

TED Friendship Groups



T.E.D.

Ageing Better
in East Lindsey

TED Friendship Groups

This report focuses on the learning from our TED Friendship Groups. Data has been collected via detailed written field notes, semi-structured interviews, informal conversations with delivery partners, volunteers and service users, and a coproduction workshop at the Ageing Better Celebration in Sheffield. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and thematically analysed. Pseudonyms were assigned to protect anonymity.

About TED

Talk Eat Drink (TED) Ageing Better in East Lindsey is part of Ageing Better, a programme set up by The National Lottery Community Fund, the largest funder of community activity in the UK. Ageing Better aims to develop creative ways for people aged over 50 to be actively involved in their local communities, helping to combat social isolation and loneliness. It is one of five major programmes set up by The National Lottery Community Fund to test and learn from new approaches to designing services which aim to make people's lives healthier and happier.



TED is funded by The National Lottery Community Fund and is managed by Community Lincs

Overview of the development of TED Friendship Groups?

Tea with TED Sessions

In 2016, Tea with TED sessions were designed for promotional purposes to spread the message about the TED Ageing Better in East Lindsey Programme, and they were sessions where people aged 50 and over could meet and socialise in safe, age-friendly environments. The Tea with TED sessions were very popular and therefore, after the initial trial period, TED staff continued to host the sessions in a range of locations across East Lindsey. Locations included: Sutton-on-Sea Library, The Storehouse Cafe in Skegness, The Coastal Centre in Mablethorpe, and Elizabeth Court Housing in Louth.

In 2018, Tea with TED development was directed towards legacy and sustainability and as most of the sessions were run by TED staff members, who were responsible for providing refreshments and venue hire, it was important to revise the delivery strategy to ensure that the sessions would continue after the TED programme had come to an end.

Friendship Groups

The test and learn approach adopted by Ageing Better allowed us to build on the learning we had gained from our Tea with TED sessions and thus self-sustaining, community Friendship Groups have now been developed. The aim of the groups are to welcome and encourage anyone over the age of 50 to get involved with their local community, meet new people, and take part in social activities. The Friendship Groups are led by volunteers and support is provided by the TED Friendship Officer, Roisin Mullee. Volunteers are encouraged to plan activities, outings and engage members of the group to ensure the groups success and longevity.

The Over 50s Youth Club in Horncastle and Louth Friendship Group launched in 2018. The volunteers who take an active role in running these groups regularly organise fundraising events and apply for small, community grants. As a result, both these groups are now fully self-sustaining.



Roisin (Friendship Officer) is currently in the process of setting up 6 new Friendship Groups across East Lindsey. These include: The Storehouse, Skegness; Barratt Court, Skegness; Binbrook; Wainfleet; Chapel St Lenoards; and Mablethorpe. Roisin has created a Quality Mark for our existing Friendship Groups and for groups that are in their initial set-up



‘The quality mark will allow those existing Friendship Groups, the recognition they deserve for their continuous hard work they give to ensure the Friendship Groups work for their local community. It will also provide a positive aim for those new groups to work towards.’

(Roisin, TED Friendship Group Officer)

The Quality Mark has been positively received by volunteers. For example, Susan states:

‘We would love to be the first officially approved TED Friendship Group, it would make us extremely proud to have the official stamp of approval.’

(Susan, TED volunteer, The Over 50s Youth Club)

Research Methods

Since March 2019, the TED team have regularly attended the Friendship Groups and have collected learning and evaluation data via detailed written field notes, semi-structured interviews and informal conversations with volunteers, service users and the TED Friendship Group Officer. Data were also gathered during a coproduction workshop at the 2019 Ageing Better Celebration, where delegates were invited to take part in a coproduction activity entitled: Through Their Eyes. Delegates were asked to consider several different viewpoints, these included: an older adult aged 50 and over who lives in East Lindsey; volunteer; relative of an older adult; local service (e.g. Drs Surgery); and a carer. Participants were also invited to share their thoughts and ideas on the following four areas: what does a Friendship Group mean to you; what benefits would you gain from connecting with a TED Friendship Group; what are the barriers you face in terms of connecting with a TED Friendship Group; and how could TED Friendship Groups form good connections with you. Informed consent was obtained from each participant, interviews were digitally recorded on a Dictaphone and all interviews took place at the Friendship Group sessions. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and thematically analysed. Pseudonyms have been assigned to protect anonymity.



Findings and Discussion

Key themes identified through data analysis included: the positive impact of Friendship Groups; the barriers people face in terms of connecting with TED Friendship Groups; and ideas for future development.

Positive Impact of TED Friendship Groups

For many older adults living in rural East Lindsey, Friendship Groups have made a huge impact in their lives. They have provided a safe space for older people to meet others and socialise, and they have encouraged and given people a reason to get out of their house:

'Here it is more open and people can just come in and join in and have a laugh and what have you, it's lovely. I've had my life threatened a lot of times so I don't like people sitting behind me. I can sit with my back towards the room and I don't feel there is anybody near me because there is space. If I'm on the bus I have to sit with my back away from people because it just worries me. I mean I suffer with PTSD, low moods and anxiety. And it's hard, it really is especially when I have been through what I have been through. But yeah, I love it here. I love the people and the staff are absolutely fabulous. If you need any help they are there. I mean the lady behind the counter will give you a card and when you've had so many cups of tea you know you get one free. Which is nice because you know when you go in the shop and you buy one get one free. People will join in. If you want to talk to somebody privately you can because you've got your group and it's safe. I mean it's lovely in here, look how the sun is shining through, it's beautiful.'

(Grace, T.E.D. Service User)

'When I retired it was so different, it was catastrophic. There wasn't enough to do and I felt quite flat and there were gaps, big gaps in the day.'

(Margaret, TED Service User)

'Because of all these illnesses I have got it restricts me from doing anything, so I'm bored. When I had the chance to join TED it helped because I was with people, I could talk to them. It felt like a family really.'

(Dot, TED Service User)

Potential barriers to consider

A number of potential barriers that older people may face in regards to attending TED Friendship Groups have been highlighted by participants in the TED programme and also by Volunteers and Service Users from other Ageing Better programmes. Awareness of these barriers is important to help us improve the services we offer older people who live in rural East Lindsey. Barriers include: transport; lack of confidence when first attending group sessions; and the practicalities of attending TED sessions whilst managing caring responsibilities:

‘Transport is a barrier for some people but if we know about it we will go and get them and bring them to the group and take them home again. All the volunteers do this. We do it every week.’ (Susan, TED Volunteer)

‘I think people with caring responsibilities would find it difficult to go every week. I know I do and it’s the guilt that’s what it is. You feel guilty about going and leaving and enjoying yourself. And there’s always things that come up that you have to do.’

(Mavis, Service User, Ageing Better)

‘It’s having that confidence to turn up to a group session on your own; it’s hard for some people.’

(Roisin, TED Friendship Group Officer)



Ideas for future development

Currently our TED Friendship Group Officer Roisin Mullee is in the process of setting up 6 new Friendship Groups across East Lindsey. These include: The Storehouse, Skegness; Barratt Court, Skegness; Binbrook; Wainfleet; Chapel St Lenoards; and Mablethorpe. Here she discusses her ideas for future development:

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

(Roisin, TED Friendship Group Officer)

TED staff work in collaboration with volunteers and service users to develop and improve the services offered on the programme. Recently, ideas for the development of TED Friendship Group sessions have centred on promotion, recruitment, structure and opportunities for men and women only groups:

‘What about men and women only groups have you thought of that? It might encourage more people from different cultures and backgrounds.’

(Jackie, Volunteer, Ageing Better)

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

(Deborah, TED Volunteer)

Summary points and key learning messages



A number of potential barriers were highlighted in regards to session attendance. These include: transport; lack of confidence when first attending group sessions; and the practicalities of attending TED sessions whilst managing caring responsibilities. Awareness of these barriers is important and TED will strive to address the issues that have been raised.



A new pet friendly Friendship Group has been introduced at Chapel Garden Centre.



Ideas for the development of TED Friendship Group sessions have centred on promotion, recruitment, structure, opportunities for men and women only groups, and collaboration with agencies (such as the fire service, local businesses and waste collection crews) that have regular contact with vulnerable people in the community.



TED are working to ensure that all friendship groups have a strong sustainability and legacy plan.



TED Friendship Groups provide a safe space for older people to meet others and socialise.



About East Lindsey



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East Lindsey is a large, sparsely populated district within the county of Lincolnshire, which includes the popular coastal seaside towns of Skegness and Mablethorpe.

East Lindsey has a higher than average ageing population with 29% of people aged 65 and over. High numbers of older people move to East Lindsey in their retirement years and many have multiple chronic health conditions and few social and familial connections in the region. Public transport across East Lindsey is poor and therefore accessing services can be challenging, especially for older adults.

The overarching aims of the TED Programme are to:

- Reduce social isolation and loneliness
- Help older people to become better connected with volunteering, social, leisure and health improving activities
- Provide opportunities for older people to influence the design, delivery and evaluation of both the services and businesses available to them

We currently have 1279 registered TED members, 74 businesses across East Lindsey hold an Age-friendly Business Award, and 516 volunteers have contributed 8,156 hours to the TED programme between April 2018 and August 2019 .

Further information...

To find out more about TED or to get involved visit our website www.tedineastlindsey.co.uk or start a conversation and share your views online: Twitter: [@ted_EastLindsey](https://twitter.com/ted_EastLindsey)



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