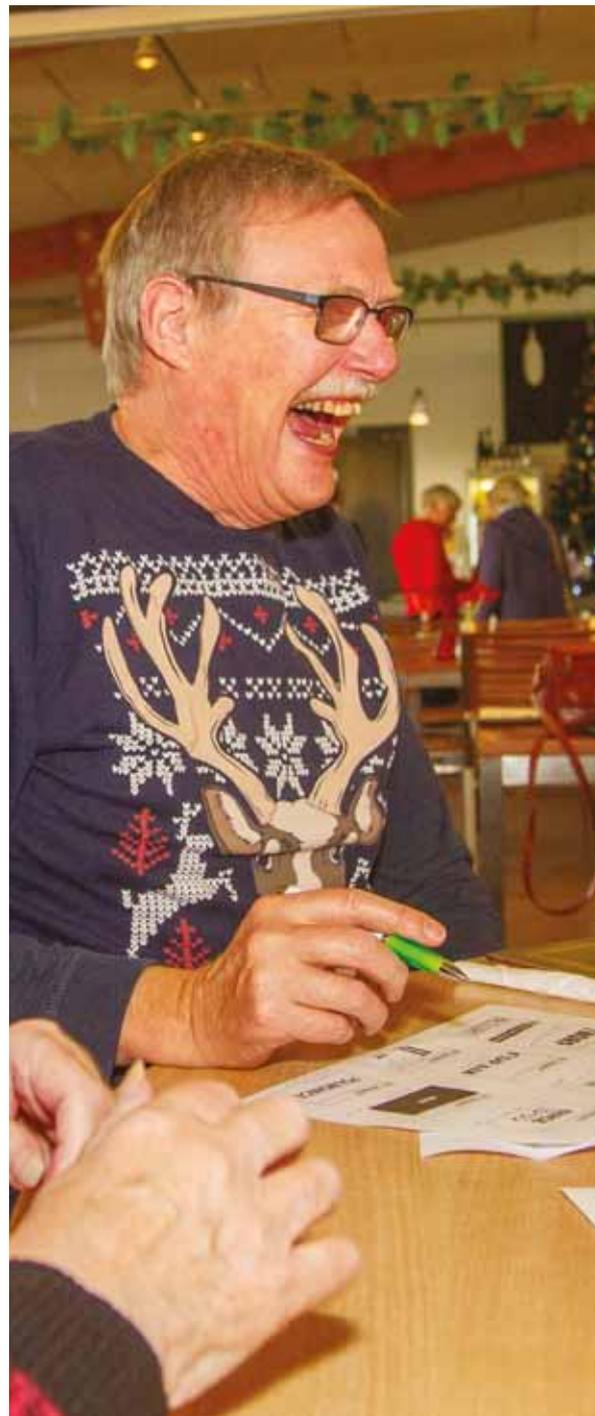
In addition to these regular activities, a large number of one-off events are also supported, including ‘Big Pitch Ups’ to encourage people to mix and to travel to parts of the Island they might not normally get the chance to visit, supporting festivals, talks, Christmas dinners etc.

The project has extremely high satisfaction levels, with;



94%

agreeing the project met their needs



98%

of participants satisfied with the project



Partnership working

The Community Navigators work with a range of partner organisations in their communities, including;

Supporting community organisations to set up their own activities, for example at Brading Methodist Church the Community Navigators gave the newly appointed Church Community Development Officer advice and contacts which resulted in Bacon Butties and Banter men's group and a seated exercise class being set up.

Working with community venues such as pubs, cafes, church halls to set up Pitch Ups or other new activities.

Working with other organisations supporting older people, including the Local Area Coordinators (now no longer funded) and Age UKIW Care Navigators to identify isolated people needing support.

Partners are able to identify how the Community Navigators have complemented their services or provided additional benefit to their organisation or community. Partners identify a better level of understanding about the needs of older people, providing a coordination role that helps connect people to activities and services and reducing duplication by facilitating partnership meetings.

"[The Care Navigators] are getting people back on their feet. We work with them and build the trust and then do the introduction to the Community Navigator. They have set up the clubs and have the local knowledge. They are embedded within the community and have the ability to set things up and support volunteers to make them sustainable. For example, the Community Navigator set up a theatre group and a gentleman I was supporting was in his 90s and caring for his wife with dementia – when I first met them they never left their house. He didn't want help with his wife, but he mentioned he used to

play piano. I introduced him to the Community Navigator and he took him out to the theatre group where he goes and can play the piano. It's giving him a bit of his life back and self-esteem."



Volunteering

The Community Navigators have engaged 62 volunteers, who help run the activities they set up. The ultimate aim is for volunteers to take over running of the groups, in order to enable the Community Navigator to withdraw and establish new activities.

In reality this takes time, as although happy to help, volunteers are often reluctant to take on full responsibility for groups. However, building the capacity of volunteers is being prioritised in the final year of the project.



“The Community Navigator is part of our community.”

“The Community Navigator helped us to notice a lack of benches in local green spaces which would encourage older people to be more active, they have also helped facilitate new activities such as a local bridge club.”

“It has reduced duplication in the area; the regular partnership meetings have helped achieve this as all local organisations are sharing information more effectively which has increased greater awareness of what everyone is offering.”



What works

Embedded within communities

Being part of the community means Community Navigators can build relationships, and crucially, trust with local people and groups. This means they are able to generate a lot of local knowledge and facilitate connections between people and activities.

“[Community Navigator] really knows the patch, he knows what is available, who to go to and where to go to get support.”

Building confidence through emotional and practical support

By developing relationships with people over time Community Navigators can build people’s confidence. Initial support to attend activities is often essential for isolated older people. This support can be emotional, by just being with them as a friendly face at the first session, or more practical by offering lifts to people who are geographically isolated. For example, one lady who attends the Niton coffee morning lives in a lighthouse on her own and doesn’t drive. Without being picked up she wouldn’t be able to attend.

“Having someone accompanying me in a new activity was nice, it helped me settle in. And the fact that I get the occasional phone call to see how I’m getting on is fantastic.”

Community Navigators are personable, friendly and supportive.

“She is so caring, and absolutely the right person in the right place for such a calling. I look forward to the next ‘adventure’ that she has in store for us all! I would never have found the confidence to join these groups, and to encourage others to do the same without [Community Navigator’s] initial support.”

Beneficial activities that meet local need

New activities set up by Community Navigators are carefully designed to ensure they include ways of benefiting older people, in addition to the social benefits. For example, quizzes and puzzles such as ‘Dingbats’ help memory and problem solving skills and arts and crafts, photography or card games help improve motor control.

It is also important that activities are fun, and are based on what people want; that new ideas come from the local community.

Links with local organisations and projects

The Community Navigators can only be successful if they are able to build effective relationships with local organisations and other services that can refer people to the project. The project needs other organisations to provide venues, support and identify other opportunities to work together to meet the needs of the community.

Sustaining groups

To sustain groups the Community Navigators need to engage and support committed volunteers, and build their confidence and capacity to lead the groups. Some groups also benefit from the goodwill of host venues, which often provide space or refreshments at a loss. And some groups generate small amounts of money through raffles or ‘subs’ which helps pay for refreshments.



*“People want someone to stick around – they are used to people coming and going for a short amount of time and it’s easy to lose trust.”
(Community Navigator).*

“Their fine motor skills have improved as they are now producing more detailed work, they have a greater sense of pride in their work and their general outlook seems more positive.”

“We use a local pub as a venue but they only charge £2 for tea and cakes, they do it because they want to help people connect, not for profit.”



Community Navigators - the difference it makes

Improving health and wellbeing

Data from participants who completed the Ageing Better national evaluation survey and the project's own survey demonstrate how the project is helping to improve clients' health and wellbeing, or prevent further decline:



41%

of participants have self-reported an improvement in their overall quality of life (using the EQ-5d-EL quality of life index)



69%

have seen an improvement or no further decline (using the EQ-5d-EL quality of life index)



42%

self-report an overall improvement in their health



60%

report either an improvement or no further decline



58%

report an improvement in their wellbeing (SWEMWBS)



72%

report an improvement or no further decline (SWEMWBS)



70%

have something to look forward to



52%

feel happier



30%

feel more motivated

"Has brought back the happy person I used to be, rather than the 'grumpy' person I had become. I am more positive now."





THE DIFFERENCE COMMUNITY NAVIGATORS MAKES

“I had some trouble adapting (mentally as well as physically) to becoming disabled after being a very active person. Helped me to find things I could still do and getting involved.”

“I’ve come out of my shell. I used to be a shy person. I really enjoy the new activities. I’ve turned a corner.”

“Slightly more motivated and look forward to visitors.”

“One of the main benefits is to the mental health of older people who can feel very low as a result of having no contact with others or connection to groups or networks.”

“I lost my husband which resulted in me having a semi breakdown and I stopped going out. [The Community Navigator] has supported me to engage with some social events locally that I may be interested in. She recently took me to take part in the local SingAbout - she travelled with me as I have lost my confidence to travel alone on public transport. She has also connected me with a Teapot Club and arranges for an Age UK driver to transport me there and back.”

“I’m trying to get my confidence back to get out on my own. The Community Navigators help you to know what is going on locally that you may be interested in, which if you weren’t active in the community you just wouldn’t know about. She connects me with things I am interested in, for example I don’t like sewing but love music and she is trying to connect me to sessions I like.”

Increasing connections and reducing isolation and loneliness

The project is also helping to increase social connectivity and reduce loneliness and isolation, or is preventing isolation levels from decreasing further:



79%

of participants have interacted with new people





68%
have made new friends



57%
are more involved in social
or community activities



41%
feel better connected



22%
of clients report an
increase in social contact
with family or friends



29%
report an increase in
contact with non-family
members



29%
of clients are less isolated



THE DIFFERENCE COMMUNITY NAVIGATORS MAKES

“Has helped remove a feeling of total loneliness.”

“Enabled me to be more independent as I’ve only been on the Island for a few years and I didn’t know anyone but family.”

“Not being alone and found a group of people in the community.”

“I have made friends and learnt a lot about the area’s history and development”

“It is bringing the community together and helping to banish loneliness and isolation.”

“In the past I would get out of bed and make myself a cup of tea and go back to bed again. Sometimes I would still be kicking about in my dressing gown at 11am. Now if I’m going somewhere I get out of bed and get on.”

Sheila moved to the Isle of Wight in 1996 with her husband. After many happy years David had a fall in 2012. He pulled through, but his health deteriorated over the next few years, including diagnosis of vascular dementia in 2015, and David sadly passed away in 2016 at the age of 92. “When David passed away, I didn’t know which way to turn. When you lose somebody after 46 years it’s like a whole other world.”

Shortly after, a problem with Sheila’s heart led to a hospital stay, after which she was unable to drive for 6 months, this compounded her feeling of social isolation. A member of the local Resident’s Association recommended the Community Navigator project and put Sheila in touch with the Community Navigator for that area.

The Care Navigator visited Sheila at home, for chats and cups of tea; and this

encouraged her to attend a Community Navigator led quiz which was regularly held in her village. “[Care Navigator] was very kind; she spent a lot of time with me after David first passed away. She would chauffeur me from place to place so that I could get out”. This opened up a whole new world to Sheila. She began to enjoy the quizzes, and to look forward to meeting with other older people who were also there to reconnect with their communities and make new friends. Sheila felt that this was a lifeline to a new phase of her life after the loss of her husband and is certain that without the intervention of the Community Navigator her life would be much less enjoyable than it is now.

“The Community Navigator took me along to the quiz which was absolutely hilarious, they provide great company and we all laugh so much. I go regularly now, and when I get to the door, it almost feels as if there is a basket there with a big sign that says ANXIETIES COLLECTED HERE. We meet old friends and make new ones and wrack our brains attempting to get the quiz questions right! As I make my way home afterwards, I’m always in a more positive mood, knowing that I can cope with whatever day to day situations are ahead, because I left them at the door hours earlier. I personally have never been out so much; when my husband passed away I didn’t know which way to turn, and here I am now out and about in company two or three days a week.”



Key Findings

Reaching vulnerable people

The Community Navigators are supporting older people who are isolated or at risk of isolation. Many have health conditions that make getting out and about challenging and often have low levels of wellbeing.

By being friendly, personable and caring, the Community Navigators are able to build trust with these vulnerable older people and support them to access new opportunities.

“She is flexible and understanding of my circumstances, she doesn’t talk down to you like many other people or services. She maintains contact with me and keeps me informed of anything that she thinks I might be interested in. She is a really lovely lady, very sweet, quiet and not in your face. She is very understanding and lets me take things at my own pace – I never feel pressured to do anything I don’t want to, which I have experienced with other services.”

Creating connections between community assets and people

The Community Navigators are embedded within their communities. By developing a good understanding of what assets exist (venues, organisations, services) they can identify gaps and facilitate the creation of new activities. Groups are created based on tried and tested models like the Pitch Up groups, alongside specific activities based on what local people want to do.

The Community Navigators support organisations to develop new activities and help connect residents to these, by building relationships and improving people’s confidence to attend. Simple things, like picking people up or attending sessions with them help people access activities.

Sustaining activities is a challenge and is dependent on the support of host organisations (venues) and the ability and will of volunteers to take the lead.

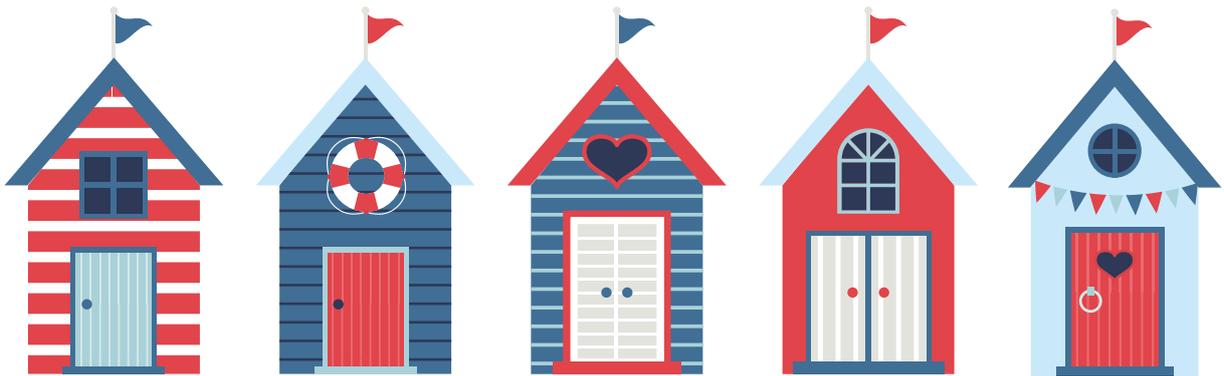
Improving wellbeing and preventing isolation

Data collected by the project shows that it is helping to reduce isolation for some and improve wellbeing for the majority of participants. It is also helping to prevent further decline in isolation levels for a much larger proportion of people.

Through taking part, older people are meeting new people, making new friends, getting more involved in community activities and events and are feeling better connected. Participants feel happier and have something to look forward to as a result of taking part.



Beach Huts Vectors by Vecteezy



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Data up to March 2019