



Creating a Cohesive Programme

A Time to Shine toolkit
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Leeds
Older
People's
Forum

Time to
Shine



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Led by Leeds Older People's Forum, Time to Shine is one of fourteen areas which form Ageing Better; an ambitious, large scale programme funded and developed by The National Lottery Community Fund. Ageing Better aims to improve the lives of people aged 50 and over by reducing social isolation and loneliness.

Introduction

Time to Shine, as a research programme with a focus on collaboration and co-production, has always sought to do things differently. This oversight and our test and learn approach, as endorsed by the National Lottery Community Fund, has enabled a level of insight into local communities and third sector organisations on a scale not previously seen in Leeds.

Most Time to Shine learning reports and toolkits focus on particular themes or individual projects, using evidence and data collected from delivery partners. This toolkit takes a wider view and covers the ethos of the programme (based on a Japanese concept) and the way in which the whole programme was planned and governed. Different sections explore how projects were commissioned, the test and learn approach, the importance of partnerships and the support available to delivery partners. This toolkit also touches on communications, administration, anti-ageism and the steps we took to ensure that Time to Shine would leave a legacy after the programme ends.

As a result of the Time to Shine programme, LOPF has learned that funders can help lead partners to lay the foundations for a successful programme during the funding design stage by:

- funding longer-term projects and programmes
- committing to a test and learn approach
- embedding the ethos of co-production
- being flexible, responsive and supportive
- encouraging partnership working and collaboration
- using positive language which is focused on strengths, not deficits
- ensuring monitoring and evaluation is robust, proportionate and achievable
- investing in capacity-building for the third sector

The aim of this toolkit is to share practical learning points on key topics - including what we did, what worked well, challenges, outcomes, key learning points. It accompanies a Time to Shine learning report '**Greater than the sum of its parts: Creating a cohesive programme**'.

The purpose of both the report and toolkit is to provide practical help to others who are interested in creating a similar programme approach within large-scale or small-scale programmes. We want to share our learning and experience to help other funders, trustees or programme managers to improve outcomes and create an environment in which collaboration, learning and creativity can flourish.

A number of people contributed their knowledge and experience to shape this toolkit, including Core Partnership Board members, Leeds Older People's Forum (LOPF) Trustees and the current Time to Shine programme team. Delivery partners shared their experiences in regular monitoring returns and their insight has been used throughout the toolkit. The sections are loosely arranged in chronological order, not alphabetical order, and the contents list helps the reader navigate to sections which are of most interest.

This report is complemented by **Report 3: Process Evaluation** and **Report 9: Legacy, systems change and sustainability**, two reports in the suite of ten final reports produced for the local evaluation of Time to Shine by the [Centre for Loneliness Studies](#) at the University of Sheffield. Report 3 specifically includes an overview of the consultation work carried out as part of the funding bid, an outline of the vision and strategy of the programme, and commissioning. It includes sections on programme development, governance and structure and partnership working.

Separate reports and toolkits on the themes of monitoring and evaluation, the programme approach, Small Funds, co-production and Friendly Communities also complement this report. Links to all these reports and more are included at the end of this toolkit.

Project planning



It took around 18 months to plan Time to Shine, from the time the funding stream was announced in late 2013 to the bid deadline in spring 2014 and the start date in April 2015. During this period Time to Shine was considered to be a project, not a programme. Statutory sector and third sector partners worked well together and consulted widely to formulate the vision and strategy. This resulted in almost £6million in funding over six years from Fulfilling Lives: Ageing Better at the National Lottery Community Fund.



What we did

In the initial phase, statutory services were instrumental in backing the bid. Leeds City Council facilitated, and widely publicised, meetings about the possible bid. Public Health wrote the initial 'stage one' application and made a clear link to the vibrant third sector infrastructure in Leeds and the strong networks of support for older people which already existed in the city.

Next, a lead agency needed to be identified. Leeds Older People's Forum was chosen because of its city-wide membership of third sector organisations supporting older people. A Core Partnership Board (20 people) was identified and a wider partnership group (63 organisations) was established in order that input into the bid was as diverse and innovative as possible.

Workshops, events and meetings held in the initial stages had created interest and energy but there were lots of competing ideas and a short time frame. The name for the programme originated in one of these workshops when an older person told us "*it's time for older people to come out of the shadows of loneliness. It's our time to shine*". The team wanted to remain open to ideas throughout but needed to create structure within which they could develop a city-wide bid. A retired senior research fellow from the University of Leeds was employed in December 2013 to collate information and write the Vision and Strategy document which, if successful, would secure the Ageing Better grant.

Consultation was essential; conversations in Core Partnership meetings led to a simple questionnaire and conversation prompt which everyone agreed to use when talking to older people, staff, carers and volunteers over a period of six weeks. This framework had pre-set categories which helped in the analysis of a huge volume of data. This was not academic research but it was extremely useful.

Complex issues around loneliness, social isolation and mental health had to be converted into easy-to-explain ideas to help all involved to understand the vision for Time to Shine. The Japanese concept of [ikigai](#) was communicated to help people think about how to lead a fulfilling life. Ikigai is a sense of purpose and being - a reason to get out of bed in the morning. Many Japanese people focus on the search for their ikigai and this is an important concept for the wellbeing of older Japanese people. This helped to shape the ethos of Time to Shine.

The team prepared a matrix to enable the Core Partnership to consider a range of actions which might be possible. This helped people to see across the whole spectrum while, at the same time, thinking about their own areas of interest and skill. It also helped partners to see that their community or geographical area of Leeds had not been left out.

Throughout the planning process the relationship between statutory services (Clinical Commissioning Groups, Public Health, Leeds City Council), universities and third sector organisations strengthened. City-wide data helped to shape the bid, including unusual data

sources such as the frequency of pauper funerals in Leeds. Lots of interesting issues were uncovered which enlivened the team and deepened their awareness.

In March 2014, a month before the bid deadline, all this information was collated into a framework to demonstrate how Time to Shine would use the substantial grant to achieve the best results. After the bid was submitted the team continued work on the detail and data until the grant was confirmed in summer 2014. The focus of the work then shifted to developing formal commissioning / delivery plans, partnership development, evaluation methods and internal processes until the project started in April 2015.

“Older people were critical to the whole process. I wrote the Time to Shine application and am myself over 60. We consulted widely with older people on the ideas in the application. Older people attended the interview with the Lottery.” (LOPF trustee)

What worked well

Involving a wide range of people in the design and governance, including older people: This happened in two main ways. Firstly, through personal connections with a wide range of people and organisations throughout Leeds (70 people attended one of the meetings). People shared their ideas to tackle loneliness and suggested ways of involving older people in designing the programme. Secondly, establishing a Core Partnership of people to develop the programme. This ensured that it was based on the needs and views of older people.

Statutory sector and third sector partners working well together and taking a broad, open and inclusive approach from the outset: Leeds City Council facilitated widely-publicised meetings attended by a whole range of people. There were lots of different ideas and new perspectives right away. This meant that lots of people became excited about the prospects for the city but also about the grant funding and how they could contribute.

Co-production with older people: Choosing LOPF as the lead organisation ensured that older people were at the heart of all decisions. LOPF is an infrastructure organisation and this created an inclusive structure for work on the bid. Most of the Board of Trustees are aged 50+ and some joined the Core Partnership as individual older people rather than representatives of organisations

A large number of activists in the Core Partnership and wider partnership: This process in itself was a learning experience. It focused on what older people were saying, deepened understanding of loneliness and this led to partners becoming more committed to making a difference.

Harnessing the power of opportunity and city-wide excitement: Ideas bounced around and some were taken forward enthusiastically even without additional funding. Partnerships and contacts developed at the consultation meetings strengthened a growing network of support and action before the Ageing Better grant was secured for the city.

A questionnaire with pre-set categories helped people to collect (and analyse) a huge volume of data: Energy, enthusiasm and commitment from partners city-wide led to a massive response to the questionnaire. Networking via partners was the only way to talk to so many people without any money for formal consultation. This was a fantastic use of resources and succeeded in reaching those who would not normally share their views. Specific work targeted men, inner city areas, diverse community groups, care homes, carers, LGBT+ communities. A lot of ideas were generated, many with common themes.

Adequate staff resources: A paid member of staff on a short term contract built capacity in the team to prepare and submit the application on time.

A wide and varied range of planned activity themes: In the bid some unusual themes were included - weekends of wonder, dinner dates, walk together, street links - in addition to traditional themes. This variety helped people to see there could be something for everyone at Time to Shine.

Specific support for groups of older people at greater risk of loneliness: Extensive and in-depth research demonstrated that particular groups of older people were more likely to be affected by social isolation and loneliness. These included: people restricted to their home environment (including care homes) through ill health, disability and dementia; carers; those who live alone and coping with personal circumstances which reduce their social networks e.g. bereavement, retirement, poverty; people whose social and cultural needs were not fully met. When planning Time to Shine these priority groups were cited and the bid included specific provision for: older men; older adults with learning disabilities; older lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT+) people; and older people from diverse communities.

“We will create a ripple effect across the system. By widening horizons for older people and organisations and generating enthusiasm, they will be inspired to try new ideas within their own resources or, using evidence, to apply for funding elsewhere.”

(Excerpt from the Vision and Strategy document)

Challenges

- Planning, delivery and evaluation of a major 6-year project.
- Helping some people to see beyond Time to Shine as just a funding source.
- Distributing the money fairly across geographical communities and communities of interest.
- Managing expectations with such a wide range of ideas put forward.
- Developing a robust, collaborative and well thought out bid in a very short timescale. The paid worker started in late December 2013 and the deadline for submission was late April 2014.



Outcomes

- 656 older people and carers and 207 workers and volunteers were consulted about current support, development ideas and priorities for Time to Shine.
- The National Lottery Community Fund initially invested £5,985,918 in Time to Shine in Leeds.
- The programme is of great value to Leeds and to the beneficiaries of Time to Shine.
- All the preliminary work established a firm basis on which to plan and run the programme.
- The majority of key partners named on the original bid were involved throughout the Time to Shine programme.
- During the consultation phase partners were so engaged in research about loneliness they started conversations at every opportunity and developed a much deeper understanding.

Key learning points

- A large, well-resourced programme like Time to Shine must be based within an organisation that is fully committed to involving and empowering older people.
- Be bold, collaborate, try to involve as many people as possible and consult widely.
- Involve community activists and create a buzz.
- Invest time in careful planning and allocate adequate staff resources.
- Collect research data and organise it well.
- Be transparent about the process, harness enthusiasm and manage expectations.
- Identify groups of people most at risk of loneliness and ensure there is specific provision.
- Plan to fund non-traditional activities - campaigning, Reiki, shared meals, performance, IT, poetry - alongside traditional activities such as chair-based exercise, gardening and crafts.

“Older people can identify what needs to change to make things better – and do it themselves. When it became clear that there was a big pot of money available it seemed clear that Leeds would be the best place to host it. It would be taken seriously in Leeds; it wouldn’t just be a stand-alone project, it would influence other things. My contribution, as well as helping to write the original Time to Shine bid, was to make sure that happened. Time to Shine went way beyond anything I’d ever conceived of!”

(Mick Ward, former Deputy Director of Adults and Health at Leeds City Council, in an article for [Shine Magazine](#))

Governance



The LOPF Board of Trustees had overall responsibility for Time to Shine. The strategic direction of the programme was delegated to the Core Partnership which was established during the project planning stage. Regular communication was key and responsibility for certain elements of the programme - for example staffing, commissioning, legacy and evaluation - was delegated to subgroups of the Core Partnership.

What we did

Key partners were named in the funding bid and they formed part of the early Core Partnership Board from 2014 onwards. These included representatives from statutory sector and third sector organisations including: Age UK Leeds; Alzheimer's Society; Care and Repair (Leeds); Carers Leeds; Caring Together in Woodhouse and Little London; The Centre for Loneliness Studies (formerly known as CIRCLE); Leeds South and East Clinical Commissioning Group; Feel Good Factor; Leeds City Council. The Chair of the LOPF Board of Trustees also chaired the Core Partnership to create a clear link between the two.

Once Time to Shine funding was secured the Core Partnership recruited additional members based on their knowledge and experience, including individual older people and LGBT+ community members, other third sector organisations and occasionally private sector businesses. A grant manager from the National Lottery Community Fund also joined the Core Partnership to provide strategic oversight and a funder perspective.

Meetings reduced in frequency during the life of the programme from monthly meetings in the early stages to quarterly meetings towards the end. A set of report templates helped to convey pertinent information during Core Partnership meetings in a concise and standardised way. Co-production with older people was of paramount importance and the majority of Core Partnership members were aged 50+. Older people were involved in all subgroups and chaired all recruitment interview panels and commissioning interview panels.

"One of the good things about Time to Shine is it's a true partnership, so [with] the Core Partnership particularly, you feel like everybody is there for the programme to be as successful as possible."

(Programme Team member)



What worked well

Consistency and stability within the Core Partnership: Many board members were involved since the project planning stages and all were committed to ensuring the success of the programme.

Basing the programme within LOPF: This meant that governance was firmly rooted in the involvement and support of older people. Over 70% of active members were aged 50+.

Clear lines of communication and teamwork: Communication between the LOPF Board of Trustees, the Core Partnership and subgroups was established when some individuals, including the Chair, joined more than one group and committed to sharing information. The Core Partnership worked well together to identify and overcome challenges. Involving a National Lottery Community Fund relationship manager as an equal member of the Core Partnership kept the funder up-to-date with progress and removed the need for the programme team to prepare separate monitoring reports for the funder.

Having an established routine and structure for meetings: Certain topics were on the agenda every meeting - programme manager update, finance, learning, legacy - and others, for example monitoring and evaluation, were reported on every six months. There was always space on the agenda to cover pertinent topics and standard templates for regular reports made the process simpler for everyone.

Inviting delivery partners to present an overview of their projects: This regular slot helped to keep Core Partnership members connected to the grassroots work delivered at Time to Shine. They could ask questions and hear first-hand about the issues, opportunities and the difference the activities were making to isolated older people. This helped to reaffirm the reasons why all were involved.

The diversity and experience of Core Partnership members: It was important to encompass a diverse range of people in this strategic role and members were interviewed and selected for both personal attributes and professional knowledge. Individual older people joined the partnership alongside people representing different organisations supporting older people across the city. The LGBT+ community was represented on the Core Partnership from the outset.

Focused and professional meetings: Papers were generally provided a week in advance and meetings were expertly chaired and rarely ran over time.

Relevant, timely subgroups: The Core Partnership identified when specialist groups were needed to focus on specific issues - for example commissioning or evaluation - and where additional skills were required. These subgroups enabled a small number of people to focus in detail on an issue and could be short-term 'task and finish' groups or longer-term groups.

Challenges

- Developing a governance structure - one that was sound, transparent and adaptable to change and improvement - in a short timescale.
- Attracting and retaining private sector businesses as members.
- Maintaining momentum and engagement over many years. In the early stages the work was new and exciting but as time went on the leadership team had to try harder to keep governance work fresh, relevant and interesting.
- The risk subgroup floundered and risk analysis for particular elements of the programme was incorporated into other subgroups.
- There was diversity in the Core Partnership but it was a challenge (and an aspiration) to increase the diversity of members in order to be more representative of older people living in Leeds.
- Eliciting feedback and challenge from members was more difficult in large, well-attended Core Partnership meetings with full agendas than in smaller subgroup meetings. Specific requests for decisions or direction for the programme team were included in separate sections of standard reports in order to highlight to members that their input was sought.

Outcomes

- The targets and outcome of the Time to Shine programme were achieved.
- It demonstrated to the National Lottery Community Fund, Leeds City Council and other partners across Leeds that a third sector organisation could successfully run a large and complex programme and that all sectors could work together to achieve a common goal.
- Almost half of the 21 members present at the first Core Partnership meeting in 2014 were still active members in 2021.

Key learning points

- Be prepared to share power and responsibility with a wider range of people than just the established trustees: genuine shared decision-making works.
- Support consistency, stability and diversity within the Core Partnership.
- Have faith in people and organisations to run a large programme with a large budget.



- Good communication and a clear governance structure helps to highlight roles and responsibilities.
- Ensure meetings are regular, focused and professional.
- Invite a representative of the funder to join the Core Partnership.
- Regularly connect Core Partnership members with frontline service delivery through presentations, quotes and case studies.

“On a very basic level we have a legal duty to ensure that the programme is run successfully, that we meet our targets and deliver in the way that we said we would. In reality, for us it’s very much about being an older person led organisation, and that older people are very much involved in everything we do. Whether that be designing a project or volunteering on it or evaluating it - that’s a very big part of our ethos. It’s what we want to run through Time to Shine, and it’s what we bring to the Ageing Better programme. We’re a local delivery organisation, that’s maybe unique.”

(Core Partnership member)



Commissioning



Time to Shine's engagement with older people and partners during the project planning stage provided an evidence base from which decisions about activities most likely to reach socially isolated older people in Leeds were made. Two main commissioning rounds were held by LOPF in early 2015 and late 2017 and these are the focus of this section. A series of 11 Time to Shine Small Funds commissioning rounds were also held, delivered by Leeds Community Foundation on behalf of LOPF. A Time to Shine learning report - [Sowing the seeds: Reflections on running a Small Funds programme](#) - and [toolkit](#) explains the Small Funds commissioning process in more detail.

What we did

In the programme planning stages it was agreed that Time to Shine would fund a large number of third sector organisations during multiple commissioning rounds in order to distribute Lottery funding across the city. This was in contrast to some other Ageing Better areas in which small numbers of organisations were funded for the duration of the programme. In 2014 the team created a 'choosing delivery partners' strategy. It was agreed that delivery partners would be selected to deliver specific activities under themes outlined in the Time to Shine funding bid, and that project delivery would commence in April 2015.



LOPF committed to developing commissioning processes that were fair, transparent, proportionate and simple. The aim was to reflect the community development ethos of the programme, support the test and learn criteria, support the development of the third sector in Leeds and be creative and innovative.

LOPF also developed a strategy to use a '5C's approach to create activities specifically for those identified as most at risk:

1. **catalysts** to change societal attitudes and behaviours towards older people and reducing loneliness by making it 'everybody's business' to do so
2. **connections** with older people from street level up within local neighbourhoods and across services, businesses and communities, creating wider, stronger networks
3. **creating support** and friendships at home and helping people to get out; offering weekend/evening activities; focusing on those currently excluded and extending digital and transport opportunities
4. **capacity building** by nurturing small community groups and voluntary organisations to develop skills, volunteer bases and pilot new approaches
5. **co-production** as older people manage, design activities and engage in development, evaluation and dissemination of learning

The 'selecting delivery partners' subgroup met to plan the assessment process and the application pack was reviewed during a wider partnership meeting in December 2014. In early 2015 information sessions and workshops were held and applications for funding were invited via a visual 'theory of change' diagram and traditional written application form.

All applications were assessed by a panel consisting of representatives from: LOPF's Board of Trustees; the Time to Shine selecting delivery partners sub group; older people with knowledge of specific communities of place or interest; and LOPF's management team. Three or four applicants per theme were invited to interview to present their ideas fully before the final selections were made.

As part of Time to Shine's risk management process all applicants considered for interview had to demonstrate that their financial and governance systems were robust and that key policies and procedures were in place. Successful applicants were commissioned to deliver projects from April 2015 onwards. A review of the first commissioning round was completed in autumn 2015. The themes which emerged were around improvement and simplification to the application form, ensuring adequate time for organisations to apply for funding and develop partnerships and limiting the number of workshops.

In the project planning stages there was an assumption that Time to Shine would run three commissioning rounds in the six-year programme. The Core Partnership decided in September 2016 that this cycle needed to change due to the later than expected start of some projects, the amount of work involved in commissioning and the need to use the learning gathered from projects before the next commissioning round commenced. There was also a realisation that projects funded for a longer time period had more time to establish, often leading to better outcomes for older people.

In preparation for the second round of commissioning in 2017 this review evidence - plus learning from contract meetings, quarterly monitoring returns and evaluation questionnaire data - was considered and presented to the Core Partnership. Core Partners were asked for input and this information was collated. A similar exercise was held during a delivery partner meeting in May 2017. Members of the wider partnership were consulted during workshops and these were externally facilitated to ensure positive engagement with stakeholders who may not have been closely involved with the programme in the previous two years. Around the same time the local evaluation team at the University of Sheffield were in the process of writing up their [Evaluation of Time to Shine Year 2 Interim Findings](#). In this report, specific recommendations were made as to what to consider in the commissioning of new activity.

In August 2017 a series of pre-commissioning workshops were held to engage the wider partnership and to communicate the intention to run a second commissioning round and fund new activity for three years from April 2018. These were used to communicate the message that the focus was on reducing loneliness, enabling people to develop independent friendships, a test and learn approach and evaluation. Two new categories were added to the original '5C's approach as a result of our learning: collecting evidence and changes. The latter referenced the particular needs of people during life changes (or transitions) including retirement, ill health and bereavement.

In late 2017 the 'choosing delivery partners' subgroup was reintroduced as the 'commissioning subgroup' and more older people were invited to join. The commissioning subgroup took full responsibility for shortlisting, interviewing and assessing applications and made the final decisions on which projects to fund. Time to Shine programme managers were present at the subgroup meetings for administrative and procedural support but had no decision-making authority.

In order to address identified gaps in provision, or as additional funding was secured, Time to Shine ran occasional, targeted commissioning rounds in addition to the main commissioning rounds outlined above. An example of this is the commissioning of five [SWIFT](#) projects in 2016.

"We've looked at what our target groups are, what the gaps are in participation for particular groups of people, and how we can meet those gaps. We use the commissioning [strands] to steer the projects that we fund towards a particular group of people or where we've identified a gap."

(Programme Team member)

What worked well

Older people in the lead: In 2015 the selecting delivery partners subgroup comprised three LOPF trustees, a commissioning manager for Leeds City Council, a representative from the Core Partnership and a senior research fellow from the Leeds Institute of Health Sciences at the University of Leeds. Two-thirds of the group were older people. In 2017 more older people were invited to join the commissioning subgroup and this group, led by older people, made commissioning decisions.

Open and transparent: There were no frontline providers on the selecting delivery partners subgroup to manage potential conflicts of interest. It was clearly specified from the outset that membership of the Core Partnership would not give an advantage when it came to the selection of delivery partners.

Inviting innovation: Organisations were asked to design the project based on need instead of fitting their ideas into a prescriptive specification.

Allowing enough time to submit a quality application: In 2015 the timescales were shorter so in 2017 LOPF listened to feedback and extended the timescales significantly.

Having a simple application process: LOPF reconsidered the application process for the second round of commissioning as in the 2015 review an applicant told LOPF that: *"In my opinion the process was much too complicated and time consuming. As commissioners you need to be conscious that only a few projects will be funded and that you are asking projects to devote considerable resources to something that might not even benefit their organisation and user group. The process could be made much more simple, but still be very professional and fair."*

A clear message: In 2017 the programme team reinforced the idea that Time to Shine is a programme, not a disparate collection of projects, and that the focus is on evaluation and sharing learning. An applicant told LOPF that *“[In 2015] expectations weren’t clear to begin with. However over the course of workshops they became a lot more clear.”*

Aligning interventions and target numbers: In 2017 the Core Partnership agreed a strategy which balanced the number of projects reaching very isolated older people (i.e. more intensive work and smaller target numbers) and less isolated older people (i.e. lighter touch and larger target numbers). This helped the programme to reach and exceed the targets agreed with the National Lottery Community Fund.

Relaxed and informal in-person interviews: During the autumn 2015 review an applicant told LOPF that *“The interview was very positive and felt relatively informal in comparison to the scoring that we received on our written application (which seemed very robust). The interview felt very relaxed and conversational which was very useful in gaining open and honest dialogue about the project....It took the pressure off our service user involved in the interview and they were given the opportunity to speak openly and freely.”*

A test and learn approach: Using a range of evidence, including recommendations from Time to Shine’s local evaluation team and the commissioning review, helped to shape the second commissioning round.

Fair distribution of funding: Commissioning a large number of organisations contributed to a programme approach and meant that Time to Shine funding was distributed across the city and used to build capacity in the third sector. If a funding application was unsuccessful then future opportunities were on offer via a second commissioning round or Small Funds. When gaps in provision were identified, or additional funding sourced, new commissioning rounds were tailored to meet these needs.

Good communication: During the autumn 2015 review an applicant told LOPF that *“Good communication from LOPF and the process made the commissioners feel approachable. Detailed feedback was given whatever the outcome of the application.”* Another applicant noted *“The ongoing dialogue with LOPF, reshaping and redefining aspects of the project and project budget. The feedback provided on our application. The transparency of information on the website and the key messages were very consistent.”*



Challenges

- Lottery guidance indicated that any partner named in the vision and strategy document would be classed as a pre-approved delivery partner, however this didn't fit with Time to Shine's plan for an open commissioning process.
- Achieving co-production took time, energy and commitment from staff and older people.
- Encouraging a partnership bid, led by a third sector organisation, wasn't popular in round one and this requirement was removed for round two. One applicant told LOPF that "*The difficulty was the requirement for a lead provider, i.e. someone to lead the bid. I found it very difficult to approach people. In a three week timescale I was unsure how a partnership agreement with a total stranger could be written up and approved by trustees.*"
- An awareness that third sector colleagues had to devote precious time and resources to funding applications which may be unsuccessful.
- Some communications weren't clear enough in the first round of commissioning.
- Reducing the number of commissioning rounds from three to two affected the progression routes for Small Funds projects. The original intention was for Small Funds projects to pilot an idea for a year and, if successful, use this learning and experience in a bid in a future commissioning round. Changing the frequency of the commissioning rounds disrupted this cycle.

Outcomes

- Almost £4.5million was distributed by Leeds Older People's Forum to commission third sector organisations to deliver Time to Shine projects between 2015 and 2021, including over £500,000 in Small Funds commissioned by Leeds Community Foundation.
- Older people decided which projects to fund for the benefit of other older people in Leeds.
- A test and learn approach was applied throughout and feedback from round one, plus local evaluation recommendations and insight from partners, informed round two.
- At the end of the 6-year programme 105 delivery partner projects were commissioned in total, from 72 different third sector organisations.

Key learning points

- Commissioning is time-consuming and the frequency of commissioning rounds within a programme needs to be realistic.
- Consult widely to identify priorities and understand the experiences of previous applicants.
- Recognise that the need to pursue funding is a regular, yet unavoidable, reality for the third sector so keep the application process simple, fair, transparent and proportionate.
- Consistent and coherent messages are essential. Consideration must be given to the

balance between full transparency and providing so much information at each stage that applicants become confused.

- Allow adequate time for applicants to design a project, find partners, write a bid and involve older people in every stage.
- Encourage applications that allocate adequate staff resources, particularly around monitoring, evaluation and shared learning.
- Design an open and transparent application process that judges the quality of the project not the quality of the bid writer. The theory of change, although new to most applicants, was well received.
- Co-production works.
- A diverse panel, which includes older people, needs authority to make funding decisions.
- Applicants appreciated a relaxed approach to the interviews and felt that this allowed the older people attending to speak more openly.



Test and learn



From the outset, the National Lottery Community Fund valued the exploration of ‘what didn’t work and why’, as well as ‘what did’. This, and their commitment to relationship building, helped set a successful learning culture within the national Ageing Better programme. Test and learn gives programmes the flexibility to respond to new learning and fast changing circumstances. It supports speedy delivery adaptations, including those needed in times of crisis. A test and learn approach was adopted in all Time to Shine projects. In practice this meant that each project continually reflected on their progress towards meeting key objectives and adapted their approach as necessary.

As test and learn is integral to the programme it is included across the suite of final reports produced for the local evaluation of Time to Shine by the Centre for Loneliness Studies. Two of these reports focus particularly on test and learn: **Report 9 - Legacy, systems change and sustainability** and **Report 10 - Test and Learn: Understanding the experiences and challenges of frontline organisations**. Test and learn templates developed as part of the programme are included in the Time to Shine report: **Monitoring and evaluation at Time to Shine**.



What we did

The ethos of test and learn was communicated regularly from the outset so that it was embedded within the programme. Within the first year it became clear that various stakeholders had different expectations about the things that Time to Shine would learn about during the programme. The monitoring and evaluation officer led a consultation exercise with the core partners and the programme team to identify topics to learn more about. These were narrowed down to a list of 21 test and learn questions which helped to shape future work at Time to Shine.

A test and learn case study template was created so that delivery partners were prompted to consider what they had tried and what they had learned. Test and learn questions were also included in quarterly monitoring returns, for example *‘please tell us about the changes you made as result of your learning and why you made them.’*

Quarterly contract meetings included conversations about the progress towards the four Time to Shine outcomes and how delivery partners saw their work was progressing, what they had tried, what they needed to do differently. A brief contract amendment form made it easy to formally record a change in direction. This demonstrated to delivery partners that the programme team were as committed to test and learn as they were and that LOPF wouldn’t hold them to their original contract.

Prior to the second commissioning round in 2017 the local evaluation team were asked to produce recommendations based on the learning gathered in the first two years. This set the direction for the latter half of the programme. As a result a few of the most relevant test and learn questions were included in project specification for each commissioning strand. Applicants were asked *‘How*

will you collect the evidence to answer the test and learn questions?’ and ‘Tell us what you want to learn from delivering your project and what would you like to get from being part of the Time to Shine learning community?’ The learning gathered informed the learning plan, the suite of Time to Shine reports and toolkits, the seven key messages and the work of the Time to Shine learning facilitator.

Working closely with the local evaluators at the University of Sheffield, the programme team selected from the list of 21 test and learn questions to influence the academic focus of project case studies, focus groups and individual interviews. A retired senior research fellow at the University of Leeds volunteered to complete a thematic analysis of all test and learn case studies provided by delivery partners and this became Report 10 in the suite of final reports produced as part of the local evaluation of Time to Shine.

“Test and learn as an approach has been written into our new project. Our ‘Company of People’ project works with a different cohort but will be evaluated with the project team at regular intervals in a similar way, allowing more ongoing opportunity for reflection and learning.” (Delivery partner)

What worked well

Embedding test and learn from the outset and committing to test and learn approach: The local evaluation team identified that delivery partners embraced the test and learn approach and felt optimistic about how it would work in practice. Overall, partners valued its flexibility and the opportunity to talk openly about what worked and didn’t work. Delivery partners told the local evaluators that *“test and learn is a breath of fresh air, an honest way of working”* and *“the test and learn element is amazing. If something doesn’t work, we can try something else.”* This also contributed to Time to Shine becoming a cohesive programme as all involved were focused on learning and sharing for the benefit of the third sector in Leeds and beyond.

Focusing on proactive as well as reactive learning: Consulting on and compiling the 21 test and learn questions mitigated against Core Partnership members having differing expectations of what Time to Shine would learn at the end of the programme, and possibly being disappointed. Proactive learning enabled the team to actively seek answers which complemented the reactive learning which arose when things didn’t turn out as planned.

Encouraging innovation: The test and learn approach favoured the adoption of innovative projects. Delivery partners and Small Funds delivery partners were permitted to try out approaches that may or may not work. Ensuring that frontline staff really understood what test and learn was and why it was important helped to break the traditional view that reporting was all about sharing positive results.

The National Lottery Community Fund’s full commitment to test and learn: This mandate gave credibility and permission for everyone involved in Time to Shine to try things out. This commitment from the funder was essential as test and learn was a culture shift and programme targets may not have been met.

Providing templates: The test and learn case study templates were completed by delivery partners and, as a result, were more consistent than case studies about individuals. Providing templates and a framework for test and learn, including quarterly monitoring questions and 21 test and learn questions, made it easier for partners to frame and share their learning.

Reducing stress: Delivery partners tried hard to achieve ambitious targets but knew that their contract wasn't at risk if the targets weren't met; provided they reflected on the challenges, communicated their learning and changed tack.

Reframing test and learn during the Covid-19 pandemic: Prompt communication from the National Lottery Community Fund enabled the programme managers to communicate the following at the onset of lockdown *"Time to Shine is happy for delivery partners to be flexible with contractual requirements. The usual, planned outcomes are not the priority at the moment. The current priority is keeping your beneficiaries safe and well and to maintain contact with them wherever possible. We trust you to do what is best to meet the needs of your beneficiaries at this challenging time."* Weekly, optional Time to Learn sessions were hosted by Time to Shine's learning facilitator so that delivery partners could drop in for peer support or share tried and tested methods as they refocused their approach during the pandemic.

Producing tangible resources: Sharing learning regularly was a lot of effort but delivery partners could see that the programme team were using their test and learn information to write a comprehensive set of reports, toolkits, learning briefings and presentations in order to influence change.

Enabling a robust evaluation: Finding out what didn't work was as important as what did work to reduce social isolation and loneliness. Test and learn contributed to the national evaluation of Time to Shine and directed the local evaluation. Test and learn case studies helped the programme team to identify emerging themes, for example the high level of mental health support required in projects designed to provide general support and social opportunities.

Taking a long-term view: The test and learn questions enabled the team to keep an eye on learning throughout the programme and tailor the work accordingly. For example, there wasn't enough evidence of 'what works' for intergenerational projects so this became the focus of a Small Funds commissioning round.

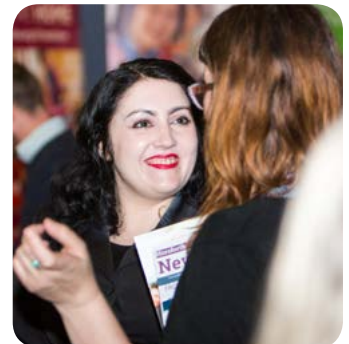
"We held a discussion with a men's group through Time To Shine facilitated by the University of Sheffield. This highlighted issues around men and isolation and how activities and subsequent interactions had helped them in terms of their loneliness etc. This was a great learning curve and very much brought home the very complex and often serious issues that start the journey to isolation. We as workers can often inadvertently categorise individuals as one group, when in fact every person can be massively different. It is always worthwhile to remember to be as person-centred as possible, although we also have to be mindful that we cannot spread ourselves too thinly. There were many issues that came out in that discussion which were often very sad, especially with those in their 50s and 60s who are still very able and mobile but obviously struggle with social interaction." (Delivery partner)

Challenges

- It took a while for some delivery partners to trust and embrace the culture shift of test and learn as they were used to financial consequences if targets weren't met.
- Some found it difficult to openly admit when outcomes were not being achieved. Partners told the local evaluation team that *"If it's not working and you're not hitting your targets and not achieving your outcomes, it's not going to be funded again. So it's very well [them] saying we're really happy to hear that, but it's admitting that you're failing isn't it?"* and *"It is tricky, because you're not used to reporting on things that haven't gone well, are you?"*
- The National Lottery Community Fund gave very little guidance on how to implement a test and learn approach in practice. Each programme had to work this out independently.
- It was difficult to articulate the test and learn approach for the first round of funding as it was a new concept in Leeds and a new way of working. This developed over time and it was a clearly-communicated, well-formed approach by the second commissioning round.
- Time to Shine responded quickly to issues identified through test and learn but it took longer for larger institutions to respond to feedback and make changes.
- Delivery partners had lots of different types of monitoring and evaluation to take part in, including test and learn, which sometimes led to evaluation fatigue.
- Case studies about individuals brought projects to life but they tended to share good news instead of specific learning unless they were carefully written.

Outcomes

- Test and learn created equality with partners and strengthened LOPF's relationships.
- One of the test and learn questions focused on co-production. As this integral to the programme the local evaluators were able to secure a grant for a student to complete a PhD on co-production, using Time to Shine as a case study.
- The programme team shared Time to Shine resources with other Ageing Better areas and delivered a presentation on 21 test and learn questions at a national Ageing Better conference.
- 138 documents were reviewed and analysed for Report 10 of the suite of local evaluation reports.
- The learning shared by delivery partners informed lots of Time to Shine learning reports, toolkits and briefings and these are available in the [resources](#) section of LOPF's website.
- SWIFt was piloted at Time to Shine in 2016 and these projects required staff to actively engage in sharing experiences and outcomes through test and learn. The SWIFt project was transferred to Leeds City Council in 2019 and expanded across the city. It was fully funded and continues to use a test and learn approach.
- Learning sessions influenced the implementation of skill-share sessions for Neighbourhood Network Schemes, led by the third sector development officer at LOPF.



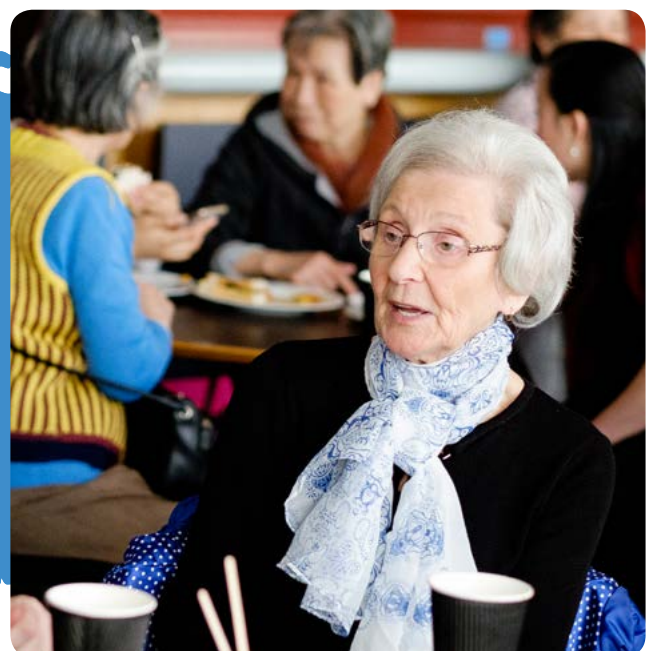
- Test and learn was adopted by Leeds Community Foundation and triggered a consultation exercise to gather feedback to understand people’s experiences of applying for Small Funds. Leeds Community Foundation told LOPF that *“By developing a strong, close working relationship with Leeds Older People’s Forum and embracing the Time to Shine test and learn ethos, we have strengthened our understanding of isolation and loneliness, and our connections with community organisations working in this sphere. We’ve also experienced first-hand the value of working with and for older people and being part of an age-friendly city.”*

Key learning points

- Overall, test and learn is really well-received by partners, extremely useful for the programme evaluation and enables partners to change tack and respond flexibly according to need. This was particularly important during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Test and learn needs a structure: letting the approach grow organically may not reveal the learning points that are anticipated.
- Templates, learning sessions and specific test and learn questions incorporated into monitoring returns help delivery partners to identify and share learning.
- Test and learn creates time for reflection and is a ‘licence to learn’.
- Communicating regularly and consistently about the test and learn approach helps to reiterate how important it is. Frontline staff need to trust that when a funder asks about learning, they really do want to know about what doesn’t work, and why.
- Accept that it may take some partners a while to embrace the approach but it can reduce stress and lead to innovation in the longer-term.
- Producing tangible resources shows partners that the learning they provide is read, considered and shared.

“The test and learn approach of the Time to Shine programme has been so effective as a learning tool that we are now adopting this approach across new programmes where possible. Over the last four years there has been a real shift in the team’s thinking about evaluation, thinking analytically and more confidence in the idea of learning through failing.”

(Delivery partner)



Administration



Running a large-scale programme involving multiple partners and projects needed an organised administrative system. Some procedures were implemented at Time to Shine in the early stages of the programme and evolved over time. A number of online tools were introduced (or used more regularly by staff) to aid remote working as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

What we did

From the outset, documents collected as part of quarterly monitoring returns were filed using a standard naming format - including keywords such as quote, case study, test and learn - to make it easier to retrieve them. Documents were originally filed on networked computers using the office intranet but they were transferred to Google Drive, a 'cloud-based' storage solution, in 2017. The transition was challenging but the situation was improved by the appointment of an administration officer with knowledge of GSuite, and by structural changes including an IT support contract and improvements to the software.

Trello, a collaboration tool for organising projects and tracking tasks, was introduced within the first year of the programme. Airtable, a platform for building collaborative applications, was introduced in early 2019. This was used as a central database and key contact lists were shared with the staff team. It was also used to allocate tasks from the learning plan to individual team members and track progress.

A range of products were used to create questionnaires - SurveyMonkey, JotForm, Limesurvey, Google Forms - and each had their own pros and cons. The Time to Shine community, a password-protected online learning platform, was set up in 2018 so that delivery partners could access key documents and also upload their own evidence for their quarterly monitoring return. This was useful for programme staff, particularly when collecting monitoring evidence and sharing large numbers of case studies with evaluators. However, it wasn't well used by delivery partners as it was seen as clunky and 'another thing to remember to log into'.

As a result of the lockdown LOPF purchased technical equipment for staff including laptops and mobile phones. With the move towards blended meetings (a mixture of Zoom and in-person attendance) the team bought two Jabra speakers and a wide-angle webcam, and a Meeting Owl Pro revolving camera.



What worked well

Keeping contacts up-to-date: Contact lists were easier to maintain with Airtable and this tool was also invaluable in keeping track of reports and other learning products.

Easy access to online documents: The need for remote working highlighted the practicality of GSuite online tools so that everyone could access the documents they needed. This need was less apparent when staff were office based. The 'search' function on Google Drive made it easy to find documents.



The transition to online meetings: This was fairly smooth due to the administrator setting up Zoom quickly in response to the pandemic. Having the budget to pay for Pro Zoom accounts meant there was no restriction on meeting duration. Staff became more confident to use other online meeting apps such as Teams or Google Meet.

Well-organised monitoring data and evidence: This meant that qualitative and quantitative information could be found easily and included in learning reports, toolkits and legacy reports.

The efficiency and accessibility of online meetings: Affordable, quality venues were available to book in Leeds for face-to-face meetings however when online meetings were introduced they were often more accessible for a wider range of participants when they became familiar with Zoom.

Challenges

- Staff struggled to understand Google Drive without adequate support and ongoing training during the transition to a cloud-based system.
- Google Drive may contain multiple versions of documents so it can be difficult to identify the final version if the file name doesn't make this clear.
- At times managing the number of online meetings happening simultaneously across multiple Pro Zoom accounts was challenging.
- Various online survey tools had their own pros and cons and finding an acceptable one was trial and error. Making changes to a Limesurvey required technical support and making changes to Jotform required expert knowledge of the software.
- The filing system for managing photos and photo permissions evolved over time and as a result it was sometimes difficult to match photos with photo permissions for use in public reports and social media.
- All staff have their own system of filing and organising documents within the structure provided. This challenge was resolved somewhat with the 'search' function on Google Drive.

Outcomes

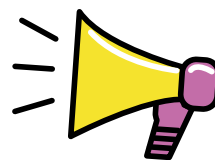
- Good administrative systems enabled the large-scale, complex programme to run smoothly.
- Collaboration and effective remote working was supported by online tools.
- A central database of key contacts and learning products was created and maintained.
- Monitoring data and evidence was filed carefully and accessible for reports and evaluations.

Key learning points

- The pace, diversity and volume of work in a large-scale programme means that tech-competent administrative support is vital.
- Store records (e.g. data, evidence, products) securely on a cloud-based server and use a standard naming format including keywords.
- Agree on a standard filing system and communicate this regularly across the team.
- Monitor the take up of newly introduced systems and provide training and support if required.
- Embrace new technologies and new online tools as requirements change.
- Commission professional photos (with completed photo permission forms) for use in public reports and social media, and file these carefully.



Internal and external communications



The communications officer role was vital to a large-scale programme focused on test and learn, research, evaluation and sharing learning with large audiences. Good communications and a strong Time to Shine brand helped to bring partners together and this contributed to the sense of being part of a cohesive programme.

What we did

In the early years of the programme specific communication tasks were included in the job descriptions of two members of the programme team. In late 2018, as the programme moved into its final phase and a greater emphasis was placed on legacy and sharing learning, a communications officer was recruited. Strong links were forged between communication teams across the wider Ageing Better programme, ideas pooled and various national communications priorities were developed together.



A Time to Shine logo and brand were developed within the first year. Delivery partners were required to refer to the programme and the National Lottery Community Fund on all their publicity and recruitment documents and this linked them into the wider programme.

Monthly e-bulletins, a Friendly Communities newsletter, a weekly email update to delivery partners plus a website, tweets, press releases and blogs kept partners informed and directed people to reports and resources produced by Time to Shine. Regular blogs - from older people, project partners and programme staff - shared news and ideas and regular tweets raised the online profile of the programme. The e-bulletin was designed using Mailchimp and this was sent out automatically on the first of every month by collating all blogs uploaded within the previous month. Airtable helped to keep mailing lists up to date and unsubscribing to communications was a simple process.

From 2019 Time to Shout was introduced; this was a very brief, weekly stand-up meeting for staff to share what they were working on. As the pandemic hit and remote working was introduced, the team recognised the value of brief meetings. Time to Shout morphed into Time to Zoom, a daily 15-minute catch up. Slack and Zoom were also set up in March 2020 in response to the pandemic. Slack is a fast, well-organised way to communicate quickly with colleagues and it was a substitute for office conversations and general chit chat. Zoom provides online video conferencing and a number of Pro Zoom accounts were purchased to unlock more functionality.

A social WhatsApp group was set up in 2018 so that current and former staff from Time to Shine could keep in touch and arrange occasional social outings. Membership grew, particularly during the pandemic, and when colleagues from other teams joined its focus changed and it became a communication tool for current staff.

What worked well

Employing a communications officer: Expertise, strategic direction and an overall responsibility for comms was introduced with this role.

Creating a brand and house style: From 2018 onwards all learning reports produced by the Time to Shine team had a house style and were professionally designed.

Holding large-scale events: This brought staff, volunteers, participants and the general public together in a fun and engaging way: The events provided plenty of opportunities for networking and promotion and served as a visual reminder of the scale and scope of the whole programme.

Requiring partners to use the Time to Shine logo: This served as a visual reminder to staff, volunteers and older participants that their project was part of a larger programme.

Building strong relationships face-to-face and by phone: The challenges arising from delivering a social isolation programme during a pandemic would have been much more difficult to navigate if good, strong working relationships hadn't already been developed within the programme.

Asking partners to write blogs for the e-bulletin: This brought a diversity of voices, raised the profile of community organisations and reinforced the message that Time to Shine was a programme.

Using a mix of paper-based and online communication methods: For example, the Time to Shine project brochure and Shine magazines were both available in print and online.

Investment in a wide range of communications training: Social media training, Trello training, sessions on how to write a good blog, and having a template to follow when writing a press release helped the wider team to get involved in communications. These were complemented by practical, externally-facilitated training courses in media training and presentation skills.

Creating space for team conversation and banter: Slack and WhatsApp helped team members feel connected to each other in a way that is more conversational and friendly than via email.

Collaboration tools: Trello helped to keep projects on track when multiple staff worked on different elements of a single project.

Challenges

- Keeping on top of a large and varied communications workload, including proofreading all learning reports, was a challenge with a part-time role.
- The Time to Shine website didn't include a search function so locating learning reports and blogs was time consuming. This has now been rectified as the resources section of the LOPF website has a search box.
- Some team members took longer than others to feel comfortable contributing to social media posts and writing blogs.
- Time to Shine commissioned a lot of delivery partners so when comms-related information was updated - for example logos, progress towards targets or Time to Shine key messages - it took time to embed the new information across the programme.
- Media outlets often contacted Time to Shine in order to get 'an older person's perspective' on a topic in the news. This wasn't usually possible at such short notice and a pool of willing, media-trained older volunteers would have helped.
- Promoting large-scale events to older people across the city was a challenge and the message often didn't reach beyond older people who found out about the events from various projects and groups that they were involved in.
- As Time to Shine drew to an end it was a challenge to reintegrate the programme legacy into LOPF and facilitate a change in status from active to inactive programme.

Outcomes

- @TTSLeeds had over 3,000 followers on Twitter.
- Over 500 blogs were written.
- Between 2016 and 2022 there were 228,931 page views on the Time to Shine website and 52,573 blog views.
- The entire Time to Shine team worked from home (for the most part) since March 2020 and the cloud-based system, online collaboration tools and a good range of formal and information channels of communication helped to make remote working a success.
- Local, regional and national partners were aware of Time to Shine's work and this contributed to the legacy of the programme.



Key learning points

- Embrace new technologies and new online tools as requirements change but don't underestimate the importance of building strong relationships in traditional ways.
- Create a logo, brand and house style to help partners feel part of a cohesive programme.
- Involve delivery partners and team members in writing blogs, tweets and reports.
- Employ a communications officer and allocate enough time to communications work.
- Establish good internal communication tools and support and encourage people to use them, particularly when working from home
- Agree a clear protocol to manage communications during the transition phase from an active, high-profile programme with its own brand into a former programme delivered by LOPF.



Age Proud Leeds ‘Wise up to Ageism’



Time to Shine’s Friendly Communities project brought together Age Friendly Leeds and Dementia Friendly Leeds with the ultimate aim of making Leeds an age and dementia friendly city. LOPF was the delivery partner and this project contributed to a programme approach by creating a range of tangible opportunities and specific campaigns for partners and members of the public to get involved over a six year period. There were six main strands of [Friendly Communities](#) work, including Age Proud Leeds. More information can be found in **Friendly Communities in Leeds: an evaluation of Time to Shine’s approach**.

This section focuses on one element, ‘Wise Up to Ageism’ training. This was developed as a platform for delivering the following aims of the [Age Proud Leeds](#) campaign:

- raise awareness of ageism and its impact
- develop more positive attitudes to ageing
- forge better links between the generations
- encourage age friendly and dementia friendly improvements in businesses, organisations and communities in Leeds
- encourage action and behaviour change that challenges ageism

“A workshop was delivered as part of the national Ageing Better Festival of Co-production. The objective of this was to encourage attendees to analyse examples of ‘everyday ageism’ found in birthday cards and to provide tools to challenge ageism.” (Delivery partner)

What we did

The Friendly Communities team created a free, awareness-raising workshop about ageism. The plan was shared with Age Proud Leeds partners. It was adapted and trialled in 2020 before being rolled out for bookings in early 2021.

‘Wise Up to Ageism’ was designed as a one hour workshop to be delivered face-to-face in a range of settings and to a wide range of audiences. Its purpose was to inform and engage people, to change negative attitudes about older people and about ageing itself.

The team delivered Wise Up to Ageism as a public session open to anyone and also as a session which could be delivered to closed groups, for example staff within an organisation. It was adapted for online delivery at the start of the pandemic and also converted into a webinar format so that greater numbers of people could take part in each session.

“It opened my eyes to the topic, provided insight into how I might work better and, being older, it made me feel better about myself.” (Training course attendee)

What went well

Basing the training on the five key messages of Age Proud Leeds: The Friendly Communities team developed a specific brand for the Age Proud Leeds campaign which helped to get a distinct message across. In planning the campaign, a lot of research was carried out and developed into five key messages. The structure of the Wise Up to Ageism session was based on these five messages. This format worked well and ensured a lot was covered in the timeframe.

Testing the session with colleagues: Facilitators ran two trial sessions before launching and changed aspects of the workshop in response to feedback.

Using a variety of learning methods: These included presentations, films, quizzes, group discussion, activities, and a [podcast](#). This diversity of method worked well, kept participants engaged and received positive feedback.

Good support from partner organisations: Engagement from partners helped to roll out the training more widely. For example, Leeds City Council's Adults and Health directorate organised three workshops and over 300 staff were asked to attend.

Adapting the training to suit different audiences: All training was moved to Zoom during the Covid-19 pandemic and we needed to quickly learn how best to deliver a workshop online. The workshop format worked well for up to 20 participants face-to-face or on Zoom. The Friendly Communities team also ran training for a group of 100 people by adapting the session into a webinar format. This had less interaction but it was well-received and opened up the potential to reach larger groups in a shorter time frame.

Collecting feedback via email: An electronic evaluation survey was emailed out to all participants to collect useful feedback to help improve the session. Very positive feedback was received which indicated that the session was delivering its objectives.

"It is amazing how long I have been doing care work and it shocked me [that] I didn't recognise ageism to some extent; the facilitators were brilliant in highlighting some of the examples."

(Training course attendee)



Challenges

- One hour was not enough to cover all the key messages so this was increased to two hours.
- Delivering training via Zoom had its challenges. The technology can be difficult to manage whilst also facilitating a session and there have been issues with internet reliability.
- Continuous tweaks to the content were necessary in response to feedback.
- Attendance at the monthly public sessions was at first promising but then started to dwindle.
- Wide-ranging, large-scale and ongoing promotion was necessary to fill a regular monthly slot, something that the Friendly Communities team didn't have the resources for.
- It was harder to engage community members than to engage staff or volunteers.



Outcomes

- 13 sessions were delivered to 180 people in 2021: six were public sessions and seven were closed sessions for organisations.
- Participants were from a broad range of sectors and organisations including: local and national third sector; West Yorkshire Police; housing associations; Leeds City Council Adults and Health; care staff; Leeds Teaching Hospitals.
- 57 people completed the evaluation survey following their session.
 - 100% of attendees said the session was useful to them
 - 96% said they would recommend the session to someone else
 - 68% of attendees said they are intending to do something as a result of attending
 - 63% said their attitude towards ageing had become more positive

“The Wise Up to Ageism and Dementia Friends awareness raising sessions have been delivered to people from a range of organisations including The National Lottery Community Fund, Community Links, Neighbourhood Networks and Leeds City Council. This has hopefully influenced working practices within those organisations.”

(Delivery partner)

Key learning points

- Plan, plan, plan but be willing to adapt to the circumstances and make changes if something isn't working.
- Despite the challenges of delivering a new workshop via new online methods, there are benefits of online delivery in terms of reach and accessibility.
- Promote the training regularly through existing networks as many sessions are arranged through word of mouth and networking.
- Allocate enough time for planning, reading, thinking and research beforehand and make time for reviewing and evaluating the session annually.
- Having confident, well-informed and enthusiastic facilitators who believe in the message is important when seeking to engage people and change attitudes.
- Create a plan for promotion and development which is also adaptable and flexible.
- Don't be afraid to try something new, especially if no one else is already doing it.

"I learnt a lot about what the term ageism was and how it impacts, potentially, on all of us. It's our perceptions that form our reactions to others and that plays such a large role in how we see, speak to and treat others." (Training course attendee)



Partnerships and personal connections



Time to Shine was created through partnership working and succeeded because of strong partnerships, a shared vision, learning and collaboration. Personal connections were at the heart of Time to Shine and could be found throughout the programme: person-centred support; co-production with older people; open communication with delivery partners; and peer learning networks. A supportive and enabling team at the National Lottery Community Fund changed the dynamic from a traditional funder / grant holder relationship to one based on trust, learning and flexibility.

What we did

Programme managers held contract meetings every three months, after the monitoring returns had been processed, to listen to delivery partners and understand the opportunities and challenges associated with their project. Discussions were centred around the four Time to Shine programme outcomes and test and learn.



The Friendly Communities team worked directly with older people in steering groups; co-production was at the heart of this work. The team also networked extensively with partners across Leeds to roll out a series of campaigns and training sessions and recruit Age Friendly Ambassadors and Age Friendly businesses. A tangible range of resources was created, including booklets, guides and podcasts, and this helped to raise awareness and persuade more people to become partners in the project.

The learning facilitator was skilled in networking and bringing people together to share their knowledge and insight in formal and informal settings. Where possible, training sessions and meetings were held face-to-face but during the Covid-19 pandemic these meetings moved online and increased in frequency. These weekly 'Time to Learn' get togethers were optional to attend. They provided a friendly space for delivery partners to connect with peers, give and receive support and swap tips on Zoom training and food deliveries during the early months of lockdown. The learning facilitator also maintained regular connections with a wider group of partners by sending a weekly email to share details of free training, events and interesting reports.

Action Learning Sets were introduced into the Time to Shine programme in 2019. Delivery partner staff from different Time to Shine projects were brought together as mixed groups (sets) to meet regularly. An external facilitator helped the group to explore work-related issues through a process of open questioning, coaching, reflection and peer support. Each set contained around six to eight people and the experience was generally well received by participants, with some setting up supportive WhatsApp groups to maintain regular contact with other members of their sets.

In the early stages of Time to Shine it was more difficult to encourage delivery partners to attend delivery partner meetings, and attendance was even made mandatory at one point. This

reluctance may have been because meetings were infrequent, the test and learn approach wasn't sufficiently embedded, partners were wary about working together, the programme team decided the theme for each meeting and workers felt that attendance took them away from their frontline work. The latter was partially resolved in the second commissioning round in 2018 when:

- delivery partners were asked to apply for adequate staff time to focus on monitoring, evaluation and learning
- Time to Shine discouraged applications for projects which included very few staff hours
- the programme team focused on creating more varied opportunities for useful collaboration

"The information gleaned from the first lockdown has been extremely useful and has allowed us to fine tune our service offering and support. The ongoing support from Time to Shine is great because you can always learn something that is shared by a delivery partner and sometimes it is great to be able to share the stresses and strains that you can feel running a social isolation project during a pandemic!"

What worked well

Group inductions: The monitoring and evaluation officer organised a series of group inductions in 2018 after new projects were commissioned. Staff learned about the programme and met the programme team and other new delivery partners. Various topics were covered including a programme overview, comms requirements, evaluation questionnaires, quarterly monitoring and an introduction to social isolation and loneliness, each facilitated by different team members. The sessions were repeated so that new recruits could also take part. This regular connection helped people to get to know each other and feel part of a wider community.

Meeting face-to-face: The programme team met in person with partners, volunteers and older people where possible. This included attending activity sessions, steering group meetings, project celebrations and holding meetings in community venues.

Monthly learning sessions: Organised by the learning facilitator, these provided an opportunity to reflect on current issues. Sessions were open to anyone working with older people in Leeds so that people from different organisations could pool their knowledge, make connections and share information in real time.

Weekly Time to Learn sessions: Developed during the Covid-19 pandemic these were a welcome source of inspiration, social interaction and peer support. Sessions were arranged so that delivery partners and Small Funds delivery partners could connect and discuss a different topic each week. A learning briefing was produced after each session to share practical ideas and suggestions with partners who were unable to attend. Attendance was optional but this offer ensured that shared wisdom reached small organisations and provided particular support for people who worked alone. Partners suggested topics for discussion and this helped to create a shared sense of ownership of the programme.

A weekly summary email: This was created in April 2020 in response to ‘information overload’ that partners experienced during the early stages of the pandemic. Frontline staff didn’t have time to keep abreast of rapid changes and digest the information so the learning facilitator stepped into this role. This weekly contact continued as a way of keeping teams connected, information filtered, and new opportunities shared.

Free training courses: The provision of free training - including Mental Health First Aid, Mental Health Awareness, Bereavement and Loss and Compassion Fatigue - were tangible benefits of being part of a wider programme. One training course attendee said *“We found compassion fatigue training beneficial as it helped with our working life in the current situation we are living in. It made us realise we need to take time for ourselves.”*

Using a test and learn approach: This helped to create a relaxed, collaborative relationship between the programme team and delivery partners. As partners began to trust the test and learn ethos (a new experience for many) partnerships with other organisations flourished. They were less concerned about others ‘stealing their ideas’ or losing their participants to other projects and more open to collaborating on joint activities so that their older participants could try new things.

Action Learning Sets: Members could talk freely in a supportive environment; they appreciated the independence from Time to Shine and the deeper connections they made with colleagues. One delivery partner said *“I feel I am always learning from the Time to Shine programme and the practice of test and learn. You bring any issues that you are struggling with to the Action Learning Set. The time within the set is also an opportunity to engage with other project workers, and I feel we learn from each other. We have formed close working relationships within the sets and can speak freely within a safe environment. I really value this time and will miss the sets when the project ends.”*

Cross-sector collaboration: This strengthened partnerships at a strategic level. For example, the programme team worked closely with Leeds City Council and Voluntary Action Leeds to increase the pool of trained telephone befrienders available at the start of the pandemic. These formed the foundations of further collaboration on, for example, the distribution of Covid grant funding to frontline organisations and the delivery of Shine magazine to 4,500 older people across Leeds.

“Looking for more ways to engage with members over Zoom and where and how to engage them better, we looked to other Time to Shine partners first to see how they were doing things and what we could directly learn from them. We looked at other formats and places to undertake our face-to-face work, such as on the canal boat from the Float Your Boat project, or outside in a park etc. We also realised from Time to Shine that working as a consortium can also reap benefits and now we use LGBT Forum’s network to send out our new summarised newsletter. We also joined forces with LGBTQ Consortium to raise funds to have more joint activities outside the regular Zoom format.”

(Delivery partner)

Challenges

- Collaborating closely with one other person on a 'trust' basis can have implications for partnership working if that person leaves the organisation.
- Encouraging delivery partners to meet with peers took time away from frontline work.
- As meetings transferred to Zoom there were significantly fewer opportunities to strengthen relationships face-to-face and develop personal connections. This was a particular challenge when new delivery partner staff joined the programme.
- Despite the commitment to collaboration within the programme there was always an underlying funder/delivery partner dynamic as contracts could be terminated for non-compliance.

“Peer support from Time to Shine meetings has been really valued by the team. However over the last quarter capacity for actually attending meetings has been very challenging due to the need to firefight within changing restrictions.”

(Delivery partner)

Outcomes

- LOPF was approached by Leeds Community Healthcare to be the lead partner in another large-scale collaborative programme, incorporating test and learn and a partnership approach.
- LOPF replicated key elements of the Time to Shine programme in new funding bids.
- Third sector organisations working with older people in Leeds saw the benefit of working together to achieve common aims and this formed a foundation for future work.
- Ideas shared in Time to Learn sessions and learning briefings enabled other delivery partners to try out new things in their own projects, for example introducing mindfulness classes or risk-assessing outdoor walks.
- Older people benefited from access to a wider range of activities and opportunities as, for example Lychee Red Chinese Seniors joined with Float Your Boat to celebrate the Moon Festival cruising on a canal boat, and Choices members acted in a play at a prestigious public venue through their connections with The Performance Ensemble.
- In 2017 two Time to Shine walking projects merged to strengthen their befriending provision to support active travel for older people.
- Some Action Learning Set members created WhatsApp groups to keep in touch and friendships have developed from this.
- Leeds Community Foundation introduced group inductions across all their grants programmes following the success of this approach with Small Funds recipients.
- When the city-wide [RU OK? telephone befriending service](#) was set up in the early stages of lockdown seven delivery partner staff signed up as volunteer trainers alongside members of the Time to Shine programme team.

“[A Small Funds delivery partner] made new connections between groups and communities across the area, contributing to sustainable impact. They reported that ongoing conversations and evaluation show individuals and community groups are better connected; people have developed sustainable relationships with each other and local organisations; people are more aware of the community around them and the opportunities it presents; people have developed skills/knowledge; people accessed support for their basic needs and accessed support during isolation. Through Time to Shine Small Funds they have learnt about the power of connecting with existing services and not duplicating (with their multi-agency approach); this produced outcomes beyond their expectations at the start of the project.”

(Leeds Community Foundation)

Key learning points

- Programme teams and funders set a programme’s ethos and approach so it is important to lead by example, create opportunities and be clear about the expectations from delivery partners.
- Be visible within the community.
- Create lots of different opportunities for the programme team and delivery partners to meet face-to-face and via Zoom.
- Introduce formal opportunities for collaboration with, for example, Action Learning Sets or free training courses.
- Developing trust, establishing good working relationships and cross-sector collaboration takes time but it is worth the investment and often results in new opportunities.
- Be open to ideas and suggestions and take action to improve the way in which things work.
- Clearly state at the application stage that adequate staff time is required to attend meetings, share learning and complete monitoring and evaluation requirements.
- As organisations move towards hybrid working it is important to meet people face-to-face where possible, in addition to Zoom meetings, in order to deepen the connections.

“I went to a celebration event at Armley Helping Hands as I thought their volunteers were receiving awards for their support during the Covid-19 pandemic and I wanted to show our appreciation too. Imagine my surprise when I found that there was an award there for us too - Outstanding Contribution to the Community. [The manager] said in her speech that the brilliant team at Leeds Older People’s Forum had gone above and beyond to support older people during lockdown, not only for their members but for older people across the city. It was a lovely event and quite emotional too”

(Programme manager)



Time to Shine was always a time-limited, strategic programme and as such there was an awareness of legacy from the planning stage onwards. From late 2018 onwards there was a greater emphasis on actions to ensure that the legacy of Time to Shine continues long after the programme ends.



What we did

In 2018 the Core Partnership agreed to refocus the programme manager role to create two distinct areas of responsibility: learning and legacy. Stakeholder consultation followed; this was externally-facilitated and involved 30 people. As a result, a legacy subgroup was formed and their first meeting was held in March 2019.

The programme manager for legacy and the legacy subgroup used the consultation notes to identify five main themes and seven key messages which informed the 'Time to Shine legacy plan 2019-2021'.

Delivery partners were asked learning and legacy questions in their quarterly monitoring returns and the topic was discussed regularly in contract meetings.

When any new projects or initiatives were funded, legacy was a consideration and partners worked towards this goal as their projects progressed. This legacy manifested in many ways, for example:

- securing additional funding to continue Age Friendly Communities or delivery partner work
- transferring ownership, management and funding of the SWIFt projects to Leeds City Council
- setting up a Community Interest Organisation to produce Shine magazines
- working with passenger transport and community hubs to distribute Shine magazines
- commissioning Leeds Community Foundation to manage LGBT+ capacity building grants
- creating a team of Age Proud Ambassadors who commit to challenging everyday ageism
- gathering evidence of what works and writing learning reports and practical toolkits

"Commissioners are thinking differently, for example, the commissioners of Neighbourhood Networks are now looking at how they might use social isolation measures. We're thinking differently in Public Health about how we might be able to embed learning at a more strategic level and how we make sure the learning isn't lost."

(Core Partnership member)

What worked well



Focusing on legacy throughout the programme: Knowing that Time to Shine was time limited brought legacy into sharper focus. The legacy element was reiterated during regular conversations throughout the programme.

Prioritising the main legacy themes: These themes were: gathering and sharing learning; community development and capacity building; societal and attitudinal change; strategy and governance; branding; and the future.

Allocating responsibility for legacy: Refocusing the programme manager role midway through the programme and creating a legacy subgroup of the Core Partnership helped to allocate responsibility.

Identifying tangible and intangible legacy outcomes: This showed the breadth and depth of the legacy at Time to Shine. It included intangible outcomes such as enhanced collaboration in the third sector in Leeds, and tangible outcomes such as a chatty bench or evaluation report with recommendations.

Engagement with stakeholders: New partnerships were created and existing ones strengthened through legacy work.

“The legacy from Time To Shine has been about how members will still continue to engage with the organisation once the project has ended. I believe that groups will still include the age range of 50 - 70. I think that lessons learned from our project will influence how we and other older people’s organisations interact with younger older people in the future.” (Delivery partner)

Challenges

- Continuing legacy actions without continuation funding.
- Relying on the goodwill of other people and organisations to take the work forward.
- Prioritising work relating to legacy from a long list of possible options.
- An uncertain funding landscape in the third sector may shift priorities in the future and lessen the commitment to the ongoing legacy of Time to Shine.
- Losing staff from delivery partners and the programme team in the final months of Time to Shine, particularly those with a deep understanding of the progress of the programme.
- Maintaining momentum and a high profile for LOPF as resources are stretched.
- Keeping loneliness and social isolation high on the political and cultural agenda.
- Sustaining key areas of work, for example Friendly Communities, and sharing learning.

- Enthusing others to progress the mission for societal change around positive ageing.
- Ongoing promotion of Time to Shine's suite of learning resources, reports and toolkits.
- Identifying the next steps for members of the Core Partnership, many of whom have been involved since the planning stage.
- How to monitor the legacy of Time to Shine over the coming years.
- Changing participants' hearts and minds when some projects start to charge for services that were previously free.

"I think Time to Shine coincided with the right climate and has brought a shift in how the City Council articulates its vision, so that social isolation, loneliness and older people now feature."
(Programme team member)

Outcomes

- LOPF's commitment to co-production has been acknowledged and celebrated.
- Time to Shine has enabled LOPF to become a lead authority on loneliness in the city and raised the local, regional, national and international profile of LOPF.
- The skills developed through Time to Shine - gathering evidence, collaboration, co-production, test and learn and adequately resourcing monitoring and evaluation - enabled LOPF to secure funding to lead the Enhance pilot programme in Leeds.
- Following the success of the two-year SWIFt pilot project, jointly funded by Public Health and Time to Shine, Leeds City Council provided continuation funding and expanded the SWIFt service to include more partners and support more people living with frailty across a wider area in Leeds.
- Funding 10 chatty benches via Leeds Civic Trust provided a long-term, visual, city-wide reminder of Time to Shine's intention to reduce social isolation and loneliness.
- The learning facilitator established peer-to-peer shared learning across the city.
- Tangible outcomes already exist, for example there are now over 200 Age Friendly Ambassadors, private sector businesses are committing to become Age and Dementia Friendly and members of the public are trained as Dementia Friends.
- Intangible outcomes include a greater awareness of loneliness, a shift towards closer collaboration between third sector organisations, a commitment to co-production and proof that a third sector organisation can successfully manage a large and complex strategic programme.
- LOPF consulted widely to create a manifesto for loneliness. When complete, this will help to continue the learning and legacy of Time to Shine.

"Time to Shine has been there ever since I joined SWIFt as a befriender in 2017 and became involved in the third sector in Leeds. I think the handing over of SWIFt in its entirety to Leeds City Council and its continuing expansion and delivery across the city exemplifies the success and legacy of Time to Shine." (LOPF Trustee)

Key learning points

- Time to Shine was a well-funded, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to gather research and evidence. There is a collective commitment in Leeds to use the learning from Time to Shine to benefit the sector, influence systems change and improve older people's services.
- Focus on legacy from the outset.
- Allocate resources to and responsibility for legacy.
- A written legacy plan helps all partners to understand the vision for legacy.
- Tangible and intangible outcomes need to be recorded and promoted.
- The transition period is challenging as the programme, and most projects, come to an end.
- Creating a shared vision with a wide range of stakeholders creates ownership and commitment to achieve objectives within agreed legacy themes.

"We're thinking differently in Public Health about how we might be able to embed the learning at a more strategic level and how we make sure the learning isn't lost.. It would be a real shame that if we've had all this investment, time and capacity, that we don't really make use of it."
(Core Partnership member)



Further Reading



The following Time to Shine reports are available on the [resources section of the Leeds Older People's Forum website](#):

- Greater than the sum of its parts: Creating a cohesive programme
- Co-production: a Time to Shine toolkit
- Sowing the seeds: reflections on running a small funds programme
- Small Funds: Setting up a micro-funding programme
- Friendly Communities in Leeds: an evaluation of Time to Shine's approach
- Monitoring and evaluation at Time to Shine
- A Lifeline In Desperate Times: Lockdown learning from Time to Shine delivery partners
- Supporting Wellbeing and Independence for Frailty (SWIFt)
- A summary of delivery partners' learning April-June 2021
- A summary of delivery partners' learning July-September 2021


The suite of final evaluation reports from the Centre for Loneliness Studies at the University of Sheffield are also available on the [resources section of the Leeds Older People's Forum website](#):

- Report 1: Executive Summary of the Time to Shine local evaluation
- Report 2: Methods
- Report 3: Process evaluation
- Report 4: Intervention typologies
- Report 5: Motivations and barriers for beneficiary engagement
- Report 6: Participation, engagement and outcomes for older people
- Report 7: The impacts of Time to Shine on project beneficiaries
- Report 8: The impact of COVID-19 on Time to Shine service delivery and project beneficiaries
- Report 9: Legacy, systems change and sustainability
- Report 10: Test and Learn: Understanding the experiences and challenges of frontline organisations





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