

# Bringing older men together in neutral spaces – a practical case study

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Ageing Better in Camden

# The ABC Outreach Service

- A dedicated outreach service that proactively meets and engages with significant numbers of people aged 60+ across the borough of Camden.
- A range of approaches including street outreach, door knocking in sheltered housing and housing estates.
- We share tailored and responsive information relevant to the local area – a walking ‘interactive’ noticeboard.
- Invite people to meet us at stepping stone ‘pop-up’ events in housing, at community venues and ‘neutral’ spaces such as local cafes.
- Our approach is simple, transactional and most importantly feels informal.
- It’s all about a person to person connection.

# Why this approach?

By going out into the community to proactively meet older people:

- We meet the people nobody knows.
- Successfully engage with the people who are less likely to be in contact with or say yes to formal activities, services and support.

Between February 2019 to September 2019, through street outreach alone we have engaged with 2,533 older people (approximately 45% of whom are men). 7% have gone on to access ABC funded activities (that we are aware of).

- For more information about street outreach please see our learning, top tips and 'how to' guide



[www.ageingbetterincamden.org.uk/outreach](http://www.ageingbetterincamden.org.uk/outreach)



# The challenge of connecting older men to their communities

Despite meeting significant numbers of older men through outreach activity:

- Older men are less likely to take part in social activities than women (35% of ABC participants are male)
- Many of the men we proactively meet through outreach activity are very willing to engage and exhibit a need for social connection but are resistant to the idea of community activities
- Men have a wide range of barriers and sensitivities around engagement

# Capturing insight from older men



## Outreach Learning Report

Connecting older men to their communities

A research project by the Ageing Better in Camden Outreach Team  
Amanda Mainey and Jo Stapleton, May 2019



- January 2019
- An action research snapshot of the views of 38 older men, met on the street, in pubs and sheltered housing.

Key questions asked:

- How men would like to socially connect with others?
- How men socialise already?
- Where men are most comfortable meeting?
- Who would be there?
- How often and with what degree of formality would men like to meet?

# How men would like to socialise/connect with others?

- “opportunities to socialise locally”
- “a space not associated with old people”



# “Whenever I feel like it”



“simple not  
sophisticated not  
formal – like meeting  
friends”  
(man on the street)

“I would not go to something called a men’s club or group”



The type of activity/information and how it is presented to men is key

# Informal social hubs

- “I meet friends in the changing room at the gym. A group of 5 or 6 cab drivers who swim meet up there and sit down for a discussion in the changing room. I join in” (man in the pub)

Informal social connections are important to men as a gateway to friendships but not all men have the places to go/skills to form these connections.



# Putting our learning into practice – a practical case study



**Town Café**, Kentish Town, open 7 days a week from 7am to 7pm.  
Coffee £1, Tea 80p



# Our approach

- **Neutral Venue:** Town Café (chosen on the recommendation of a local older person as a “clean, friendly, affordable place to go”).
- 2 hour time slot for the pop up agreed with the cafe at a ‘not busy time’ (café to remain open to regular customers)
- **Transactional:** Local older people (with a focus on men) engaged through street outreach to be invited to ‘**drop by**’ and to ‘**meet us there**’ for a free coffee/cake and opportunity to pick up information about free local activities.
- Outreach team to meet the cost of a free tea/coffee and cake for our guests.
- **Social hub:** Event an opportunity to establish if the café has the potential to act as an informal social hub for local older people.
- **Meeting a need:** the outreach team meet significant numbers of older men through street outreach activity on Camden and Kentish Town High Roads. Some of these men are out on the streets in all weathers and appear not to have existing social hub connections.

# The invitation/outreach tool



An invitation to join the AGE UK Camden Outreach team for free coffee and cake at the Town Café, Kentish Town



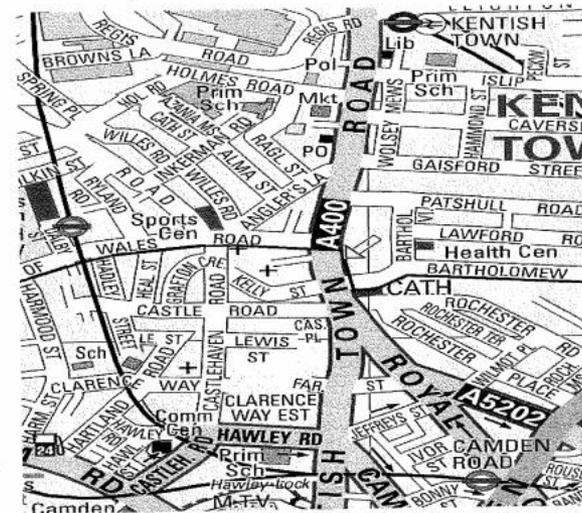
Thursday 26 September, drop by between 2-4pm at the Town Café, 140 Kentish Town High Road, NW1 9QB

Come along as our guest and meet other local people over free coffee and cake at the Town Café on Kentish Town High Road

Pick up information about free activities for Camden residents aged 60+ across the borough, including free swimming, Saturday social lunches with free lunch and entertainment, free gym facilities and a wide range of trips and activities. Meet AnneMarie, Jo and Jill (Outreach)

Town Café, 140 Kentish Town Road, London, NW1 9QB

The café is located on Kentish Town High Road, opposite the junction for Prince of Wales Road. A bus stop is located just outside the café, served by 46, 99, 134 and 214 bus routes.



For more information please contact: AnneMarie, Jo and Jill at the Age UK Camden Outreach team 020 7239 0421

# Taking our offer on to the streets – what did we learn?

- The café was well known to the majority of local older people engaged on the street in conversation. For some men this overcame barriers to attending ‘where is it, how do I get there, who will be there’ etc.
- It was necessary for the outreach team to adapt their usual outreach approach. “I’m 75 and don’t feel aged at all. I’m very active so don’t need anything. Come back when I’m 90”. We had more success with a transactional focus on ABC/Lottery rather than AGE UK Camden.
- To avoid men feeling they were being targeted/brought together under the guise of a men’s group, the team also approached women and couples during outreach activity.
- Conversations held on the street between the older person and outreach worker were key to men attending. It was important for the older person to know they would meet the outreach worker at the café.
- Over 3 days of activity, the outreach team engaged with 106 men and 110 women.

# Kentish Town Café 26 September 2019

- 22 local older people attended the café pop up. (50% gender split)
- The café was being used by customers of all ages - 'neutral space' box ticked.
- Large windows enabled men to see inside/the outreach worker and make a decision about coming in.
- Information was shared but time was required to initiate conversation and to build rapport.



£40 spent on coffee and cake

**“this is great. Now that you’ve found me, you’ll be seeing more of me. I need to get out and meet people. I’m glad I’ve come”**

# Key learning/recommendations

- **Ask local older people for venue recommendations** – choose a location that older men already use and feel comfortable to visit. (It may not be a venue you would choose yourself).
- **Ensure the invitation/flyer has a clear, simple and transactional focus** and any text reflects the informality of the invitation/approach. E.g 'drop in', 'pick up information' etc.
- **Ensure resources are available** to promote the event via street outreach conversations. These interactions are key to engaging and reassuring older men about the purpose of the event and to reaching men who are less likely to attend formal activities.
- **Ensure sufficient staff and volunteers are available to support the event** by having time to chat to and build relationships with older men.
- **Promoting activities needs to have light touch.** Information needs to be available for men to pick up and to chat through.
- **Ensure there is an invitation available to the next informal stepping-stone event** to provide opportunities for men to meet you and each other again.

# Building our model



## Do you want to be more active?

Find out about how to use free outdoor gym equipment from a trained instructor - and more!

**Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> November 10.30am to 12.00pm**

Meet us around the outdoor gym equipment in Kilburn Grange Park, NW6 2JL

Please join us for:

a free cup of coffee, tea, refreshments and a demonstration of safe use of the outdoor gym equipment

Find out about the fantastic free, low cost and accessible activities for people 55+ and 60+

For more information contact: Jo & AnneMarie at Age UK Camden Outreach team 020 7239 0421



An invitation to join the AGE UK Camden Outreach and Community Connector teams for free afternoon tea/coffee and mince pies at the Newsroom Café



**Friday 6 December, drop by from 2-4pm at the Newsroom Café, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Swiss Cottage Library, 88 Avenue Road, NW3 3HA**

Come along as our guest and meet your neighbours over free tea/coffee and a hot mince pie at the recently opened Newsroom café, (open 10am to 8pm, Monday to Thursday and 10am to 5pm Friday and Saturday) relax, read the papers, access the free to use computers/internet in the library or join the free North London Cares monthly Book Group.

Meet Jo and AnneMarie (Outreach) and the AGE UK Community Connectors team, find out about the fantastic range of free trips, visits and activities available for people aged 55+ across Camden.

# Thank you

Any questions?

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Ageing Better in Camden

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