Community Development for Older People in Bristol

Key findings and recommendations from Bristol Ageing Better's 'test and learn' community development projects

Amy Beardmore, Penny Beynon, Christine Crabbe, Carol Fry, Jan Fullforth, Jeremy Groome, Mat Jones, Eddy Knasel, Christopher Orlik, Jill Turner, Jo White

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS »

Executive Summary »

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Social isolation and loneliness are of increasing concern within the field of public health. Not only are they conditions that indiscriminately affect all ages (deJong Gierveld et al. 2006), but they have also been shown to be severely detrimental to both physical and mental health, with evidence to suggest that the conditions can even play a significant part in the foreshortening of human life (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010).

Whilst social isolation is sometimes sought out by individuals it can also happen to people involuntarily as they become unintentionally disconnected from their usual contacts and connections. Loneliness, on the other hand tends to be a more unwelcome state, and is often an undesirable feeling that can be felt even if a person appears to be well connected.

One group that appears disproportionately affected by these conditions is older adults, and in particular those aged 50 and above. A combination of factors that become more common as we age (such as the loss of loved ones, family members moving away, retirement, physical impairments or mobility issues) are also more likely to coexist, with older people therefore having a higher risk of loneliness and isolation as a result.

Many older adults continue to live in urban areas as they age, and although some may maintain social connections and continue to be engaged in their usual activities, others may begin to feel increasingly disconnected. This is often felt even more keenly as the community around them changes – perhaps as friends and neighbours move or pass away, or as younger adults move into the area. In urban settings it is not uncommon for housing stock to be more affordable in areas that have traditionally housed the same families for years, and for younger adults to move in as properties become available. Likewise, some areas may become more transient as they are opened up to young professionals, and these factors can lead to a feeling of alienation from a once familiar community for some older adults.

It is therefore imperative that communities provide facilities and activities for everyone and all ages, but particular attention should be given to those who might be more at risk of loneliness and social isolation. This means developing communities with the needs of its residents in mind, often using the skills and assets which already exist locally and building on them to make communities as inclusive as possible. In Bristol there are many communities which are deemed to be in need of such work, and as such Bristol Ageing Better (BAB) commissioned a selection of local providers to undertake community development for older people (CDOP) across a number of areas of the city.

Good community development work is increasingly recognised as a foundation for building the health and wellbeing of communities. Community development can act as a route to better link people with public and voluntary sector services, to make sure their voice is heard, and to find creative solutions to local issues.

Community development is a practical process whereby community members come together to find solutions to shared concerns that matter to them. Its key purpose is to create a better overall life for everyone, through building communities based on justice, equality and mutual respect. Community development is concerned with changing power structures to remove barriers that prevent people from participating in the issues that affect their lives. The focus is on individuals, small groups and networks that want or need to cooperate in order to achieve change at a local or community level.

In Bristol, a key element of the BAB programme has been Community Development for Older People (CDOP), with ten such projects taking place under this theme across the City, using a 'test and learn' approach. The aim of these projects was to create vibrant communities that meet the needs of older people and provide them with a range of social and cultural activities to take part in as they age (Bristol Ageing Better, 2020).

In six of these CDOP areas a Community Researcher or Researchers (CR) worked with staff at the University of the West of England (UWE) to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each project, resulting in an in-depth analysis. The following report summarises the successes and challenges that resulted from each individual project, and the key learning and recommendations from the citywide CDOP programme are brought together in the final section.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND SUCCESSES

The CDOP projects' use of asset based community development (ABCD) approaches helped practitioners map existing connections, organisations, venues and volunteers at the start of the project, in many cases laying significant groundwork for the future. This was largely achieved through the Community Development Workers (CDWs) making contacts and building relationships, although some areas found novel ways to do this such as in Stockwood where local people were asked to assist in canvassing opinions and mapping local activity.

The test and learn approach employed across all areas allowed projects to try out a number of different ideas and activities, with many providers choosing to test activities and consult with residents through the use of one-off events, taster days and pop-ups. These proved to be very popular and gave some of the more cautious older residents in the community the opportunity to try something new in a safe and fun environment.

Consultation with older people was attempted through a combination of approaches. Many projects had initially intended to set up steering groups, but when these did not come to fruition alternative approaches were sought. Door knocking – although time consuming – did in some areas yield good results on an ad hoc basis, as did consulting older people at the taster days and pop-up events. Where steering groups were established successfully, projects found they were best achieved as part of a more general community consultation group rather than one specifically aimed at the over 50s.

Publicity and marketing were an important part of almost every project strategy, and for some projects, a booklet was produced and distributed in the local area. These were often most successful if combined with information about the wider community, with activities for the over 50s forming a section of the 'what's on' guide. This had the added benefit of also making them more sustainable in terms of printing costs, as local companies were keener to pay for advertising in a publication with a wider reach. Advertising in local and often free community publications was also deemed to be effective, and for the majority printed materials remained preferable to online advertising given the audience.

Activities offered by projects were varied and consideration was given to the range of ages, abilities, skills and mobility of those in the over 50s range. Projects recognised that the needs of the 'younger old' were potentially more demanding than those of 'the older old' and the types of activities they wanted to participate in were broad. In inner city areas, where there is greater diversity and a multicultural population, projects were also mindful of cultural implications and were flexible about the timing of community events that might coincide with festivals, celebrations or even funerals in the case of St Paul's.

In many cases intergenerational activities proved to be both the most popular and the most sustainable given that offering activities to all ages generally increases attendance. There was also evidence - particularly amongst the 'younger old' that many did not want to socialise and make connections solely within their age group. Many of the more successful project outputs therefore were activities that brought different age groups together, be it community picnics, street parties or cooking projects.

There is a strong indication that community development for older people might be best addressed through building inclusive and age friendly communities where older people are instinctively included as part of a collaborative endeavour rather than as a separate, targeted population. Indeed, the most successful CDOP projects in the evaluation were those that included the needs of older people in wider community work, an approach that also often meant activities were more sustainable long term.

Evidence from the registration records of 760 participants and 233 baseline and follow-up Common Measurement Framework (CMF) evaluation questionnaires show a number of positive features of the CDOP projects. The projects were reaching groups that were a focus for the BAB programme. At project entry, the mean age of participants was 70.8 years; 71% lived in areas of higher multiple deprivation; 42% were living alone; 44% had a long-standing illness or disability; 22% had carer responsibilities; and 31% of participants scored as 'intensely lonely' using the De Jong Gierveld 6-item scale (n=166).

Measures using the UCLA 3-item scale showed a statistically significant impact on social and emotional loneliness following participation in projects (n=190, p=0.003). There were also positive impacts for wellbeing (SWEMWBS scale) and general health (EQVAS). Statistically significant impacts for social participation, co-design and influence of decision making points towards how these benefits were achieved. A central ethos of the CDOP projects was to empower older people as part of a process for personal and collective change.

The CDOP work benefited greatly in certain areas from the strategic co-ordination role that LinkAge Network played in providing a citywide oversight of training and CDOP activities. LinkAge Network's work meant that potential duplication across the city was avoided as much as possible and that workers were able to collaborate and meet at organised events, as well as participate in quality training and have access to relevant funding opportunities.

MAIN CHALLENGES AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

One of the major challenges faced by the CDOP projects was staff changes and/or inconsistent line management. In a few cases staff who left projects were not immediately replaced, often

causing a hiatus in delivery. When they were replaced there was sometimes no handover and new workers faced the challenge of starting again from scratch or guessing at what had been achieved so far. Some had insufficient time remaining at the start of their employment to make any significant changes and some project work had to be abandoned as a result.

Reaching the socially isolated and the lonely proved to be a universal challenge across all projects, and although significant attempts were made to reach out to these individuals, their very isolation meant that they remained difficult to contact. All projects made good efforts to include lonely and socially isolated people, but – beyond the CMF data - it remained problematic to assess the scale of success in this area through project data.

Poor transport links – although beyond the control of individual projects – remained a major challenge to getting people to and from groups. Some found temporary solutions to this problem, although these were not sustainable long term (such as in Horfield and Lockleaze where taxis were made available to those attending project activities) but generally transport remained an issue throughout, particularly for those with limited mobility or disabilities.

Whilst some projects had a reach beyond their geographical boundaries and saw this as a positive outcome, others were unsure of the value of a place-based project targeted at a specific area if people attending came from outside of those boundaries. Likewise, some CRs noted that confining projects to a strict geographical area overlooked some of the more nuanced factors that influence how people in a city relate to certain areas. For example, St Paul's has a rich Afro-Caribbean history and it was felt that people may travel into the area from other parts of the city to access culturally relevant activities as a result. On the other hand, areas

such as Old Market appeared to lack a strong identity or sense of community, with many quite transient activities.

Considering the time that community development projects take to embed, the contract duration of two or three years for such work was seen as a barrier to success. Community development work is difficult to rush and workers felt that the CDOP funding period was in general not long enough to create sustainable changes. Equally, short term funding inevitably meant fixed term contracts for staff, making it difficult for projects to retain staff to the end of a funding cycle. It can be argued that community development is an ongoing cycle of activity without a beginning or an end, and short term contracts are unhelpful if this is the overall aim.

Record keeping in some of the projects was insufficient and it was felt that more could have been done to ensure that projects performed against their contracts through more stringent monitoring. In some cases, CRs repeatedly asked for project records but these were either incomplete or not sent by projects, making it almost impossible to gauge success based on the quarterly reports or other documentation provided.

KEY CONCLUDING POINTS

The test and learn approach has given CDOP projects the freedom to try a range of activities as well as allowing them to test different ways of effectively consulting with older people in the city. Whilst much of this work has ultimately been successful, there is clearly a need to be flexible and adaptable whilst finding what works within a local geographical or cultural context. Building trust and forming relationships with local people and organisations takes time, and if projects are to be able to adapt according to such nuances then community development projects need to be given more time to become

established through longer funding cycles.

It is important to remember that the term the 'over 50s' encompasses such a broad age range that it is impossible to cater for all interests, cultural needs, skills and preferences under one umbrella approach. Indeed, some of the most successful CDOP projects have used a combination of approaches, with some activities targeted directly at the over 50s and others taking a more community-wide, intergenerational approach. This is perhaps an indication that in order to achieve good community development for older people, the whole community needs to be involved in any endeavour with careful consideration of contextual factors.

THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK AND THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOR OLDER PEOPLE
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The Coronavirus pandemic of 2020 has had a major impact on all aspects of the BAB programme, with potential consequences across all areas of the work. However, for community development projects there are a number of potentially damaging implications, not least the concern over how logistically possible community development work will be if communities are unable to meet in person or with limited contact.

The unexpected interruption to the usual freedoms of later life has the potential to undo any progress already made through CDOP work and cause those who were already isolated to withdraw further. Equally, the virus has already impacted heavily on those who were previously active and engaged citizens by in some cases

forcing them to shield from community activity.

When the financial contribution made to society by older people through volunteering is considered, along with the emotional and physical support offered by older people who perform unpaid caring roles outside the home, the impact on wider society has the potential to be considerable.

Further to the potential consequences for wider society that this loss represents is the impact that the pandemic may now have on the confidence of older people whose sense of value and perceived sense of self-worth could potentially be diminished as a result of this loss of social contact. Those who were once seen as valuable members of society may now be viewed as vulnerable due to their susceptibility to the disease, thus affecting both their own confidence as well as potentially compounding negative views about the contribution older people can make to society.

However, despite the negative impact there may also be an unseen benefit to the pandemic. There is, for example, evidence that some activities for older people have successfully moved classes and groups online (see the Community Kick-Start Fund Addendum for examples), making them accessible remotely to those who are connected to the internet. The virus has therefore also brought with it the potential to explore new ways of bringing activities directly into the homes of the socially isolated in ways that may have previously been overlooked. There is now the potential to rethink how activities for older people are designed and implemented and the technology that might be needed to make them accessible to all, regardless of mobility issues, transport links, levels of confidence and other barriers to participation. It is therefore more important than ever to explore new and innovative ways of working with older people to develop communities that allow them to meaningfully engage, feel valued and contribute

to the world around them. In many ways, this challenging and difficult period may even help to contribute to a period of rethinking old approaches to supporting and engaging with citizens as they age.

With the funding for the community development projects evaluated in this document finishing before the Coronavirus outbreak forced the UK into a national lockdown in mid-March of 2020, this evaluation focuses on a range of largely face-to-face activities across six areas of the city that aimed to develop communities for older people in a pre-virus world. These projects will no doubt now need to think long and hard about how community development can be adapted, both in the immediate and long term future to target a range of people with a variety of needs under differing circumstances. Projects may need to harness technology and newfound ways of working by providing activities across a range of face-to-face and virtual platforms as we look towards a potentially different kind of future for communities.

CONTENTS 》》

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS »

ABCD	Asset Based Community Development
BAB	Bristol Ageing Better
BCC	Bristol City Council
CDC	Community Development Co-ordinator
CDOP	Community Development for Older People
CDW	Community Development Worker
CEO	Community Engagement Officer
CMF	Common Measurement Framework
CR	Community Researcher
PC	Project Co-ordinator
PO	Project Officer
SDM	Senior Development Manager
UWE	University of the West of England
VC	Volunteer Co-ordinator

1. Background and context >>

1. INTRODUCTION

With the number of people in the UK aged 60 or above set to rise to an estimated 25% of the total population within the next 20 - 40 years (Dickens et al., 2011), creating 'age-friendly' environments is increasingly high on the public health agenda. One key priority within this context is to create local settings that can positively influence the lives of an ageing population (Lui et al., 2009), and there is increasing recognition that consulting older people on what this should look like is an integral part of that process.

Older citizens can - and frequently do - make a positive contribution to their communities, and therefore constitute a valuable asset to communities. It is estimated, for example, that contributions made by older people in a voluntary capacity are worth over £10 million a year to the economy (Klee et al., 2014). However, increasing levels of social isolation and loneliness present a major potential setback to successfully engaging older people in the communities in which they live, and could potentially represent a major threat to a person's health and wellbeing. Some have even suggested that loneliness could be as dangerous to a person's physical health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015).

In 2020, that threat to health and wellbeing has come into even sharper focus for many people as large numbers of the older generation have found themselves in a position of forced social isolation due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Whilst this unexpected interruption to the usual freedoms of later life may cause those who were already isolated to withdraw further, the virus has also impacted heavily on those who were previously active and engaged citizens. When the financial contribution made to society stated above is considered, along with the emotional and physical support offered by older people who perform unpaid caring roles outside the home, the impact on wider society has the potential to be considerable.

Second to the potential consequences for wider society that this loss represents is the impact that the pandemic may now have on the confidence of older people whose sense of value and perceived sense of self-worth could potentially be diminished as a result of this loss of social contact. Those who were once seen as valuable members of society may now be viewed as vulnerable due to their susceptibility to the disease, thus affecting both their own confidence as well as potentially compounding negative views about the contribution older people can make to society.

However, despite the negative impact there may also be a silver lining to the pandemic. There is, for example, evidence that some activities for older people have successfully moved classes and groups online (see the Community Kick-Start Fund Addendum for examples), making them accessible remotely to those who are connected to the internet. The virus has therefore also brought with it the potential to explore new ways of bringing activities directly into the homes of the socially isolated in ways that may have previously been overlooked, and there is now the potential to rethink how activities for older people are designed and implemented and the technology that might be needed to make them accessible to all, regardless of mobility issues, transport links, levels of confidence and other barriers to participation. It is therefore more important than ever to explore new and innovative ways of working with older people to develop communities that allow them to meaningfully engage, feel valued and contribute to the world around them. In many ways this challenging and difficult period may even help to contribute to a period of rethinking old approaches to supporting and engaging with citizens as they age.

With the funding for the community development projects evaluated in this document finishing before the Coronavirus outbreak forced the UK into a national lockdown in mid-March of 2020, this evaluation focuses on a range of largely face-to-face activities across six areas of the city that aimed to develop communities for older people in a pre-virus world. These projects will no doubt now need to think long and hard about how community development can be adapted, both in the immediate and long term future to target a range of people with a variety of needs under differing circumstances. Projects may need to harness technology and newfound ways of working by providing activities across a range of face-to-face and virtual platforms as we look towards a potentially different kind of future for communities.

2. ABOUT BAB

Bristol Ageing Better (BAB) is a partnership of individuals and organisations. It is funded by the National Lottery Community Fund to develop and deliver a 5-year programme (with total funding of £5.9 million) that identifies the best ways of reducing both the social isolation and loneliness of people over 50. The funding runs from 2015 to 2020 (recently partially extended to 2021) and is part of the National Lottery Community Fund Fulfilling Lives: Ageing Better programme.

BAB aims to create an environment in which partner organisations can deliver effective services, share their knowledge of what works, and be noticed by the people who matter. The partnership is led by Age UK Bristol and the programme aims to reduce isolation and loneliness in older people in Bristol through commissioning projects across four main themes:

1. Creating the conditions to reduce and prevent loneliness

2. Identifying and informing older people at risk of loneliness

3. Working with communities to increase the services and activities available

4. Supporting individuals to live fulfilling lives

In Bristol, a key element of the programme is Community Development for Older People (CDOP), with ten such projects taking place under this theme across the City. The aim of these projects is to create vibrant communities that meet the needs of older people and provide them with a range of social and cultural activities to take part in as they age (Bristol Ageing Better, 2020). The overall aim of these community development projects is to design activities with and for older people that will both prevent and

reduce the negative effects associated with loneliness and social isolation by designing and implementing activities that matter to them.

3. LONELINESS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION IN OLDER PEOPLE

The terms 'loneliness' and 'social isolation' are often used interchangeably, but it is important to differentiate between the two as they can mean different things to different people, and may be dependent on personal circumstances or other contextual factors. Loneliness, for example, is a personal perception of the extent to which an individual is connected to others and the significance and value of those connections. Many people may appear to have a number of acquaintances, but the quantity of a person's social contacts does not always translate into meaningful connections. Loneliness can therefore be defined as:

"A subjective feeling about the gap between a person's desired levels of social contact and their actual level of social contact. It refers to the perceived quality of the person's relationships. Loneliness is never desired and lessening these feelings can take a long time." (Age UK, 2020)

Age UK, 2020

Social isolation, on the other hand, does not always have negative connotations and may even be desirable to some. Individuals may be socially isolated by circumstance or through choice, and it may be something that they feel reasonably comfortable with. However, for others social isolation is less desirable and is something that they would like to change. It is a phenomenon best described as "...an objective measure of the number of contacts that people have. It is about the quantity and not quality of

relationships" (Age UK, 2020).

Whilst loneliness and social isolation can affect people of all ages, older adults are particularly vulnerable, and being socially isolated carries with it cognitive implications. The risk factors for social isolation and loneliness may be broadly the same for the whole population, but some factors are more likely to occur in individuals who are in older age. They include:

- Issues associated with housing tenure (ownership, renting)

- Living alone and the potential impact of a lack of social interaction on health and wellbeing

- Marital status (especially if divorced or widowed)

- Those who report being in very bad or bad health (these individuals are 2.5 times more likely to report loneliness) Thomas, (2015)

These problems are often further compounded by the fact that this age group is much more likely to experience more than one risk factor at the same time. It is therefore imperative that strategies are put in place to support the development of inclusive communities that encourage participation for all older adults in order to increase levels of inclusivity and interaction before they impact negatively on an individual's quality of life. This will not only help to address problems associated with social isolation and loneliness (perhaps even before they start), but will also make our communities safer, friendlier and healthier places in which to grow old.

4. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOR OLDER PEOPLE

What is meant by 'community development'?

Community development is a methodology that empowers citizens by engaging them in collaborative community action. It aims to move away from needs-based approaches in which people are 'done to', instead embracing the concept that members of communities should be involved in the decisions that impact on their lives and in planning, developing and delivering services based on local need.

The following definition of community development brings together a number of key features building on Gilchrist and Taylor's review (2011), European Community Development Network (2014), and International Association for Community Development (2018):

Community development is a process where community members come together to find solutions to shared concerns that matter to them.

Its key purpose is to create a better overall life for everyone, through building communities based on justice, equality and mutual respect. It is concerned with changing power structures to remove barriers that prevent people from participating in the issues that affect their lives. The focus is on individuals, groups and networks that want or need to cooperate in order to achieve change at a local or community level.

The term community development can be used to describe an occupation, a way of working with communities, as well as a social movement.

For all circumstances, Gilchrist and Taylor (2011: 10-12) provide a useful framework to draw attention to three 'vital aspects' of community development:

- informal learning

- collective action

- organisation development

Informal learning takes place predominantly through direct involvement in community activities. This might be understood as a form of experience-based community education where participants try new activities, take on roles, and obtain feedback. In so doing this builds knowledge, skills and confidence that can support both personal and community growth.

Collective action involves finding the power of combined voices and determination; the strength of many people acting for their mutual benefit or to champion the interests of those who cannot stand up for themselves. A concern here is with the potential of social networks, and notably ideas linked to social capital. Drawing on the work of Putnam (1993), community development practice works with three forms of social capital: bonding capital that brings together close knit links between family and friends, bridging capital that links wider networks together, and linking capital that describe links that span different levels of power.

Organisation development consists of helping groups and bodies to evolve a form that enables the members to achieve their goals, to act legally and to be accountable to the membership and wider community. This work can be seen as following on from informal learning and collective action: where groups have reached a point where they are seeking to build more concerted and sustained forms of action that can benefit from a more formal footing.

There are a number of traditions of community development, each with somewhat different areas of concern. For example, 'community education' traditions clearly have a focus on processes of learning, while community organiser traditions might emphasise the importance of building resilient and inclusive groups to act on a cause. However – according to Gilchrist and Taylor – all forms of community development have a shared interest in the three vital aspects of informal learning, collective action and organisation development.

In recent years there have been efforts to promote a consensus around the core values, competencies, and codes of practice for community development. In the UK, the Community Learning and Development

Standards Council Scotland[1] (CLDSC, 2017) has been leading work in this area and has produced national occupational standards for the sector. Since 2016, CLDSC has also had an important influence on the development of shared international standards for community development practice. The International Standards for Community Development Practice (IACD, 2018) provide a set of work themes and key areas for practice.

Footnote: **1** In the UK, progress on common competencies and standards is more advanced in Scotland than other nations

Figure 1: Community Learning and Development Competency Framework (CLDSC, 2017)

Table 1: International Standards for Community Development Practice (IACD, 2018)

Themes	Key practice areas
Values into practice	Understand the values, processes and outcomes of community development, and apply these to practice in all the other key areas.
Engaging with communities	Understand and engage with communities, building and maintaining relationships with individuals and groups.
Participatory planning	Develop and support collaborative working and community participation
Organising for change	Enabling communities to take collective action, increase their influence and if appropriate their ability to access, manage and control resources and services.
Learning for change	Support people and organisations to learn together and to raise understanding, confidence and the skills for social change.
Diversity and inclusion	Design and deliver practices, policies, structures and programmes that recognise and respect diversity and promote inclusion
Leadership and infrastructure	Facilitate and support organisational development and infrastructure for community development, promoting and providing empowering leadership
Developing and improving policy and practice	Develop, evaluate and inform practice and policy for community development, using participatory evaluation to inform and improve strategic and operational practice

There are a number of different methods for developing communities, but one of the most commonly used in the BAB programme is asset based community development (often referred to as the 'ABCD' approach). In ABCD communities are encouraged to take stock of what already exists locally, what's working well and which resources are available. It moves away from identifying what is lacking locally and instead builds upon existing assets that can be used to benefit the community. These might include the skills and knowledge of local people, existing venues or connections between people or organisations (Sykes, 2012). Both empowerment and participation are seen as crucial elements in this approach (ibid).

Although there may be a level of consensus on the broad frameworks for community development, the field of practice faces a wide variety of challenges. In this section we focus on four of these: the (changing) nature of community; ideology and community development; status and recognition of practice; and demonstrating impact.

THE (CHANGING) NATURE OF COMMUNITY

As an idea, 'community' is both remarkably simple and remarkably complex. The use of the term in everyday use often conjures images of groups sharing a sense of belonging, experiencing a good life, or acting together in a joint cause. As a point of reference for policy and service development, measures to promote community life appear to be self-evident and offer straightforward appeal.

However, closer consideration shows that community is a difficult idea to define, particularly in the context of a changing social context. While 'place' and 'belonging' are regular features of definitions of community, many forms of community identity are not rooted in a locality and also can refer to matters of conflict, dissent or exclusion. With increasing spatial movement and more fluid identities it becomes less appropriate to operate in terms of discrete and coherent community groups. While these changes may be less 'new' than are commonly claimed, these narratives represent substantial value-based and practical challenges for practitioners who might be charged with prioritising action on some forms of community identification over others.

IDEOLOGY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Because it is strongly underpinned by social values and in particular, a concern with power, community development practice is inevitably politicised and is influenced by diverse theories of change. From a more radical perspective, the primary goals of community development should be concerned with tackling the causes of inequality and injustice. Here there is a clear preparedness to take an oppositional stance, with a view that it is not in the interests of

'power holders' to relinquish the status quo.

A second group of community development perspectives is directed towards rebalancing the system towards greater fairness and democratic influence. These liberal pluralist approaches acknowledge that society is made up of a variety of interest groups who organise collectively to compete for attention, influence and resources. Here the role of community development is directed at addressing structural inequalities and creating better opportunities for the inclusion of marginalised groups.

A final group of perspectives is orientated towards seeking to make existing structures operate better. Sometimes described as communitarian (Gilchrist and Taylor, 2011:22), there is an emphasis on enabling people to exercise rights and responsibilities without significantly challenging the existing social order. In this context community development often takes a light touch and might be one element in a package of interventions.

While this summary is simplistic, it indicates how community development initiatives can be oriented towards substantially different goals. A more complex understanding is to recognise that context is critical for community development practice: depending what is appropriate to the circumstance practitioners may find they need to adopt a strategy that is oppositional, negotiating or accommodating in character (Toomey, 2011).

STATUS AND RECOGNITION OF PRACTICE

There is a long standing debate on whether community development work should be seen as a profession (with all the attendant restrictions regarding entry qualifications and standards), or as a social movement, drawing upon a network of activists in which some

workers obtain payment for their work (Gilchrist and Taylor, 2011:117). The latter perspective reflects concerns with elitism, the exclusion of 'non-experts' and the exercise of professional power – a matter that community development practitioners have been critical of with respect to other public sector workers.

The counter to this has been that community development practice involves the exercise of complex judgements, specialist skills and concerted effort that is equivalent to other professions. However, the orientation of community workers towards communities and civil society sometimes places them at odds to the interests of statutory agencies, often the same bodies that authorise funding for community development. This boundary position – located between state and community – poses endemic challenges for practitioners in terms of role strain, accountability and mediation (Hoggett et al., 2009).

DEMONSTRATING IMPACT

There are a number of reasons why community development is difficult to evaluate in terms of impact. In contrast to structured interventions, community development initiatives evolve goals over time through dialogue and learning with community members, and such goals may be diverse, enmeshed with other activities, and occur beyond the term of the project (Blanke and Walzer, 2013). Indeed community development processes might be better understood as 'events in systems' rather than as 'causes and effects of interventions' (Hawe, et al., 2009). This poses a problem for statutory bodies seeking evidence of the effects of community development projects on public policy goals, such as improved health and wellbeing.

Several studies show that assessments of outcomes for project participants are feasible, but come with an evaluation burden that

requires careful justification (South et al., 2017). A general pattern in community development evaluations is to closely attend to how projects are implemented. This is predicated on a theory of change that proposes that processes – such as the quality of engagement with community members- are intimately tied to outcomes. Thus 'good processes' are a reasonable proxy for 'positive changes'. A further feature characteristic of community development evaluations is the emphasis on examining change for a range of stakeholders, and especially groups that experience social disadvantages.

To conclude, this section has considered some central aspects of community development theory and practice. In the UK, interest in and support for community development has oscillated over time. It has evolved in response to shifting policy debates, and recurrently resurfaces as a solution often to some of society's more intractable issues.

WHY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOR OLDER PEOPLE IN BRISTOL?

Bristol is the largest city in the South West, with a population that is predicted to reach half a million by 2027 (Bristol City Council, 2020). It has a BAME population of around 16%, which is higher than the UK average of 13.8% (Diversity UK, 2020). With its mix of young professionals and University students, it is no surprise that the mean age in the city in 2018 was 32.5 years, with those over 50 making up around 27% of the population and only 13% (around 60,000) were aged 65+ (Bristol City Council, 2018).

With a population as multicultural and diverse as Bristol's, areas of the city can also vary immensely in terms of levels of social deprivation. Often this means that lower income

wards sit side-by-side with more affluent areas, making providing uniform community activities that suit all ages, cultures, ethnicities and income levels extremely difficult, if not impossible. Community provision is therefore increasingly reliant on an understanding of local complexities, cultural implications and resident needs on a street-by-street basis.

Despite the city's younger demographic, we know that for those 27% in the older adult category factors associated with social isolation and loneliness can represent a significant threat to health and wellbeing. In recent years Bristol City Council (BCC) has recognised this, and in 2014 the council produced a social isolation summary report which recognised the benefits of preventative measures and of initiating support networks at an earlier age to ensure people stay connected as they grow old:

"By placing some emphasis on tackling social isolation among residents in their 50s and 60s, it may be possible to alleviate some of the detrimental health effects experienced by people as they get older."

BCC Social Isolation in Bristol, 2014

Subsequently, there has also been a strategic shift citywide away from the more traditional top-down approaches to community development that had previously been favoured towards an empowerment and participation model. With this shift in culture and in recognition of the city's diverse needs, community development for older people is seen as a crucial cornerstone of BAB and its partner organisations who are striving to make Bristol 'a brilliant place to grow old'.

Communities in transition
Bristol has been undergoing a period of rapid change in recent years, with many areas seeing a shift in local demographics, often associated with the gentrification of areas due to changing house prices and the relative affordability of local housing stock. This has implications for older people who have remained in the same area of the city for a long time and are therefore 'ageing in place' – that is, staying in their own homes within communities that they are familiar with as they age. Doing so can be beneficial to individuals in terms of maintaining independence, encouraging social activity and generally promoting healthy ageing (Sixsmith and Sixsmith, 2008) but when areas begin to change rapidly, older people can be left feeling disconnected from the previously familiar community around them (Woodspring, 2016). At the beginning of the BAB project, a number of recommendations were made regarding where efforts should be channelled to improve and innovate community provision for older people locally, and areas like this – so called 'communities in transition' - was one such recommendation (ibid). Old Market, Horfield (and part of Lockleaze) and Stockwood were all considered to be areas undergoing such a transition.

Areas of exceptional need
Areas that had previously suffered from a lack of investment – either by charitable organisations or from Bristol City Council – were identified as 'areas of exceptional need' for the BAB programme. Early asset mapping conducted by the Community Researchers in 2015 demonstrated that areas of both Greater Fishponds and Greater Brislington should be considered as having these exceptional needs (Woodspring, 2016).

BAB funded Community Development for Older People (CDOP) projects
The CDOP projects aimed to tackle the issues of loneliness and social isolation across ten communities within the City of Bristol, using various approaches to community development dependent on local need and existing services.

Different providers were invited to tender for the CDOP work in each area, using a 'test and learn' approach tailored to the local community receiving the intervention.

Much of this work involved utilising Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approaches that built on what already existed within a community, connecting groups and services and using them as effectively as possible (Klee, et al., 2014). Community development has therefore been integral to BAB since its inception and is a key element of the overall programme.

Bristol Ageing Better funded 10 projects focused on Community Development for Older People (CDOP). Although starting at different times within the Bristol Ageing Better programme, each of these projects received funding for between 2 - 3 years.

UWE Bristol and a team of 8 Community Researchers have undertaken an in-depth evaluation of 6 of these projects. They are: Greater Brislington (delivered by Bristol Charities), Horfield & Lockleaze (delivered by Buzz Lockleaze), Greater Fishponds (delivered by The Care Forum), Old Market and St Pauls (delivered by Livewest), Stockwood (delivered by St Monica Trust) and a city-wide 'strategic coordination' form of community development (delivered by LinkAge Network). The following initial findings and observations are based on these 6 projects.

5. THE TEST AND LEARN APPROACH

BAB recognised early on that community development projects would need an assets based approach that both recognised and met the changing needs of the older population of Bristol. There was not a universal solution, and as such each project's invitation to tender emphasised the importance of a 'test and learn' model in which different community development approaches and techniques are employed in a range of contexts in order to develop theories of best practice.

6. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The overarching aim of the evaluation of BAB CDOP projects was to explore the elements of what constitutes good community development for older people. In this context, the following research questions were used to inform and guide the direction and focus of the evaluation:

1. What is the added value that the project brings to community development activity in selected areas of Bristol?
2. What is the perceived effectiveness of the training, support and networking offered through the project?
3. What is the role of the project in changing local area and city-wide decision making on issues for older people and their communities?
4. What are the key successful elements of the project's model for community development coordination?
5. What aspects of project activity are associated with core BAB outcomes for older people? [Focus on isolation, loneliness, community activity, and decision-making]

However, at the heart of all the CDOP evaluations is the overarching primary research question:

"What does good community development for older people look like?"

This, therefore, guided the evaluation process above all other sub-research questions.

7. METHODS

Each CDOP project was assigned a Community Researcher or Researchers (CR) to conduct the evaluation, and each evaluation used a range of methods. CRs came from a variety of backgrounds and were all in the older age group themselves, enabling them to conduct peer led research, often utilising and building on the skills that they had accumulated in their professional lives.

Although overall this was a mixed methods evaluation, the work conducted by the CRs was largely qualitative in nature and consisted of both fieldwork (including informal interviews, meetings and ethnographic observations) and the analysis of some project documentation and monitoring data. There was however a quantitative element to the evaluations, and in some cases budgets were examined and project data studied. CRs were encouraged to play to their strengths and to use their personal and life skills to evaluate each project, with the support of researchers at UWE where needed.

The analysis of Common Measurement Framework (CMF) forms was largely conducted by the UWE team, although the basic data for each project was made available to CRs throughout the evaluation period.

Before work on the evaluations began in earnest, an evaluation plan was agreed between UWE, the CRs and the project. The methods of analysis were therefore agreed as follows for each project:

Analysis of records linked to the project
CDOP projects were required to report on a quarterly basis to BAB, and each project also created a variety of records concerned with, for example, project planning and delivery; external communications; feedback from partners; best practice and case studies. Within the conditions of Data Protection and ethical conduct (see BAB Evaluation Research Ethics) the evaluation team used this information (where available) to conduct a desk-based analysis of the information to identify key characteristics of the key activities and the project overall. This analysis was used to inform an overall account of the process and impacts of the project.

CMF (Common Measurement Framework) reporting on changes for older people linked to project activities
The CMF is a nationally designed recording and measurement set of tools for individual participants in National Lottery Community Funded Ageing Better programmes – of which BAB is a part. The CMF consists of a registration form for demographic details and baseline and follow-up questionnaires used to assess social isolation, loneliness and a range of other health, wellbeing and social indicators. 9 of the 10 CDOP projects were required to use the CMF as part of their BAB contract. While broad targets were set at the beginning, agencies needed to adapt their use depending upon the specific features of their work.

Process evaluation of selected aspects of community development coordination
As a rough guide, the CRs working on the evaluation of the CDOP projects were asked to undertake fieldwork and research according to the following framework:

1. Minimum 2 ethnographic observations of CDOP project work (for example, observation at classes and activities provided)

2. Interviews, focus groups and/or informal conversations with minimum 6 older people, volunteers and/or wider stakeholders (including BAB and non-BAB agency workers).

3. Interviews (and potentially focus groups) with lead staff working on the project activity

4. Analysis of project records.

From this CRs were asked to analyse their findings and develop a narrative account of the development, implementation and perceived impacts of project activities. This document is a summary of their individual evaluations, but each CR team produced an in-depth, longer analysis for each CDOP project. Links to these reports can be found after each project summary in section 2.

Evaluation of the project's role in training, support and networking
As part of the evaluation plan, each delivery partner was also required to participate in the research. Their role in delivering training, support and networking opportunities was therefore evaluated through:

1. Review of project delivery records and feedback records from participants in CDOP events

2. Interviews/email/online feedback from a sample of participants and wider stakeholders.

3. Interviews with CDOP project staff and BAB staff.

These data were thematically analysed and summarised with selective quotes from participants for the purposes of each CDOP project evaluation report.

2. Summary of CDOP evaluation findings ≫

2.1 IMPACTS OF THE CDOP PROJECTS FOR PARTICIPANTS

Introduction

This section gives an overview of the characteristics of people taking part in the CDOP projects. It presents evidence on whether the projects succeeded in reaching and engaging key groups. The section then analyses the role of the changes for participants in terms of social isolation and loneliness, health and wellbeing and social engagement.

Overview of participants in CDOP projects

Between June 2017 and January 2020, the total number of people recorded as taking part in CDOP projects was 7,894. This figure represents 34% of participants for the BAB programme as a whole.

Of these, 760 registered their demographic details and 233 completed baseline and follow-up questionnaires, a return rate of 30.7%.

The breakdown of participants by gender was 74.6% female, 22.5% male, and 2.8% other/prefer not to say/no response (n=760). The percentage of females was higher (69.2%) than that of the BAB programme overall.

The ages of participants ranged from 42 to 100, with an average age of 70.8 years.

Based on postcode of residence, participants tended to live in areas of higher multiple deprivation (71%, n=453, living in top five deciles for the Index of Multiple Deprivation).

In terms of ethnicity, 73.2% (n=564) identified themselves as "White English/Scottish/Welsh/Northern Irish/UK" or other "White" groups, and 19.4% (n=148) across a range of other ethnic identities[1]. For religion 56.3% (n=428) identified themselves as Christian; 18% (n=137) as no religion; and 7% (n=53) as Muslim. The remaining 4% (n=46) were from a range of religions (e.g. Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh)[2].

For the records of 760 participants, 42% were living alone, 31.5% were living with a spouse, 12.9% were living with family, and 3.4% were living in residential care. In total 43.6% had a long-standing illness or disability and 21.7% had carer responsibilities.

### Methods for assessing outcomes

Measures
Outcome based questionnaires were developed as part of the national Ageing Better programme (the Common Measurement Framework), and termed "Wellbeing Questionnaires" in the BAB programme. Participants completing baseline

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Footnotes: **1** Missing data or prefer not to say for 48 individuals
2 Missing data or prefer not to say for 96 individuals
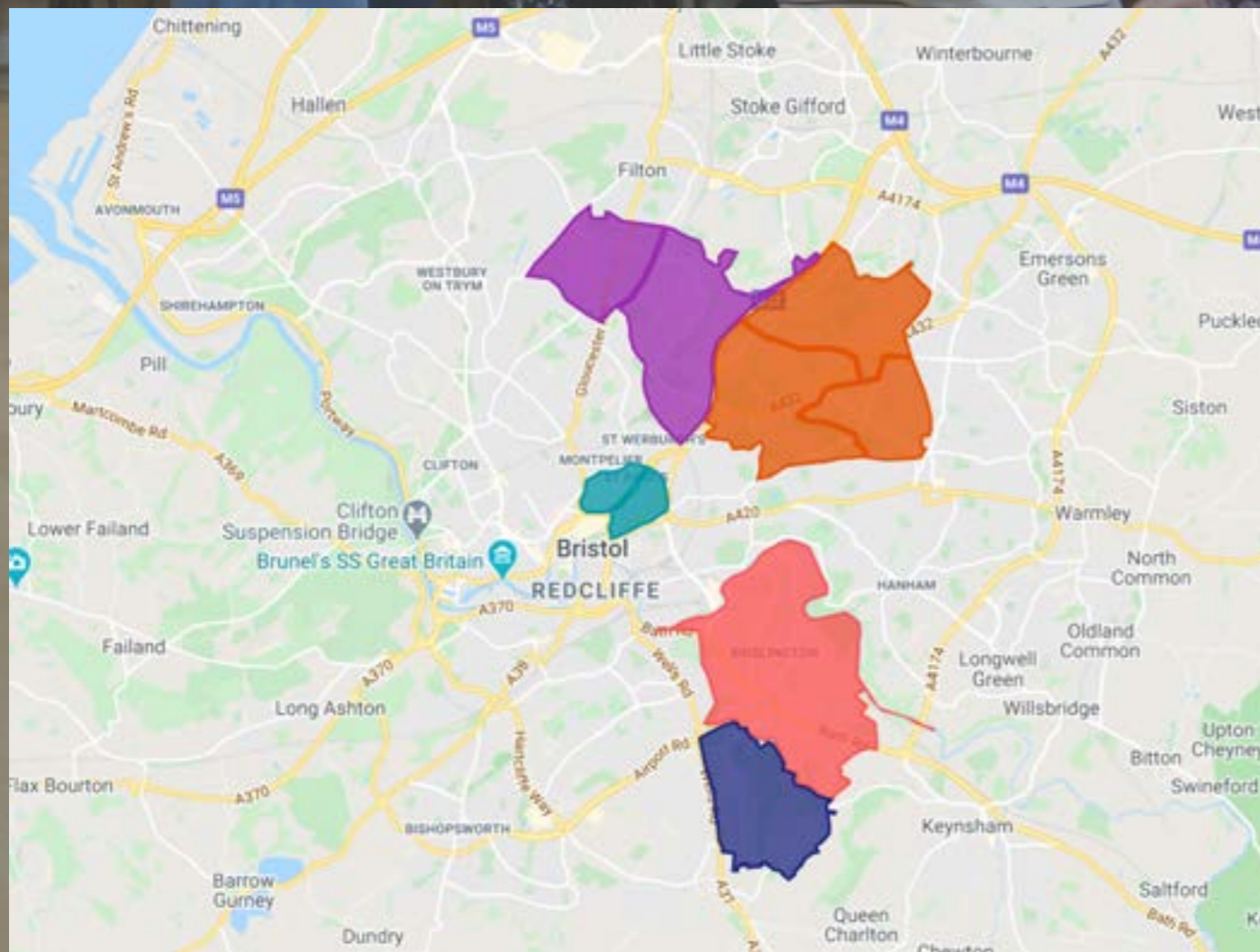
and follow-up questionnaires responded to questions using twelve sets of validated measures. These are:

1. Loneliness: De Jong Gierveld (DjG) 6-item scale

2. Loneliness: UCLA 3-item scale

3. Social contact with children, family or friends

4. Social contact with anyone who is not a family member

5. Social participation: membership of clubs, organisations and societies

6. Social participation: comparison with others

7. Activities involved in (Co-design)

8. Volunteering and unpaid help

9. Ability to influence local decisions

10. Wellbeing: SWEMWBS

11. Quality of Life: EQ 5D 3L

12. Health score: EQ VAS

Administration

CDOP project staff, with the assistance of BAB staff and BAB Community Researchers were the main administrators of the baseline questionnaires. All administrators received training on how to complete the questionnaires. Participants were provided with an option to complete the questionnaires by post through direct contact with BAB staff. Of those who responded, 17% (n=130) had some form of assistance to complete the baseline questionnaire. Projects varied in the number of returned completed questionnaires, with the Greater Brislington project completing the largest number.

Analysis

Completed questionnaires were returned for data entry at the BAB office. BAB staff used the Ecorys Ageing Better online system to enter the data, with an SPSS software dataset then downloaded for analysis by the UWE team.

The primary outcomes of interest were loneliness and social isolation. However, given the focus of the CDOP projects, outcomes linked to social participation, involvement and influence were also important areas of focus.

We used a number of statistical techniques to analyse the data dependent upon the type of measure and the distribution of the data. Results were tested at the standard level of significance ($p<0.05$), the higher level of significance ($p<0.001$) noted where appropriate. Where the result 'p' value was lower than 0.05 it is unlikely to have occurred by chance. However, it should be noted that a statistically significant difference does not necessarily show a difference that is meaningful from the perspective of participants, practitioners or decision makers.

Reach and engagement: addressing social isolation and loneliness

At baseline, the scores for the 0-6 DjG loneliness scale show a mean of 2.85. This is a somewhat lower level of loneliness than that for the BAB programme overall (3.37) and the national Ageing Better programme overall (3.2). Almost one third of participants (31%) scored as intensely lonely, 19% moderately lonely and 50% not lonely.

Intensely lonely (5-6) 31%

Not lonely (0-2) 50%

Moderately lonely (3-4) 19%
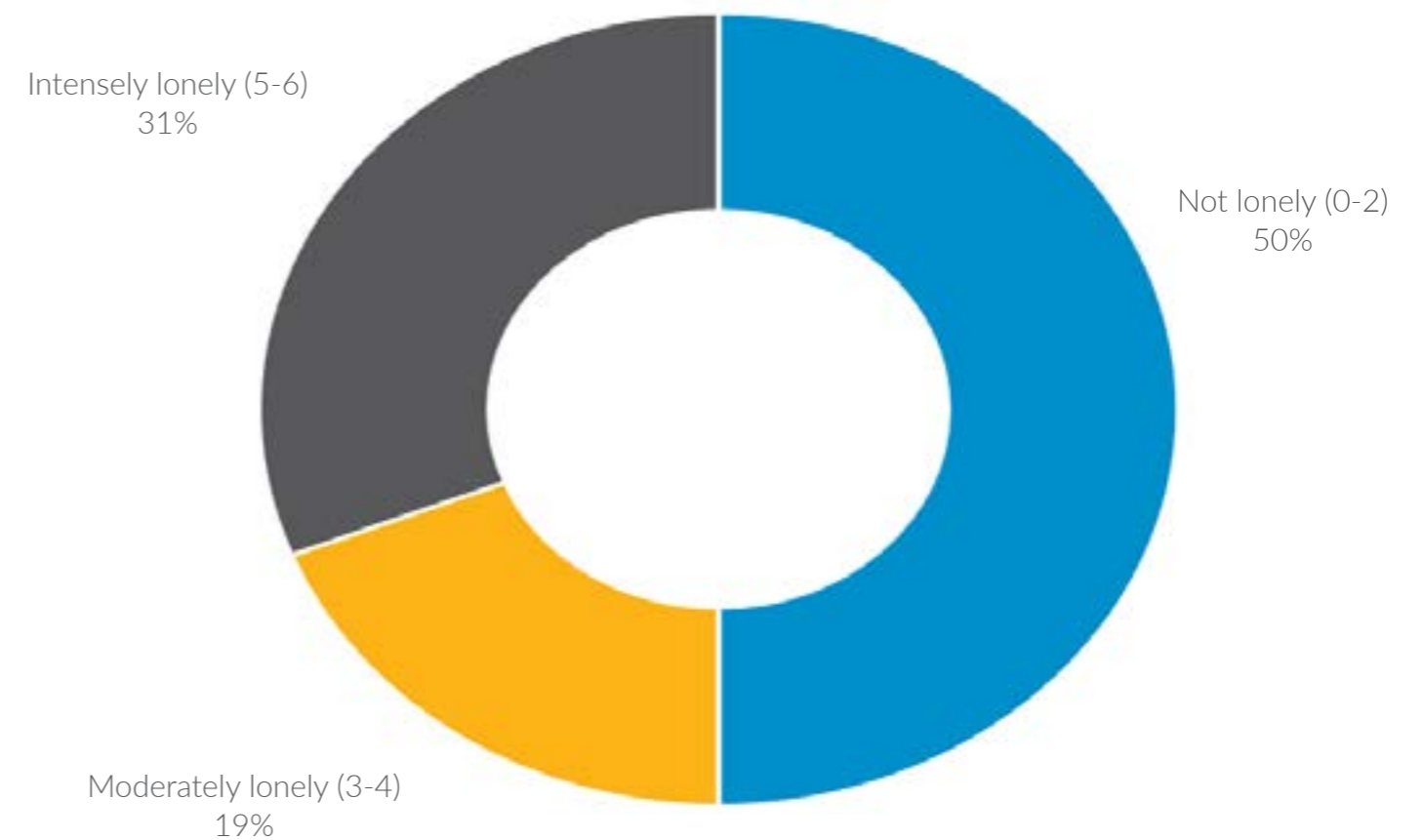
The UCLA 3-item loneliness scale gives a scale with a possible range of 3 to 9. For participants in CDOP projects 56.3% (n=107) scored between 3 and 5, which is classified as 'not lonely'; 43.7% (n=83) score between 6 and 9, which is classified as 'lonely'. While the DjG and UCLA score classifications are somewhat different, they show a similar profile for the participants. The data provides evidence that the projects were reaching individuals that were the focus for the BAB programme, bearing in mind that the CDOP projects were all designed to work with a range of older people rather than a focus only on those experiencing loneliness.

Outcomes for participants

Table 2 presents a summary of the outcomes for CDOP project participants alongside the outcomes for the BAB programme as a whole and the national Ageing Better programme. At baseline, the overall pattern is that participants in CDOP projects were - on average - scoring somewhat better scores for health, wellbeing and social connections, and were less isolated than the averages at city and national levels.

For the primary outcome, the UCLA measure shows that there was a statistically significant improvement in scores for social and emotional

loneliness. With the means dropping from 5.12 to 4.80, this equates to a shift from 'lonely' to 'not lonely ' for the group as a whole. This shift was supported through further analysis of the variance of scores shown in figure 3.

The DjG loneliness measure did not show the same change. This is likely to be due to the different properties of the measure and the scoring system.

The other measures show statistically significant positive changes for wellbeing and health (EQVAS). There are also positive changes for social contact with family and non- family members; social participation in clubs etc; participation in social activities; involvement in activities and ability to influence decisions. It is notable that for social contact with children, family and friends and for co-design, the CDOP outcomes are stronger than for the BAB programme as a whole.

Across the page
Table 2: Outcomes for participants in the CDOP projects, alongside outcomes for participants in BAB overall and the national Ageing Better programme.

Area of measurement	Measure	**CDOP** No of matched pairs	Baseline mean	Follow up mean	Significance (p value)	**BAB Programme Overall** No of matched pairs	Baseline mean	Follow up mean	Significance (p value)	**National Ageing Better** No of matched pairs	Baseline mean	Follow up mean
Social and emotional isolation	DEJONG	166	2.85	2.75	0.506 #	753	3.37	3.16	**0.001**	8290	3.2	2.9
Social and emotional isolation	UCLA	190	5.12	4.80	**0.003 ***	897	5.66	5.35	**0.000**	8277	5.5	5.1
Social contact with children, family, friends	CONTACT	168	3.52	3.66	**0.020**	808	3.27	3.30	0.442	8059	3.00	2.89
Social contact with non-family members	SPEAK-LOCAL	222	7.00	7.31	**0.001**	1020	6.70	6.82	**0.033**	9576	6.68	6.89
Social participation in clubs etc	SOCIAL-SCORE	206	1.74	1.94	**0.020**	966	1.35	1.52	**0.000**	9477	1.1	1.3
Taking part in social activities	TAKEPART	221	1.70	1.88	**0.026**	1015	1.40	1.58	**0.000**	9456	1.49	1.73
Co-design. Activities involved in	INVOLVED	217	1.14	1.40	**0.006**	843	1.02	1.10	**0.082**	-	-	-
Ability to influence local decisions	INFLUENCE	236	2.88	3.19	**0.003**	915	2.85	3.00	**0.004**	-	-	-
Volunteering, unpaid help	HELP	214	1.67	1.85	0.127	981	1.26	1.41	**0.002**	-	-	-
Wellbeing	SWEMWBS	190	22.43	23.37	**0.003**	865	21.10	22.18	**0.000**	8493	21.5	22.9
Health/Quality of Life	EQ5DIndex	209	0.73561	0.74215	0.632	787	0.64932	0.66762	**0.042**	4485	0.61	0.63
Health	EQVAS	222	68.42	73.00	**0.000**	828	62.41	67.31	**0.000**	4477	63.05	67.00

* Significant change. Confirmed with a Wilcoxon Signed Rank test (p=0.006)
\# No significant change. Confirmed with a Wilcoxon Signed Rank test (p=0.461)

Statistically significant positive change highlighted in red

Figure 3: Change in UCLA scores by type (decrease, no change, increase)
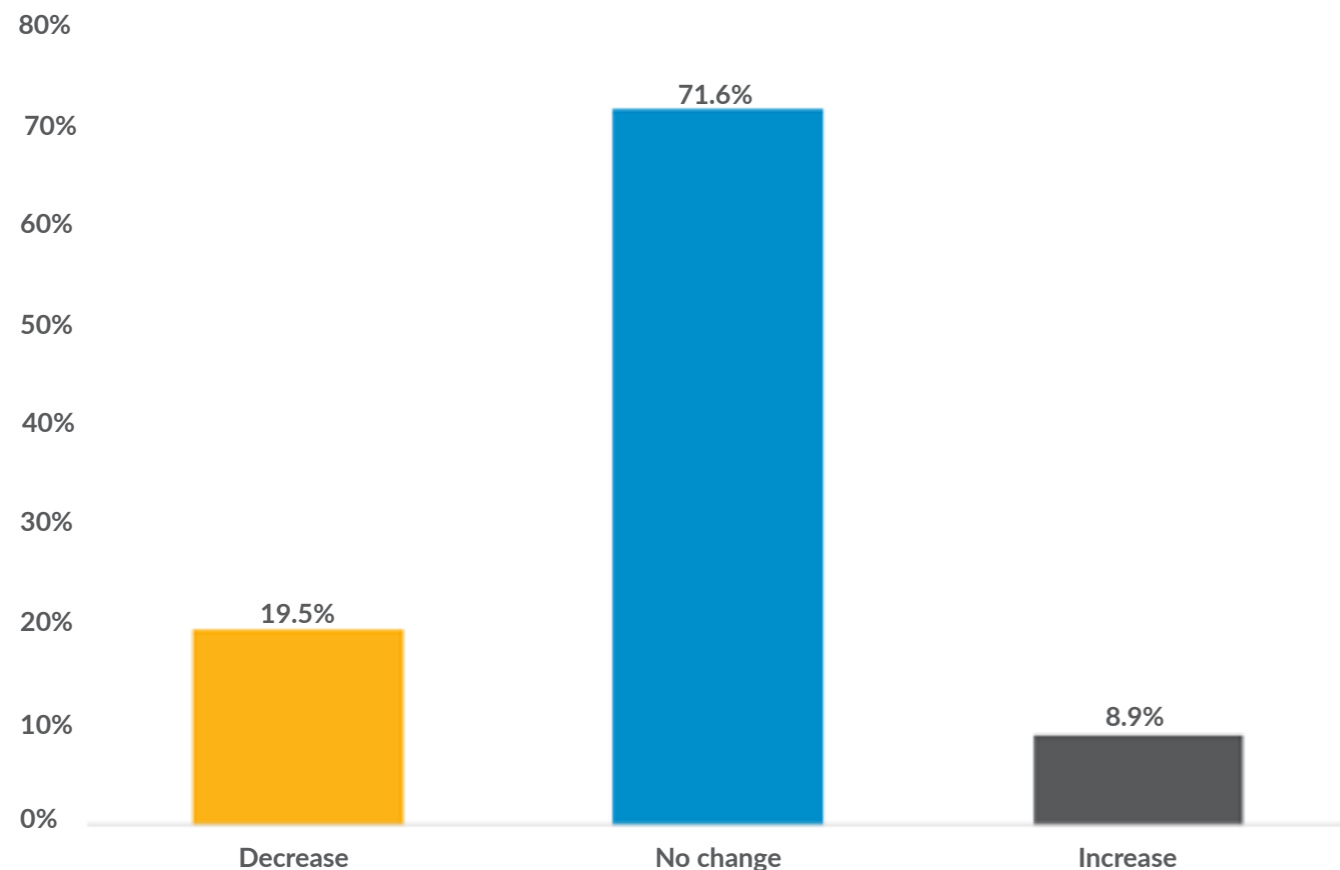
In summary

The CDOP projects were successful in engaging a large number of participants in their projects, although we do not have evidence of registration from the majority reported in monitoring returns to BAB.

There were wide variations between projects in the completion of registration forms and wellbeing questionnaires. Some variations are clearly a consequence of the project model. For example, the LinkAge Network project was not primarily engaged in direct work with groups of community participants, whereas the Greater Brislington project was heavily activity focused. However, low data returns from some projects appear to be due to issues with project planning, delivery and skills, as well as value-based objections and ethical concerns with the use

of questionnaires in community development practice.

CDOP projects have had some success in reaching out and engaging older people who report high levels of isolation and loneliness. The overall patterns show that participants have a range of social needs and reflect some priority groups for the programme.

Analysis shows that there were statistically significant improvements (i.e. improvements unlikely to have occurred by chance) for:

- loneliness,

- wellbeing,

- general health,

- social contact and participation,

- co-production and influence of decision–making.

This pattern of change supports the broader theory of change for the CDOP projects where, in particular, it was hypothesised that greater opportunities for social engagement and control over decision-making would underpin positive changes for health and wellbeing - and reduced social and emotional loneliness.

2.2 GREATER BRISLINGTON

Delivery partner: Bristol Charities

Key project staff: Community Development Worker (CDW); Senior Development Manager (SDM)

Community researchers: Christopher Orlik and Carol Fry

Project overview: Bristol Charities community development project in Brislington aimed to involve local people in shaping the activities and events. The project worked closely with other local organisations by supporting them to make funding applications and promotion of the groups. Local people were invited to join an over 50s forum where they could give their input and contribute to shaping the activities in the area. The project produced a booklet with details of all the activities going on in the area for older people, which was made available at libraries, GP surgeries and community venues throughout the ward. Other key activities included taster days and the production of a toilet map. The CDW led the project with the support of the SDM.

Successes

Publications and publicity
One of the greatest successes of the Brislington CDOP project has been the 'what's on' guide produced by the Community Development Worker (CDW). The CDW has clearly been committed to publicising the guide by leafleting every home in Greater Brislington, telling people about the booklet and asking people to contact him if they would like one. This strategy appears to have been effective in both saving on the cost of unnecessary printing and in spreading the word about the booklet's existence.

Since the booklet was first published in July 2018, it has been updated five times. This

commitment to keeping the information up to date and to establishing the booklet as a reliable source of information has increased its readership and credibility locally, however there are concerns for the future of the publication if no one is found to continue this work. There is also a clear need for someone to co-ordinate and source potential advertisers, as revenue raised through advertising in the booklet is the key to sustainable publication of the information. There is therefore a danger that the booklet will no longer be updated or reprinted due to a lack of resources going forward.

The production of a toilet map for Greater Brislington is another success for the project and predated Bristol Council's eventual production of their own citywide toilet map. It is a welcome resource, not only to the older generation, but to wider members of the community, such as those with young children or disabilities.

Taster Days
The CDW ran two taster days, which were well attended and did result in some people taking up activities that they had not done before. However, this is another outcome that is difficult to quantify as attendees at activities were not asked where they had heard of the class or why they were attending.

It is clear however that taster days are an excellent opportunity to showcase what is available locally, and attendance at the second of the two days was very positive. Venue, publicity and the weather all had an impact on turnout, but it is clear that perseverance and commitment to trying a range of strategies as part of the test and learn approach has been beneficial to the project.

Activities available
As with all of the CDOP projects across the BAB programme, the Greater Brislington project has demonstrated a need to provide a range of activities for all 'older' age groups. It is clear that

What's on Guide Greater Brislington 2019

Community Groups & Activities

Produced by the Greater Brislington Over 50's Project

BRISTOL CHARITIES

COMMUNITY FUND

within the category of those aged 50+ there are at least two sub-age groups (perhaps best referred to as the 'younger old' and the 'older old'), within which exist a range of mobilities, interests and levels of health and fitness. At one end of this spectrum are the younger, more active people for whom activities such as the Twalkers group proved popular, and it may even be the case that there is a need for more activities for this younger cohort. The lunch clubs, on the other hand, seem to cater for those primarily aged 75 and up, for many of whom the club was there main point of social contact.

The project has therefore demonstrated the clear need to cater for the sub-age groups when planning activities for older people, the youngest of whom may not even identify as belonging to the broader 'older' category at all. We did not examine in detail the differences between activities that are available to men and women in the area, and generally men and women

attended most activities. However, other areas have been able to specifically target the particularly isolated group of older men through activities such as men's sheds, and this may be something to develop further in the future.

Staffing and Management
Another successful element of the project has been the well-defined management and support structure within the organisation of Bristol Charities. It was clear that the CDW felt well supported in his role and was provided with effective line management by his employer. The SDM was also always available to the researchers and this consistency in management and staffing has no doubt contributed to the continuity of the standard of the service delivered.

Experienced community development worker
Further to the organisational support and support of the SDM, the CDW was able to bring a wealth of community development expertise

to the role. He has had a clear strategy from the start, and little time appears to have been wasted on unnecessary activities or indecision. The CDW has fully embraced the 'test and learn' model and has not been afraid to try new activities, or to let them fail when necessary.

Challenges

Transport and mobility
During the course of the fieldwork, researchers learned that transport is a big issue for participants and is a problem that is not particular to the older population or even to the Brislington area specifically. Transport infrastructure across the city is problematic for all ages across most areas, with the majority of bus services in Bristol following main roads. This is inconvenient for the more mobile, but is often prohibitive for older or less mobile citizens. Bus services in Brislington are limited, with only one bus serving Sandy Park and Broomhill. Although all the activities take place within a mile of

Sandy Park, there are no direct bus routes from there to many of the locations.

One suggestion for mitigating this lack of flexible transport options is a volunteer driving scheme, although this carries with it a number of inherent problems, such as obtaining suitable insurance. It also requires mainly retired people with their own transport to give up their time in order to pick up and collect local people. This can be an inconsistent and erratic voluntary role and the CDW expressed concern when interviewed by the CRs about the popularity of such a scheme for potential volunteers. However, based on our conversations with participants it appears that if problems with transport could be overcome then participation at events could be increased.

Reaching and supporting lonely and socially isolated older people
The most significant challenge to the success of this project – as with the rest of the BAB programme – has been successfully reaching lonely and socially isolated older people. For every person attending groups it is likely that there are many others living in households where they feel isolated and unable to attend activities for a variety of reasons.

Although great efforts were made by Bristol Charities to distribute promotional materials as far and wide as possible, inevitably there will be members of the over 50s community who do not have the motivation or resources (physical, practical or emotional) to attend activities. It may also be the case that some do not want or need such services and may stay at home and not engage with services as a conscious choice.

In other parts of the city BAB has paid for Community Navigators. The CDW in Greater Brislington has made informal attempts to set up community navigators and has also begun advertising a 'Good Neighbour Scheme', but unfortunately the success of both of these

initiatives has so far been limited. The CDW has advertised to find volunteers who can be matched with isolated elderly people, but has so far had more success in sourcing volunteers than in finding beneficiaries. The problem as always is that many people living alone - perhaps either through choice or apprehension - do not take up offers like these. This may be due to pride in not wanting to seek help or accept what they perceive to be 'charity', or it may be that they do not recognise themselves as potential recipients of such as service.

Funding and sustainability
The CDW has been proactive in building in sustainability from the start of the project, and many of the activities and project outputs are likely to be successfully sustained beyond the life of the project as a result. However, as the project enters its final stages, attendees at all activities will need to be proactive in encouraging their friends and neighbours to participate in activities on offer in order for them to remain sustainable into the future. The engagement of local people in order to continue the work of the CDW will also be crucial in terms of longevity of the project outputs.

The CDW has also successfully established a number of partnerships with local agencies, and these will also be key to sustaining projects into the future.

In summary

The evaluation of the Greater Brislington CDOP project has uncovered a number of successful approaches to community development for older people that could now easily be transferred to other parts of the city and beyond. Many of these are based on a format that can be adapted to any area, namely the production of a 'what's on' guide, toilet maps and the Good Neighbour Scheme. Other activities are clearly more dependent on local need, and having a regular meeting at which older people can be consulted

about what they want and need within their communities is a key element to addressing this need.

Many of the successes of the project have evolved through embracing the test and learn approach, and this has clearly been a good starting point for initiating activities for this age group. It is also worth considering the needs of sub-populations within this demographic, as it is clear that not everyone over the age of 50 has the same interests or desired platforms for social interaction. Further experimental aspects of the project – such as producing leaflets to dispel myths about activities or to encourage tradespeople to spot when an older person is isolated – are clearly also showing positive early results.

Many of the challenges that the project has faced have largely been beyond its control, such as transport and cuts to funding. However, the CDW and SDM have done their best to mitigate these or to try ways of improving the situation for local people. Where the project has faced these issues – for example the closure of publicly funded toilets – the CDW has done his best to deal with the consequences and to find workarounds (such as the toilet map).

The strong managerial structure, organisational support and lack of staff turnover within the project have allowed consistency throughout the life of the project. As a result the CDW has been able to build sustainability in from the outset, and it is hoped now that members of the community can take ownership of the clubs, events and activities that have been developed through the project in order to continue them into the future.

2.3 HORFIELD & LOCKLEAZE

Delivery partner: Buzz Lockleaze CIC

Key project staff: Business Manager (BM); Horfield Community Engagement Worker (HCEW) Lockleaze Community Engagement Worker (LCEW)

Community researchers: Jan Fullforth, Jill Turner and Eddy Knasel

Project overview: Buzz Lockleaze CIC is a consortium made up of four local delivery partners, all of whom are based in the area of Lockleaze. The project employed two engagement workers, one for each area. The two wards differ greatly in demographics, geography and layout of local amenities, meaning that a two-pronged approach was necessary.

Working across the neighbouring areas of Horfield and Lockleaze, the project took an asset based community development (ABCD) approach and both engagement workers engaged in door knocking activities in the area, as well as providing taster days for activities. A number of local venues and assets were included in the project and much work was done to create solid connections with local providers.

Activities included an animation workshop, craft group and numerous one-off events. A taxi service was also established in order to break down transport barriers for some older people living locally.

Successes

Early asset-mapping and outreach activity
There has clearly been a lot of activity over the course of this project in both wards, with good progress made towards addressing the needs of local older people in some areas. Much progress

was made in year one towards establishing strong connections with local people and organisations within the neighbourhoods of both Horfield and Lockleaze. This led to a number of venues connecting with the project and strong relationships being established.

Aspects of assets-based community development have been employed in both wards, and both workers spent much of their first year in post creating a list of local venues, organisations, existing groups and interested people. Attempts were also made in the first year to connect with local people through door-knocking activity.

The first Horfield Community Engagement Worker (HCEW)'s work in establishing effective working relationships with local community groups is clearly influenced by the assumption that firm foundations in the community are a prerequisite for later innovation. There is therefore good evidence from this period of the project that significant efforts were being made to work with the community to connect and mobilise existing assets in the area of Horfield.

Lockleaze is perhaps more fortunate than Horfield in the sense that it benefits from a geographical layout that lends itself more favourably to community activity, centring as it does around Gainsborough Square. This inevitably made using the assets available easier in Lockleaze, whereas Horfield's assets are more sparsely distributed and spread sporadically across the ward. Additionally there are simply fewer organisations within the boundaries of the latter with which to work.

Whilst there is evidence that some door knocking activity took place in Horfield, and whilst good connections were established by the HCEW and Lockleaze Community Engagement Worker (LCEW) with various local community assets in the first year, it is unclear whether a full asset mapping exercise was undertaken by the

project. However, asset mapping was clearly a priority for the project in year one, and there is good evidence that the HCEW in particular was able to make contact with various local venues and their leaders in order to begin to connect up local assets within that community.

Overall, some strong relationships were forged within the local community in the early stages of the project, laying the groundwork for future community building.

Transport
A taxi service was established in the area in an attempt to break down transport barriers that stop some older people from attending community activities. Whilst this was not sustainable in the longer term, it provided a good interim solution to what amounts to a significant issue for many older people.

Taster days and one-off events
The taster days and one-off events that were held in year one in particular were both popular and effective ways of introducing the project and potential activities to local older people. These events were largely well attended and had good engagement from the local community.

Passionate and knowledgeable community development workers
It was obvious from conversations and interviews with project staff throughout the

project that they were knowledgeable, skilled and passionate about community development. Even towards the end of the project and with no time left to establish new activities, the second HCEW and the VC were both able to forge strong relationships with various organisations in order to keep some momentum going.

Strong connections to other elements of the BAB programme
Applications to the Community Kick Start Fund led to the establishment of the animation workshops and craft groups, both of which were successful in engaging members of the community in some regular activities. The more successful groups appeared to be those that took a more intergenerational approach and invited attendance from the wider community.

Buzz Lockleaze CIC was also in a strong position to signpost members of the community to additional support given that they were also

awarded the contract for the BAB funded Community Navigators scheme in the North of the City.

Challenges

Staff turnover
Staffing issues affected the project at various times during the funded period, and there were significant disruptions to delivery as a result. Given that the project was restricted to three years funding at the outset, to be beset by numerous staffing and capacity issues was significantly detrimental to maintaining consistency of service. The high levels of staff turnover contributed to a lack of continuity at various points in the project which sadly frustrated the otherwise good progress being made.

The loss of both development workers and of the project manager at different time points resulted in major disruptions, from which the project never fully recovered. The lack of an effective handover when new staff were eventually appointed meant that to all intents and purposes the groundwork was lost with the result that much of Year Three was essentially a catch-up exercise with the new staff given the task of achieving as much as they could in the final year of the contract.

Staff absences could have been better managed as there were significant gaps between replacing these workers with new staff. This is of course understandable in the case of a member of staff being signed off sick, as replacing them is not straightforward for a small organisation whose budgets are already tight. However, there was also little or no handover between the staff originally working on the project and their successors. The resulting hiatus in project work meant that the second HCEW had to start again from scratch without any prior knowledge of what the first HCEW had managed to achieve. Holding documentation centrally in an easily

accessible place could have mitigated this.

Organisational structure
Further compounding progress was an apparent lack of hierarchical leadership within the wider organisation after the Business Manager left the project and wasn't replaced. Although an interim manager was found from with Buzz Lockleaze CIC, it was clear that due to her commitment to the wider endeavours of the project (including the BAB funded Community Navigators scheme, as well as other activities unrelated to the BAB programme) she had limited knowledge of the CDOP work and was already working at full capacity on these other projects. This was no reflection on the managerial capabilities of the individual concerned, but she clearly did not have the capacity to take a lead on this additional area of work.

Working and consulting with local older people
It is difficult to assess the extent to which the project worked and consulted with older people about what they would like to see happen in the community given that there was no formalised consultation group. Although the project had intended to establish a steering group, this struggled to get off the ground. Following initial failed attempts, subsequent references to a steering group made it clear that it had been substituted for smaller groups on a less ambitious scale, which did not appear to be comparable to the more influential steering groups in other CDOP areas.

With the steering group never becoming successfully established, there was no formalised way for older people to have a voice in their community on a regular basis, or to truly help shape community development for older people in the area.

Community in transition
Despite the early recommendations made by Woodspring (2016) that Horfield be an area of focus due to its rapidly changing identity, there doesn't appear to have been a specific piece of work targeting this in practice. Given this focus and the initial progress that was made by the first HCEW in the Horfield area, it is again a shame that the momentum was lost and that there was a hiatus of seven months with no one leading on this work.

It would have been especially useful to have established a steering group or consultation process within the Horfield area in order to deal with concerns within the community associated with the changing make-up of the community. However, it was pleasing to see some intergenerational work being established through activities such as animation workshops which were initiated by older people but attended by people from different age groups.

Project focus
Whilst Horfield and Lockleaze may be neighbouring wards, they differ greatly in terms of both demographics and the layout of local amenities. The project quite rightly approached them as two distinct entities and recognised that a different approach would be needed in each area. This worked very well during the periods when two workers were in post, but again the disruptions to staffing meant that at times in the project one worker was having to cover for the other's area. Not only did this mean an entirely different way of working with a different community, but also that there was insufficient time to cover both wards meaning that the work in one was either diluted or paused.

The layout of the areas inevitably presented challenges in terms of organising activities, and it appeared that after year one activity tended to centre more on Lockleaze due to its central focal point of Gainsborough Square and the surrounding venues, such as the Buzz Café and the Hub. This, accompanied by the suspension in activity in Horfield due to staffing problems, led the evaluation team to believe that Lockleaze had become the focus of all project work in the latter stages of the project.

The composition of the consortium
All of the organisations and projects named in Buzz CIC's successful bid for this CDOP project were based on Gainsborough Square in the heart of Lockleaze, and it is therefore curious given the project's focus on the two wards that the consortium did not include any group operating in Horfield.

The overall structure of Buzz CIC therefore made the work in Horfield challenging from the outset given that it did not include any organisation from the Horfield area in its consortium.

Record keeping and documentary evidence
A particular challenge in evaluating this project was the lack of documentary evidence available for Years 2 and 3. Additionally, gaining access to service users and workers proved equally difficult at times and resulted in confusion and a lack of clarity regarding what could be evidenced. The reasons for this lack of documentation have been made clear in previous sections, but occasionally staff were also difficult to get hold of and did not always reply to emails from the evaluation team in a timely manner.

Project legacy and sustainability
Towards the end of the project it was clear from our interviews with the HCEW and VC that staff were passionate about the project, with some exciting ideas for taking it forward. However, again there were frustrations that they had come into the project so late and as a result had little time to start new activities or to make any lasting changes. Despite this, the enthusiasm with which the remaining workers were approaching the project at the end of the funding period was encouraging, and if the groups are able to find a way to be sustained beyond the life of the BAB funding period then there is likely to be some positive legacy from the project.

In summary

Whilst this project benefited from the skill sets of various workers throughout the project, inconsistencies with the management of staff, poor record keeping and a lack of contingency planning for staff absences were a barrier to any consistent and sustained progress being made. The early work of the HCEW and LCEW demonstrated the importance of laying the groundwork for good community development work by establishing strong community connections, even though in both cases momentum was lost at various time points. However, as the focus of BAB projects is on test-and-learn approaches, these findings can make a valuable contribution in terms of how future community development for older people projects might be designed, commissioned and implemented in similar contexts.
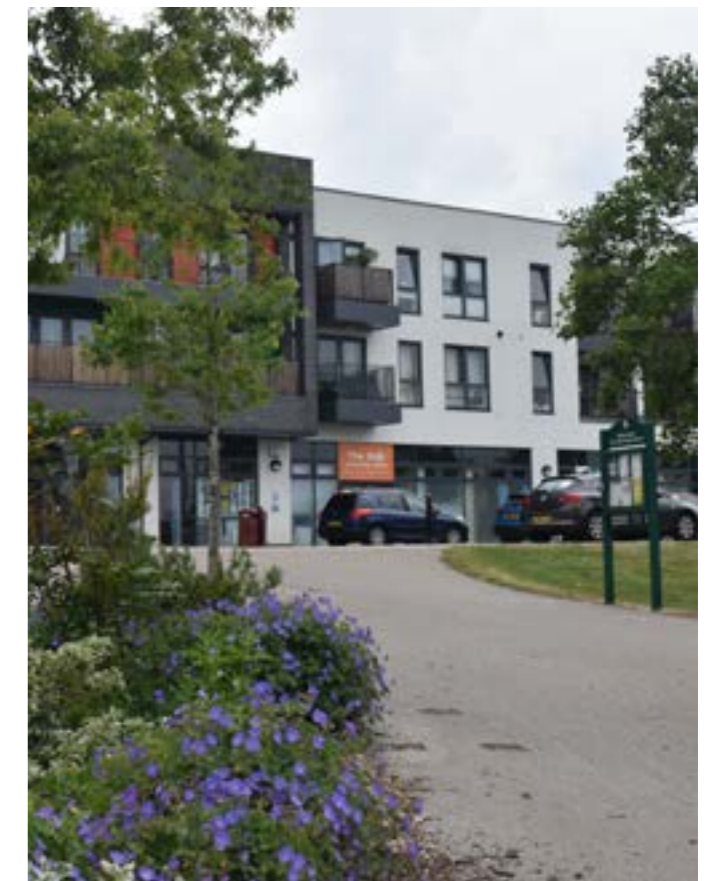
2.4 GREATER FISHPONDS

Delivery partner: The Care Forum

Key project staff: Project Co-ordinator (PC)
Project Officer (PO)

Community researchers: Penny Beynon and
Jeremy Groome

Project overview: The Care Forum had
ambitious plans at the start of the project
to recruit and train community champions;
to establish a steering group and to work
alongside local carers. However, the project
had to adapt some of these aims as the team
were met with challenges in recruiting local
volunteers and engaging with some parts of the
community. Good progress was made in building

relationships in what is a challenging part of the
city, consisting as it does of three very different,
diverse and multicultural wards. The project also
met with some significant challenges associated
with staffing the project which impeded
progress at times, but there were successes in
the form of intergenerational activities, pop up
events and the Considerate Friends project.

Successes

Relationship building
Like Horfield and Lockleaze, a key strength of
this project was the Project Officer (PO)'s ability
to successfully build relationships within the
three wards in the Greater Fishponds area in
year one. This was achieved by visiting local
organisations, meeting people in the community
and reaching out to local businesses, retailers
and faith groups. Although the latter yielded

few results, overall, this approach proved to be
largely successful.

However, it should be noted that building these
relationships took time and establishing trust
within the community was a key part of the
project during the first year. This may therefore
be an important lesson in relation to the time
scale of future CD projects.

Project strategy
The project proposal from the outset was to
recruit, train and support a total of 12 active
members of the community to be "Community
Champions" across Greater Fishponds to form a
core group of volunteers supporting community
development activities. Unfortunately, this
proved to be too ambitious a target, particularly
as the earlier asset mapping exercise had not
investigated the availability or willingness of
volunteers locally. Recruiting volunteers to
the Community Champions role in the first

year was therefore abandoned and replaced
with an asset-based approach aimed at
developing 'active citizens'.

At this stage the strategy became a three-
pronged approach:

- An informal process of volunteer self-
  selection stimulated by a variety of activities
  e.g. door-knocking, library socials, coffee
  shop get-togethers and one-off events

- An intergenerational approach (e.g. initiating
  links between care homes for the elderly and
  local pre-school nurseries to facilitate regular
  visits by the children)

- Stimulation and support for community hubs
  and existing local groups, including aid for
  the start-up of new ones where a need was
  identified.

The first PO worked with a clear asset-based approach to the project, with the aim of working directly with local groups or organisations to give them management support or to find out what local older people wanted and support the establishment of new activities. This was a particularly successful element of the project, and the PO worked closely with existing groups across the Greater Fishponds area as a result. The project adapted its approach over time to facilitating and supporting and a decision was made to focus on developing the skills of individuals and small groups so that they might be sustainable beyond the life of the funded term.

Publicity

Generally, the approach to publicity appears to also have been very effective, with the production of several eye-catching flyers, a Facebook page and articles in the local 'Fishponds Voice' magazine were excellent ways to promote project activities. In addition the production of a Greater Fishponds 'What's on Guide' at the end of year two proved as popular as the guides produced in other BAB CDOP areas of the city, such as Brislington.

Door-knocking

Door-knocking was a key activity for the project, but successful outcomes depended on the area within which the door-knocking took place. Overall, the door-knocking activity was well organised, and, in some areas, resulted in a preliminary list of ideas for potential group activities. One of the noteworthy findings from the door-knocking activities was that it seemed to be more successful when conducted by local residents themselves rather than a professional, and fellow residents often evoked a more welcoming response from those visited.

The groups that were successfully established as a result of the door-knocking activity included a coffee social and Eid celebration event. These were both initiated by the same group of people, so it may have been that they were just particularly active members of the community. However, they were well supported by the PO who helped them to secure extra funding for the Eid event. This group is now a successful legacy of the project, running independently and with their own funding (as far as the research team are aware).

There was also an active group in the Symington Road area, following door-knocking conducted there in year one. The activities undertaken by the group were successful in bringing the community together through street parties and 'playing out' events.

Pop up events

The various 'pop up' information stalls mounted throughout years one and two proved popular and were believed to be useful in signposting some socially isolated older people to suitable services and activities. There was also evidence that this was a good way to recruit volunteers, as seven people came forward at these events to offer their time.

Intergenerational activity

Good progress was made towards establishing intergenerational projects in year one, and there was a strong sense that this might be a way to make activities sustainable in the longer term. PO1 considered that this was a more 'normal' approach to community development where all age groups in the community worked together to create, run and participate in integrated activities. She described her role as 'lighting the touch paper' to get things going initially by signposting and connecting. However, once established she considered that activities should be self-sufficient and not in need of her ongoing involvement.

The two links that were made between care homes and pre-school nurseries resulted in an on-going programme of collaboration. One continues after a period of a year and a half and appears to have had a significantly positive impact on the wellbeing of the older residents. In addition, there has been a growing collaboration and understanding between the staff at the care home and the nursery.

Considerate Friends

Considerate Friends was an activity that was sub-contracted to the Carer's Support Centre, based near TCF at the Vassall Centre. Considerate Friends worked independently of TCF, led by the same paid member of the Carer's Support Centre staff for its duration. She provided regular reports to the PO/PC for inclusion in quarterly reports to BAB and for display on TCF Community Champions website page. The project was widely publicised and successful in its outreach work, as well as in recruiting volunteers (a steady four until the project end), despite them having caring responsibilities themselves. Thirty three local services, including a local park, health centres, fitness centres and several local shops and cafes were approached, and a number successfully engaged with this part of the project and became actively involved in adapting their venues to become more use-friendly. The Considerate Friends project lead expressed the legacy of the project as:

- The 'Carer Conversations' monthly café group, stating that 'It's become quite lively and the group has started to really support each other really well'

- The small but significant improvements for older people made by local services as a result of the visit reports.

Challenges

Staff turnover

There was a high turnover of staff across the life of the project, and losses at the end of year two and into year three had a major impact on the maintenance of the project and severely curtailed any expansion in activities. Project Officer 2 (PO2) replaced PO1 in March 2019 when she left to take up a new post. PO2 left in July resulting in a 2 month gap with no-one in post until PO3 was appointed in October. Whilst staff turnover is unavoidable in any organisation, in this case, as staff left the project, continuity and momentum were affected, even though the first two POs each provided both a face-to-face handover and written notes to their successors. In addition, over the 3 year course of the project, no less than 4 people occupied the project Co-ordinator role, which added to the lack of continuity and fragmentation of the project.

Each new worker had to initiate their own ideas about how to progress the project. Furthermore, as community development work relies so heavily on relationship building (as was started so successfully early in the project) any trust between the paid worker and the community required to be rebuilt with each successive worker.

Good progress was made by the first two Project Officers but unfortunately the gap of two months with no post holder in this role in, quarter two of the final year meant that much of this was again lost. Further, the third PO took up the post with just 6 months of the project remaining. Although he tried to contact several of the previously linked groups and projects, he found he had little response.

The real time gap between the departure of PO2 and the arrival and induction of Project Officer 3 (PO3) plus the lack of strategic continuity between Project Coordinator 3 (PC3) and Project Coordinator 4 (PC4) severely limited the chances of the Community Champions project maintaining relationships with projects which had been established in the first two years.

Unfortunately, staffing issues in the final year

also hindered this evaluation, as reporting of progress on field activities was inconsistent, and the research team therefore frequently found it difficult to evidence any progress.

Contracted hours
The potential development of the project was also hampered by the limited extent of the Project Officer's working hours (21 hours per week, supported by a Project Co-ordinator (PC) working 5 hours a week). This constraint was exacerbated by the fact that sharing and learning activities with other community development projects consisted only of face-to-face meetings, and these sometimes happened on the PO's non-working days.

Moreover, any limitations on the work, due to PO effectively working the equivalent of 3 days a week, may have been exacerbated by the lack of time input by the first of the Project Coordinators (PC1) in the first two years of the project - less than 30% of allocated hours. The second PO (PO2) considered that the project needed a full-time worker, given the size and significant demographic differences between and within the three project wards.

Connections to other BAB funded activities
Like Horfield and Lockleaze, TCF was one of only two CDOP projects that had the potential to benefit from the fact that they were also responsible for an element (promotion, relationship building with the voluntary/community sector, community development) of the BAB funded Community Navigators (CN) work which covered the whole city. However, it is unclear whether there was any well-defined or sustained collaboration between these two BAB projects.

There was, however, good uptake by clubs in the area in terms of applications for the BAB funded Community Kick-Start Fund. Nevertheless, this did not necessarily benefit the right people, given that funds were awarded

to organisations who were already established and operating on the outskirts of the designated Greater Fishponds area (namely Begbrook Retirement Club (2 awards) and Stapleton Social Club). Successful applications from more centrally based and accessible activities would perhaps have benefited more socially isolated or deprived local older people.

Steering group
The TCF project bid stated that a key responsibility of the Project Coordinator (PC) role was to recruit and support a Steering Group of local people which would 'direct and monitor' project achievements. In the event PC1 did not lead or participate in the recruitment process and neither did they attend any of the steering group meetings. PO1 undertook all the liaison, recruitment, organisation and chairing of the meetings in addition to her normal duties. The first monthly meeting (held in September 2017) had good representation from across the community, including local organisations, residents, businesses and councillors.

However, despite the initial enthusiasm, attendance quickly dropped off and, unfortunately, there was no consistent attendance at any of the later meetings, which had to be rearranged on several occasions due to the lack of availability or attendees. At that stage, the decision was made to hold the steering group meetings as a quarterly, rather than monthly, event. Ultimately, the PO was never able to garner support from within TCF or identify strong local representation to drive this group forward. With the PO needing to concentrate on the day-to-day running of the project this shortfall in management contribution likely impacted significantly on the failure of the Steering Group as by year three all related activities had stopped.

Financial Underspend
There was a significant financial underspend at the end of year one, and as Big Lottery funding

stipulated that unspent money could not be carried forward into the following year, these funds had to be returned at the end of year one. TCF explained that the underspend was because they would not release funds for activities or groups that had not yet proved themselves, preferring to only offer funding to those that could show potential sustainability. However, the inevitable outcome was the loss of some valuable financial assistance.

Reporting requirements
The evaluation of this project suffered from a lack of available project reporting information and as a result much of the information on attendance at activities discussed in the evaluation report was based on anecdotal accounts. It was frustrating for the community researchers that records of specific amounts spent on each community activity were not required, and this in turn made it difficult to verify the extent to which the project aims had been achieved. This may have been an indication of inadequate reporting requirements from the BAB team rather than the shortcomings of TCF).

In addition, it would have been beneficial for the standard quarterly report to be supported by a monthly contact and monitoring meeting with BAB management. Whilst initial face-to-face meetings did take place, in the later stages of the funding period it became a phone call.

A further observation by the research team is that it would have been beneficial for the project to report separately on the three project wards rather than a quarterly report that provided a discussion of all activities across the three wards.

Project legacy
Staff changes led to a complete change of focus in year three, with PO3, (appointed at the beginning of quarter 3), concentrating purely on winding up existing projects with a

view to TCF completely stepping back from any new elements of project delivery. No new developments were currently being considered under the banner of the CDOP project and the aim now was to contact existing partners, groups and group leaders to inform them that the project was coming to an end. It is unclear how much input TCF continues to have in the projects that were ongoing, given that they are largely led by dedicated community members, who aim to self-source their funding and run independently. Other groups continue to run without funding purely due to the commitment and dedication of the group leaders. It is therefore unclear what the legacy of the project will be.

Geography of the area
The decision by TCF for the project to cover the whole of the Greater Fishponds area despite the Woodspring recommendations to target the funding on the Hillfields ward specifically spread the resources of the project too thinly. The three wards contained within the project are disparate, incorporating a wide range of ethnicities, cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, areas of deprivation and affluence, housing stock and age ranges. Covering such a large area on a small number of hours was incredibly challenging for the project, and both the quality and quantity of the work appears to have been affected as a result.

In summary

Good progress was made at various time points in the Greater Fishponds CDOP project and there were notable successes that included strong relationships with local organisations, good publicity, successful intergenerational activities and the sub-contracting of the Considerate Friends initiative. However, much like Horfield and Lockleaze, inconsistencies with the management of staff, poor record keeping and a lack of contingency planning for staff absences were a barrier to any consistent and

sustained progress being made. Staff involved in the project were clearly knowledgeable and capable community workers with strong interpersonal skills, but the momentum lost by staff changes proved to be detrimental to the project over the funded period.

There were also challenges to this project associated with the all-encompassing nature of 'Greater Fishponds', given that this area includes three distinct wards that are spread over a significant and wide geographical area, making it very difficult for community workers on limited hours to develop meaningful activities equally over the three wards.

2.5 OLD MARKET AND ST PAUL'S

Delivery partner: Livewest

Key project staff: Community Engagement Officer (CEO) x 2 (one in St Paul's and one in Old Market)

Community researcher: Jan Fullforth

Project overview: Like Horfield and Lockleaze, this project took a two-pronged approach, with two CEOs employed, one for each of the two project areas. An asset based community development (ABCD) model was used in both Old Market (OM) and St Paul's (SP) and strong connections were made with existing local organisations. Through the project it became clear that OM was the more challenging of the two areas, largely because of its geography, few pre-existing groups and a general lack of a sense of community. Nevertheless, both areas held a number of very successful one-off, pop-up and consultation events, as well as regular activities that were well attended. Many of these were attended by older people from outside the area, perhaps largely due to the central location of OM and the cultural identity in SP.

Successes

Asset mapping
An ABCD approach was employed in the Old Market and St Paul's project, with a great deal of work being done at the start of the funding period to establish which local agencies and community groups existed locally. Contact was made with existing groups and the Community Engagement Officers (CEOs) went to great efforts to form close relationships with local leaders and existing groups. This approach was very successful in SP's due to a pre-existing strong sense of community locally. The

geography of SP's is also such that it forms a more natural community than OM which is in contrast more of a thoroughfare without any central point.

During the initial phase of activity, contact was made with existing community-based groups in both areas. Many groups were identified in St Pauls, with members often enthusiastic to both be involved in and help to deliver new activities, particularly some of the larger whole day promotional events. The results of the asset mapping approach therefore revealed more going on locally in SP's on which to build, whereas those attending the few existing clubs in OM tended to come from outside of the area. Equally, although it was felt that the work of the CDOP was immediately embraced in SP's and more people than expected turned up for planned events, it was also found that many of those interested in participating in project

activities in St Pauls were not, in fact, residents of the area.

Nevertheless, the early asset mapping exercises were successful in establishing strong relationships, and during this time local people were asked what they were able to offer their community, as well as questions about their own interests and what they would like to see happen locally. A number of contacts were made with postal workers and community police officers who had good knowledge of the local area, and communication between local agencies was therefore strong as a result. In one notable case in St Pauls, the CEO was told by a number of people, including the postman, about a local resident, recently widowed, who was felt to be very lonely. Eventually the woman herself made an approach to staff and became involved in the project.

Door knocking
Early consultation with residents took place through door knocking activity, with one of the primary aims being to establish how many older people were living in the two areas. Residents were also asked about their levels of social contact, any concerns that they had about living in the area, as well as their knowledge of any existing local activities. Although the door knocking exercise was a useful early activity, it was considered to be very time consuming, so other ways of consulting local people – such as pop up events - were ultimately considered to be more productive.

One-off events, pop-ups and consultations
Pop-up events were organised in both areas with the aim of signing 100 people up to a database for invitations to consultative events to bring people together to explore their interests and the skills they had to offer. For the pop-ups the CEOs based themselves on walking routes through their CDOP areas, near shops and schools, and outside blocks of flats. Some of the people they met suggested others who

they felt may benefit from the project. The period of carrying out pop-ups was extended into the second year to try and engage more local residents. Five barbeques were held in the summer, initiated, planned and delivered by local residents who engaged passers-by in conversations and shared newsletters with information on local activities.

The second phase of both CDOP projects involved holding consultation events. These were planned around the interests expressed by local people and included 'taster' sessions and group discussions on how to take ideas forward, following a short introduction by the CEO about the project. These events took up most of the day and included a complimentary lunch where no charge was made to attendees. Two events were held in St Pauls; 70 attended the first, and over 100 the second, making these extremely popular. In Old Market, where the venue was the Trinity Centre, about 35 attended the first event and a significant number of the attendees came from groups that already met there; this included a group of people from nearby Fishponds in the neighbouring ward of Eastville. Overall, it was estimated that half the attendees did not live in the target area. A second event was held in February 2018 which was attended by about 40 people.

Numerous one-off events were organised with participants around their interests, and these included theatre visits, exhibitions, visits to the seaside and parks outside of Bristol, and celebratory events. In several cases groups took the lead in organising these events and widening participation.

One-to-one work and extra support
The CEOs found that they spent a lot of time working one-to-one with people who had come forward and fell within the target group of being lonely and socially isolated, but needed extra support prior to becoming involved in a project activity. Indeed, the CEO in SP's referred to

Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1954) and the necessity of helping people deal with major life problems before they could engage with social activities.

"One thing I've noticed is that regardless of what I want to offer people, if they're not ready for it, they're not going to do it".

CEO worker

Flexible activities
Flexibility was a key characteristic of the way the groups were run. In OM, many of the men who attended the DIY group were recruited via contact with the local mosque, and timings of the classes were adjusted to allow for prayer as well as for family responsibilities. However, arrangements became difficult when prayer times changed, during Ramadan, for example,

and so some participants were unable to attend certain sessions. In SP's, funerals were very significant events for the local community and the number of people attending each group meeting varied according to whether one was taking place, with meetings sometimes being cancelled. In both areas, there were participants whose attendance was influenced by chronic health conditions and associated medical appointments, as well as other issues in their lives. The CR observed how individuals valued not feeling under pressure, either because of being unable to attend a meeting, being late arriving, or by their level of participation if they did attend

Sustainable, low or no cost activities
All of the groups were run at no cost or low cost to those who attended, and this was found to be a significant factor in encouraging participation. In the SP's Art group, for example, some members had participated in art classes or other art activities before, but had stopped because of the costs involved. During the last months of the projects, when the CEOs worked with the members of the different on plans for sustainability, there were many concerns about securing future funding, and some apprehension about the loss of support from the CEOs. Some groups regarded charging members as a last resort as some members had already had to curtail some of their social activities as they could not afford them.

Training local people
Building on and enhancing participants' knowledge and skills to further their group activities was a significant part of the plan to ensure sustainability beyond the two years' funding provided. Across the two years of the project the courses which various CDOP group participants attended included:

- Risk assessment

- First Aid

- Food Hygiene

- 'Grow your own group' provided by the Community Learning Team

- CANVA training for designing newsletters and posters and for social media at Knowle West Media Centre

- ABCD training two-day course with Cormac Russell and Nurture Development

- Bid writing run by Voscur[1]

- Broadcast skills with Babbers radio show[2]

Communication and publicity
There was no existing free local newspaper or newsletter which listed all activities of interest to people over 50 in either St Pauls or Old Market, so the CEOs developed their own. This covered both areas, so widened potential participation, and advertising events and activities run by other organisations as well as those run by the CDOPs. It was distributed to many different venues in the two areas. Social media was also used and a joint Facebook page set up, but it was recognised that many people did not have internet access so this channel would have limited impact in the two geographical areas, and the paper version would overcome any potential 'digital divide'. Participants preferred a more positive focus than the description of activities and events as intended for 'people who were lonely or socially isolated', hence greater emphasis was placed on phrases such as 'embracing social activities and friendship' (CEO St Pauls). 'Young at Heart' was the name chosen for the newsletter and the Facebook page and was used for various events.

Footnotes: **1** A charity that provides direct support services and specialist advice to voluntary organisations and social enterprises across Bristol.
2 The Babbers is a radio show hosted by Ujima Radio that is run by older volunteers and focuses on topics of interest to older people in Bristol.

A wider audience was reached by sending CDOP information to the quarterly 'Vocalise' community magazine which covered St Pauls, St Werburghs, Montpelier and St Agnes (the St Pauls CEO was a Director of this magazine), and which had a regular 'over 50s' feature. For Old Market, use was made of the fortnightly e-bulletin and quarterly magazine 'Up Our Street', which is delivered to households in Easton and Lawrence Hill.

The CEOs also appeared regularly on the Babbers radio show to talk about any up-and-coming activities. Given the known wide listenership of this show, this was considered an important medium for sharing CDOP-related news. Subsequently, comments from group participants indicated the value of the show as a source of information. By the end of the project, arrangements had been made with the Babbers show for a volunteers' day to teach broadcast skills and indicate what is involved, with the aim of getting new volunteers to help support the Babbers. Four people from the CDOPs were interested in participating.

Challenges

Lack of a base for the CEOs
Livewest's head office is situated in Weston-super-mare, some 22 miles from Old Market and St Paul's. As such, both CEOs lacked a location in either of the wards and were unable to have a regular physical presence there as a result. Having an office location in the area within which the CEOs were working may have been beneficial for the community and helped to embed them therein.

Staffing and organisational changes
Over the course of the funding period the name of the organisation running the project changed from Knightstone, to Liverty to Livewest. Whilst this does not appear to have been too detrimental to the project, a consistent identity would have been beneficial. Equally there were several redundancies within the organisation throughout this period, including the manager of the CEOs who took with her a lot of project knowledge, and who had been a constant source of support to the CEOs.

The CEOs were both on fixed term contracts which can sometimes be problematic, particularly as projects near the end of the funding period and staff start to look for alternative work. However, fortunately this did not play out in OM and SP's and both workers remained in post for the duration.

Disparities between the two areas
Whilst overall the strategies employed for making local contact worked well in St Paul's, in Old Market - located slightly nearer to the city centre and more of a thoroughfare than a community in itself - it was observed that many of the people who stopped to chat at Pop-ups were just passing through and not from the local area. It therefore took longer than expected to identify people from within the project target group in that area, and the CEO in Old Market reported struggling to get people involved in the CDOP generally. This was partly due to the lack of a central community venue where people congregated, and her not having a local base where people could easily find her. The cafes and shops in the Old Market area were not frequently used by older local residents and according to the Live West manager people in OM tended to work in silos and were less interested in collaboration. Many residents tended to go to nearby Easton for groups and activities, which made establishing new groups in OM difficult.

Cultural challenges
Both OM and SP's are inner city areas with diverse, multicultural communities. In OM, local people tended to be more likely to use the cafes and shops in Easton, but those most visible people were predominantly (Muslim) men. The CEO felt that if she had been a Muslim man then she may have been more successful in engaging with this group. There were also particular difficulties engaging older people from the Somali community. Although contact was made with the local mosque which resulted in several men joining the DIY group and three younger Somali women becoming involved in the sewing group the CEO for Old Market felt this to be "a drop in the ocean" compared to the size of the local Somali population and their potential engagement in the CDOP.

Venues
A 'Tea and Talk' drop-in session originally started by a previous community worker in the area was continued by the CEO, but the number of people this attracted was limited. This was partly attributed to the venue, a community room attached to one of the blocks of flats in St Judes. The CEO found that while many people from St Judes knew about the session, and some popped in, few were from the older age group (over 50s) targeted by BAB. The session was moved to a local pub which was keen to attract older people at quiet times of the day, and which was felt to be more accessible to some people from a wider area, but was eventually dropped due to poor attendance. There was greater success with a lunch club which was run directly after the Old Market art group, and which most of the group attended, for example

In OM there were fewer activities, and of those that did exist many were organised through the local churches. These were also contacted by the CEO but did not become very involved in the CDOP. The Old Market CEO believed that if local people did not belong to the Christian community then they might not feel comfortable attending activities in a church, and the same might be said for other cultural groups and religious venues.

Steering groups
Both CEOs intended to set up steering groups, and in OM it was hoped that this would emerge from the lunch club. However, those attending expressed little interest in taking part in such an activity as they simply wanted to turn up and chat. Establishing a steering group was also unsuccessful in SP's and this was attributed primarily to a residents not wanting to get involved in 'strategic thinking'.

In summary

The OM and SPs project has highlighted the complex issues that exist in diverse inner city areas and the difficulties inherent in delivering activities that are suitable for all older people to attend. Despite this, the CEOs enjoyed a number of successes, most notably with pop-up and on—off events. There is a clear need for activities – particularly those in areas of higher social deprivation – to be low or no cost, and with many projects the truly socially isolated or lonely may need emotional support or assistance in attending activities. Good communication and publicity, flexibility and training for local people have also all proved to be important elements of this CDOP project.

Image credit: "Trinity Centre" by stevekeiretsu

2.6 STOCKWOOD

Delivery partner: St Monica Trust

Key project staff: Community Development Worker (CDW)

Community researcher: Christine Crabbe

Project overview: With a strong existing community on which to build, this project has been very successful in implementing a number of activities, including regular events and taster days. Local people were keen to be involved in the work and have participated regularly. The Greater Stockwood group has acted as an effective steering group for the project and is well established with a terms of reference. Collaboration with local agencies and organisations has worked well. Intergenerational activity has also proven to be an effective way of advancing and sustaining activity throughout the project, beginning with a community asset mapping activity. Staff changes were smooth and well managed and workers were engaged in the community.

Successes

Knowledge of the local area
The CDOP project in Stockwood has demonstrated the importance of getting to know an area and its culture before community work can begin in earnest. This can be accomplished before the appointment of a community development worker by commissioning older people as community researchers who either know the area well or are residents and asking them to produce an asset map. Recruiting older volunteers as community researchers who know the area and requesting them to produce a mini asset map or survey can provide an accurate picture of the activities taking place, the people, their culture, their history, and who

else is working in the locality. It can also help the community development worker and the service provider to gain insight into the character of the area from the perspective of 'an insider'.

Asset mapping and door knocking
The approach used in Stockwood was that of asset based community development (ABCD) with an intergenerational focus. The first stage of the CDOP project in Stockwood involved mapping out Stockwood's assets: the existing community groups, organisations, open spaces, and venues. The CDOP worker set up an asset mapping training exercise for the Stockwood Steering Group (a group of interested local residents) the staff of the Southern Links Children's Centre and some parents from the Children's Centre. A tutor from Bristol City Council was engaged to deliver the training. Participants were sent out in pairs or groups to walk to a place where people gathered. They were then required to ask passersby what they liked about living in Stockwood.

Four areas of Stockwood ward were targeted for door knocking, which enabled the CDOP worker to link people with existing activities and gather contacts for future activities. The CDOP worker produced a leaflet, which was placed in Stockwood library, introducing herself and her role and explaining how she can support the community. The door knocking conversations on people's doorsteps established that people had different perceptions about the area they identified as their community. For example, in the Wells Road part of Stockwood ward people did not consider themselves to be part of Stockwood, but rather Whitchurch or Knowle. Other people living in West Town Lane considered Brislington was their community.

Clearly defined geographical boundaries
It is also essential to define the CDOP worker's geographic boundaries before an appointment is made. For example, will it include the whole of the electoral ward or target specific parts of

it? Rather than spreading too thinly over the whole of the ward, it might be more productive to concentrate on a specific district or locality, thus enabling more in-depth work. It needs to be borne in mind that within a electoral ward districts may be very different and have their particular individual problems, traditions and history, as is clearly the case in Stockwood.

The findings of this report show that boundaries and the community people identify with can affect the activities people attend. For example, people who consider themselves to be living in Knowle might naturally look to Knowle first, whilst those who identify as living in Brislington might look to see what Brislington has to offer rather than the activities taking place in a nearby community they do not identify with. However, the findings of this report also indicate that people will travel to another area if they have a particular interest in an activity and they are sufficiently motivated. Thus, integrated publicity over a wide area advertising activities could attract those that have transport to take advantage of what is offered in other communities.

Intergenerational activities
The CDOP worker introduced some intergenerational activities that aimed to bring older and younger generations together. These activities included the allotment group and 'stay and play' sessions at the local care home, both of which were very successful.

The Greater Stockwood Group (GSG)
Two weeks after the CDOP project started in Stockwood in September 2017, the mayor of Bristol visited Stockwood for a locality session and about eighteen people turned up to meet him. The venue for the meeting was the Southern Links Children's Centre. During the mayoral session, discussions were facilitated on different topics and the issue that came up over and over again was that people wanted to

talk more and have some kind of forum. The mayoral visit occurred soon after neighbourhood partnerships (NPs) closed and were no longer funded (in 2017 Bristol City Council announced that NPs were to be abolished, with funding to be cut by half in 2017/18 and then completely in 2018/19). Arising from the issue of some kind of forum the CDOP worker set up an initial meeting of interested persons to talk about what it might look like and for people to bring others who may be interested along. The group met together and initially called themselves the Stockwood Steering Group, but this was subsequently changed by vote to the Greater Stockwood Group (GSG) to reflect the whole of the electoral ward of Stockwood.

The GSG evolved naturally from residents who wanted to have a voice in their community. The timing of the mayoral visit was the catalyst for bringing likeminded people with an interest in their community together. The CDOP worker supported this group by attending the GSG meetings suggesting training and people and organizations that could help. Stockwood has many issues for a forum to mobilise around, such as the future of Stockwood library, the shops, potholes in the shops' car park, new housing, the proposed link road, and the burden the houses built by BANES might have on the medical centre and schools. The group have developed clear terms of reference and there are a number of regular attendees who are committed to driving the work forwards.

The group were also responsible for successfully commissioning and siting a new community noticeboard for residents. In January 2020 it was agreed that the name of the GSG would be changed to the Greater Stockwood Alliance (GSA) as it was considered it portrays the impression of an inclusive community.

Taster afternoon and annual one-off events
There were a number of successful taster days and one-off activities in the Stockwood area, including an over 55's taster day with workshops and activities, a community picnic, an apple pressing event outside the local shops and a 'shindig' in December 2018 featuring minced pies and mulled wine. There were also events that aimed to address some of the more negative aspects of life in Stockwood, such as the anti-social behaviour event in May 2018.

Regular and varied activities
Regular activities proved to be very popular, and included a range of local groups people could attend, either as a regular attendee or on a drop-in basis. Stockwood Growing Together is one such popular activity centering on growing vegetables and making use of the land next to the nursery at the Children's Centre. The

activity is aimed at older men and women and the produce grown is shared with the Children's Centre. A Cooking Together group was also established as well as various other activities including Stockwood Newbies (a group for those new to the area), Tea and Talk and Positivitea. Both groups provide a space for local people to catch up over refreshments. In addition, a younger member of the GSG created a Repair Café and a Cook and Chat group for the Over 55s was also set up.

More recently a STAR bereavement peer support group was established and it is proving increasingly popular. This group enables people to talk and listen to one another in a safe environment.

Change of worker
In January 2019 the CDOP worker went on maternity leave and there were concerns that her replacement might take some time to settle into the role resulting in lost or reduced momentum. These concerns proved to be unfounded and a smooth seamless handover took place. The new worker was experienced in community work with a good knowledge of the local area, which eased her comfortably into the post.

Challenges

Changing demographics
One of the key challenges that Stockwood faces going forward is the shift in demographics that has been seen in other parts of Bristol. When people refer to Stockwood they usually allude to the area from Sturminster Road (the road that runs from West Town Lane up to the plateau at the top of the hill). Stockwood is often considered a backwater because of its slightly isolated situation - there is no main artery road running through it and it is surrounded by green spaces. Many of those who live in Stockwood are long term residents who are now becoming increasingly frail and passing away.

As the population ages, more and more housing will become available and it is somewhat inevitable that younger generations will move into the area. Stockwood, therefore, runs the risk of becoming an impersonal city suburb if community development doesn't continue in earnest.

Reaching out to the lonely and socially isolated

The difficulty with all projects that aim to reduce isolation and loneliness is finding socially isolated lonely people. Not only are they hard to find, but the reason they are socially isolated will sometimes be a barrier to them getting involved in activities. The key is often to raise awareness amongst the whole community to help, befriend, and bring a neighbour along to activities so it expands.

Transport

Public transport is an on-going huge problem and the reliability of buses is of great concern. For people living in the Stockwood area and many areas of Bristol. It is difficult or sometimes impossible for some people to walk to a bus stop. Even after reaching the bus stop, it could mean a long wait for a bus with no shelter to protect from cold and rain.

Transport is an issue for those without a car or those who can no longer drive, and although this is true citywide, it is a particular issue in Stockwood. There is currently only one bus that travels to Stockwood; residents do not have a choice of buses. Even walking small distances can prove a problem for people whose homes are on a steep rise. For such people walking to the nearest bus stop presents a big challenge. Whilst a regular reliable bus service would help there needs to be assistance for those whose homes are high up.

Concerns about the GSG and its long term future

Some members of the GSG considered there

was a danger that the many projects the group has become involved in might be too much for a fairly new and inexperienced group to manage. Members were worried that too much was being attempted too quickly and the group might wear themselves out and, therefore, cease to be effective.

Members began to feel the group should try and make sure their activities are manageable and not try to attempt too much too soon. In addition, the group needs to ensure that people are looking after themselves, as a group and individually. Some members began to feel pressurised and some became unwell.

The CDOP worker considered that the group needed a clearer definition of its roles and boundaries, as well as an audit of the abilities of the group and the time that members were willing or prepared able to give. If the group was not clear on its mission, aims and objectives then time and effort may be wasted and people could be drawn into worthy projects that do not fit what the group wants to achieve. It is important to be clear on the group's priorities and the things they want to concentrate on.

In summary

The Stockwood CDOP project benefited from good asset mapping and door knocking activities early on. Including local people with knowledge of the area in this process added value to the exercise and increased local investment from both residents and partner organisations. Stockwood has a regular networking meeting where various agencies with an interest in the area share ideas and information, thus avoiding duplication of work.

Intergenerational activities have been successful in bringing different elements of the community together, and it is clear that old and young appreciate spending time together. It has also been an asset to have the CDOP worker

operating from an office based at the Southern Links Children's Centre. The range of activities on offer in Stockwood is impressive, with a variety of groups and sessions available. The project has catered for those who want to use their existing skills or learn new ones, as well as providing emotional support to those in need. The Greater Stockwood Group have been of great benefit to the area, and their clearly defined terms of reference have given them a definitive remit that has allowed them to be creative and attract regular and committed group membership. Taster days and annual events have also proved popular and activities were advertised in a 'what's on' booklet published by LinkAge Network/St Monica Trust. Changes to staff within St Monica Trust have been handled well and the transition to a new worker was smooth.

The project is not without its challenges going forward, but many of these are issues that apply across the city and will require a coordinated approach.

2.7 CITY-WIDE 'STRATEGIC COORDINATION' FORM OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Delivery partner: LinkAge Network

Key project staff: Community Development Coordinators (CDC) x 3

Community researcher: Jill Turner

Project overview: This CDOP project differed to the previous examples in that was not area based, but rather provided co-ordination and collaboration at a citywide level. The five key areas of focus for the project were to:

1. Encourage new activities from organisations or groups of older people

2. Connect and network existing groups.

3. Support and champion asset-based approaches

4. Coordinate and share intelligence

5. Horizon Scan for funding opportunities and coordinate collaborative bids

The project developed relationships with the other CDOP projects early on, as well as making contact with other BAB funded projects and external organisations not affiliated with the programme. The project drew on an ABCD approach with the aim of filling any gaps identified by connecting up and supporting existing resources.

Successes

Asset mapping and supporting asset based community development (ABCD)

The first stage of the project involved a strategic scoping of the organisational assets in each area of the city - North, South, Central and East. The team then brought together practitioners and other interested people in a series of 'Gatherings' with the aim of creating new dialogue around good practice, priorities for action and collaborations. The team also focused support on existing forums and networks – particularly those less visible in the Bristol community and voluntary sector, such as faith networks. Over the course of this project, staff were well placed to connect several hundred individuals in the city: for example, in a nine-month period one CDC recorded 118 meetings,

of which at least 86 involved external parties.

Early asset mapping exercises identified the project's priority areas. The priorities were either local communities or communities of interest, and were intended to relate to 'at risk' groups as defined by BAB. Mapping including walking the areas, identifying physical assets, building relationships with local people, local activists and local services, using the Age UK Loneliness Heat Map[1] and the Bristol Joint Strategic Needs Assessment[2]. This process helped The CDCs understand potential priorities for the project and informed the focus of their work.

Footnotes: **1** https://www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/policy-research/loneliness-research-and-resources/loneliness-maps/
2 https://www.bristol.gov.uk/policies-plans-strategies/joint-strategic-needs-assessment

It was important to find out as much as possible about the areas – for example what has happened in the past and who has been involved – as this undoubtedly influences local dynamics. At the beginning of the CDOP project time was spent asset mapping and scoping to inform this work. The CDCs used a variety of tools that are commonly employed by community development workers including door knocking, listening, pop-ups, attending community festivals, and online or paper questionnaires.

Building on existing skills, expertise and reputation

LinkAge has a well established reputation, good capacity and a consistent track record of working in older people's interests, and the project has been able to capitalise on this. In addition, the CDC team have brought considerable experience in community development – which in turn helped LinkAge to quickly roll out the project.

While needing to retain holistic work with all communities, the project has shown the value of focusing on the interests of older groups which include perspectives of particular concern to this demographic. The team offered advice on working with older people as they have expertise and experience of many years.

Innovative collaboration and co-ordination

The project developed extensive links with other BAB projects. This enabled the team to take a more strategic and programme-wide approach to their work. The team were also successful in bringing together existing groups across the city. The approach was adapted to reflect the specific characteristics of area of the city and the skill-set of the respective CDC. A new environment was developed for practitioners and other parties to meet and share experiences in the form of 'Gatherings'.

There were differences for each area of the city.

In the South and East areas there was a general enthusiasm for a new network, however in the Central area, workers said there were too many networks already and connections were good. In the North, there was an existing community network administered by the Dementia Well Being service. In this case, the CDC negotiated joining the existing group and facilitating an extra discussion each meeting about work with the over 50s.

The project team was able to introduce groups to new ideas. The project has helped a wide range of initiatives obtain greater visibility – which in turn has improved contacts with interested practitioners and service users. The approach shows promising examples of how it can enhance the effectiveness of link working and social prescribing, for example through supporting the development of bereavement support groups in the South.

LinkAge was able to advise and inspire groups to scale up their work and open out to new partners. The team helped create neighbourhood Guides for activities for the over 50s, worked on filling gaps in local provision and provided 66 small grants to help develop and support community activities for older people.

The South Bristol gathering have continued beyond the lifespan of the CDC project with two members now nominated to take responsibility for organisation. A survey of members was completed at the end of year two, with a clear direction for members to consider. With the end of the BAB commissioned programme and therefore a reduced workforce, the group is widening its focus to support all community development in south Bristol. In North Bristol, the gathering continues to meet and has collaborated on further activity outside the gatherings. This has included compiling a report on Bullying and Harassment in residential settings, and co-producing a Friends with Pens project. In the east, the gathering collaborated

on a What's On Guide for the over 50's; linked with St George Community Network for involvement in Future Parks and CIL funds for the area; city wide organisations were invited to support and connect local organisations; and a members' survey in year three established the future direction of the gathering. A new administrator has been identified.

The team helped increase in local opportunities through bridging contacts. For example, in Sea Mills the CDC worked with a Care Home to support their activity schedule, and put them in touch with Sea Mills Community Centre who then ran bingo sessions at the home, involving residents who did not attend events previously. The care home also got in touch with other local homes brought to their attention by the CDC to bolster their numbers for trips outside of Bristol.

LinkAge's seven Share and Learn events adopted a strategic approach to bring together people interested in community development practice across the city and to transfer innovative and practical solutions to common issues faced by practitioners, volunteers and community members. Feedback on the sessions showed that they provide networking opportunities, a chance to develop and reflect on practice skills, an arena to learn about the wider reach of the BAB programme, and an opportunity visit projects. The Share and Learn programme therefore provided an informal continuing professional development platform in a context where such opportunities were rarely available.

More generally, the CDCs have invited expert speakers in community development practice to Gathering events. Adopting a city wide approach, the CDC in the North worked closely with a variety of professionals to develop and research two potential city-wide projects, the ideas for which came from both professionals working with older people in the North and older people themselves. By working in partnership, with each person in attendance

bringing their organisation's perspective on the subject, a firm basis was put in place for further development.

There are many CDWs who often work in isolation in their local areas or specific project remits. An important function of the LinkAge CDC work has been to offer these workers individual mentoring and coaching, which appeared to greatly appreciated. Similarly the isolation issue also meant that facilitation of networking and learning was appreciated.

Overall the team found that a Community Development Coordination approach can therefore:

• Make use of a range of community development approaches, based on social justice and mutual respect;

• Support community development work to inform governance and funding opportunities;

• Interconnect local and wider communities;

• Focus on both formal and informal networks, to strengthen what exists and create new ones;

• Build on what already exists and is currently happening within a community;

• Reduce duplication and silo working;

• Enable mutual learning and form effective and supportive partnerships.

Training and increasing awareness of asset based approaches
The project also developed a participatory model for training, which includes an emphasis on building the capacity of community-based trainers. The city-wide training played a role in building skills for the BAB programme as

a whole and for practitioners in community development work more generally. LinkAge adopted a strategic approach to skills training in which local groups with niche expertise were supported by LinkAge to develop training events. This contrasts with standard training packages that are led by specialist consultants. The training sessions covered 11 subject areas, each of which were delivered on two occasions. In total there were 299 attendances for the programme, with an average of 13 people attending each session. Learning was consolidated through reflection sessions some months after attending training in order to re-cap key messages. A large number of participants described the particularly impactful nature of the 'lived experience' approach, whereby the personal stories and perspectives of different groups were shared at many of

the training events. The training programme highlighted the level of demand for free training within the voluntary sector in Bristol focusing on particular at risk demographic groups particularly people with dementia.

There were a number of positive outcomes to arise from this area of work. Participant feedback was positive, new trainers were encouraged by the response of participants and new networks were built through further training opportunities. For example, The Somali Women's Group and Midnimo had not delivered training before, but in developing their training for this programme they became better connected with the groups who attended. As a result they have continued to raise cultural awareness about Muslim culture in relation to end of life, cancer care and diabetes with

St Peters Hospice, Macmillan Cancer Care and Diabetes UK. There have been several collaborations and further training requests as a direct result of the workshops. Bristol Dementia Action Alliance, for example, has received several training contracts as a result of providing the training for this programme. They have also built better networks, improved their connectivity with other groups in the city and widened their reach. Using an asset based approach, these workshops have shown how new networks can be made through training to support small groups to become more inclusive and improve connectivity across the city.

Encouraging and promoting new activities
The CDC team adopted a range of approaches to promote new activities across the city. Some of this work built on LinkAge's experience with the production of activity Guides for city neighbourhoods. For this project, the team worked with intermediaries – local groups – to support the development and distribution of these guides. Having scoped networks across the city, the CDCs also worked through individual groups and clusters of groups to

promote ideas for new activities. Much of this practice involved matchmaking activists and publicising less well-known events. The project has helped a wide range of initiatives obtain greater visibility – which in turn has improved contacts with interested practitioners and service users. Although it is hard to quantify the extent of new activities, the use of the CAB fund in supporting 66 diverse initiatives gives an indication of the reach and traction of the programme with local groups.

Through LinkAge Network and BAB websites, email updates, posters, and delivered leaflets, the project team helped publicise opportunities across the city for the over 50s.

There are examples of practice that show how the assets-model has been successful in stimulating new activities. The team worked in contexts where there was no community development support, for example in residential care homes, with churches, and with organisations in areas where there no CDWs, such as Sea Mills, Speedwell,and Ashton Vale. This work led to the development or creation

of neighbourhood groups and forums to bring together existing groups. Overall, the team managed to put a large number of people in touch with one another, and has been able to show examples of how this work has led to new initiatives.

Horizon Scanning for funding opportunities
The CDCs helped inform groups of funding opportunities through the BAB programme (KickStart fund), and through assisting with applications, some of which were successful such as the Memory Café at Holy Trinity.

Engaging older people and communities in decision making
The decision at council level to withdraw funding from Neighbourhood Forums was a major challenge at the start of the project. Neighbourhood work across the city is patchy and varied because the Forums have been replaced by a variety of bodies and the mayoral system has centralised some decision-making. The project has therefore had to find alternative ways to involve communities in decision making processes.

The CDC in the North worked with The Community Forum in Sea Mills, meeting with and encouraging older people to have a voice and involvement in shaping the Community Plan. In the North, the CDC supported, co-produced and part-funded the Let's Connect Event in Lawrence Weston, which aimed to ensure older voices were heard, to collect potential project ideas and to encourage people to support groups to take those project ideas forward. Everyone was given the opportunity to think about what "an ideal world" in Lawrence Weston would look like, how Ambition Lawrence Weston and residents could support the area, and most importantly what they could do to help.

The CDCs also brought new ideas to existing groups. For example, with the Clifton Bristol

Over 50s Forum, a CDC suggested an evening event, where local organisations set up stalls to publicise their work. The CDC also prompted a local church to expand their community role. This work has also led to the creation or revival of local and city fora for a wide range of organisation representatives to convene and share practice experience.

Sustainability
All activity under this CDOP project was planned with an exit strategy in mind; the intention was that when the project concluded, the activity could continue independently. This principle applied to all work including encouraging new activity, building networks and CAB funding. Ways of working to strengthen sustainability included:

1. Strengthened local networks. The project has succeeded in helping to develop social networks both at the neighbourhood level and at greater scales across the city. These connections were often entirely new and, where they are based upon the free interests of the parties concerned, have prospects to continue independent of the LinkAge project.

2. Engaging local groups or services which could own new work beyond the CDOP project. When multi-agency approaches were possible, this was welcomed because it further-increased the likelihood of ownership beyond the CDC.

3. The CDCs declined to own (manage or deliver) new activity, but to empower others to own the work. The CDC empowerment role may have included mentoring, agreeing funding, introducing new connections.

4. All CAB applications had to show how their request would be sustainable before the money was agreed.

5. The CDCs often assumed a coaching role for other Community Development Workers or local activists to develop their skills and practice. These people's roles and impact can continue beyond the life time of the CDOP project.

6. A legacy of skill development was a strong theme throughout the work. Training directly strengthened skills and knowledge. The CDCs commissioned and managed training around BAB identified 'at risk' groups and also fundraising workshops for smaller groups.

7. The LinkAge Marketing and Communications Officer created templates on accessible software for groups to re-use in the future. In this way, material production was not owned by LinkAge, but could be reused by the groups.

8. Advice and support. CDCs have referred individuals and groups to sources of advice and support, such as VOSCUR based governance and future funding support. Towards the end of the project funding period CDCs have led events for funding opportunities and collaborative bids

While it is too early to know what aspects will lead to sustained actions after the project, the intention of the area-based elements of the project (North, South, and Central and East) was to help people to help themselves, rather than to create dependencies. The LinkAge team clearly factored in the exit process from the outset and, to a substantial degree, have been showing how avoid disruptive effects normally associated with the final stages of time-limited projects. There are a number of aspects to sustainability that are useful to emphasise.

Challenges

Wider contextual factors

Although the LinkAge project was one of the largest BAB commissions, its remit covered a considerable population and organisational field. The origins of the project were the consequence of a lengthy development process in which there were different ideas about the central goals of the project. The three-year funding period added pressure on the project to create change within a relatively short period for community development. A further complication has been the reduction in public investment in local government and voluntary sector services over the period of the project. Uncertainty about the funding landscape dampened confidence across the local sector to take long term investments in community development. Together – the scale, focus, duration, context, and future – all created substantial challenges for the project team.

Delivering a complex citywide initiative

Additionally, there were inherent challenges in undertaking community development 'work' alongside the wider role of community development 'coordination'. Nevertheless, the LinkAge project has been able to build upon wider planning in the BAB programme and a history of asset-based work in the city.

Clarity was needed in the contract and remit of LinkAge, in particular in relation to what BAB wanted to have direct responsibility and control over themselves, for example in terms of the management of the Training and the Share and Learn programmes. In addition, the contract restrictions around geography and age did not easily fit with community development work. Representatives of communities often had no direct interest in the project-based geographical areas, and worked according to different timescales.

Timescales

One limitation is that a three-year project is not sufficient time for community development because asset based approaches means working at the pace of the community, finding ways to talk and gather information. Community development coordination work is time consuming – as is a feature of most community development work (Klee et al. 2014). The CDCs found that some of their coordination time actually got taken up by doing basic community development work rather than coordination.

Power, authority and conflicting agendas

There are also questions of how power is exercised in co-ordination using an asset-based approach. For the Gatherings one issue concerned the ownership and management of the meetings. LinkAge's commissioned work led it to focus on the specific BAB issues, which was not necessarily the same as other parties that were attending. The CDCs were able to draw upon organizational resources: funding, skills, knowledge and an agenda, all of which shaped the direction of the Gatherings. While there was some success in distributing authority amongst a core of those taking part, the context and short duration for the events meant that it was hard to consolidate a working pattern.

The CDCs sometimes found it difficult not to get too involved in the detail of other organisations. CDCs developed a number of techniques to avoid getting drawn into the agendas of other agencies, such as being clear at the outset about their role, or only offering telephone support rather than attend meetings. CDC work involved clarity and honesty about practice boundaries, the project remit, and the time limited nature of any support. Building upon assets-based principles the CDCs learnt not to speak too much, and to take the time to listen and let people say things from their own perspective.

Addressing isolation and loneliness amongst older people

As with all BAB projects, it is not feasible to estimate how many socially isolated people are now attending activities when they otherwise would have been on their own at home. Nevertheless, the evaluation identified many instances where CDC's had contributed towards this goal. For example, at Sea Mills Community Centre four older women reported helping as a result of meeting community activist with on Games on The Train. Likewise, Sea Mills 100 has provided the opportunity for residents to meet each other, undertake training and the community has been given a boost to organise going forward.

The focus on loneliness and isolation was difficult at times, the CDCs encouraged groups to expand and reach out to people beyond those already involved. In some areas, they tried door knocking in their endeavour to try to connect people to groups. They believe they did manage to reach some people who were lonely and isolated, however the majority of the people they worked with were already involved in social activities.

Providing activities for the 'over 50s'

It is helpful to note that there are important differences among groups concerned with older people's issues. For example, the team observed a difference between 'younger older' and 'older older' people – believing that 'younger older' people are more demanding about what they want to do and their expectations of activities. than 'older older' people. CDCs felt that they should not make assumptions that people over 50 will want to do certain activities or want to be around people of their own age. They reflected that perhaps focusing on over 50s did not quite work because communities consist of mixed ages.

Barriers to volunteering

In some cases there were real barriers to volunteer involvement in community projects. The work in Avonmouth and Ashton Vale both illustrated conditions that were not ready for strategic community development co-ordination. While CDCs facilitated local meetings and outreach activities, in both areas there was low interest from residents, some significant social divides, and disjointed or poorly resourced venues and other assets.

Transport and mobility

From the perspective of older people seeking to take part in community activities, access to events has been a major issue. Transport, along with mobility issues, is a widely mentioned barrier in people's ability to attend activities. Other accessibility issues include the poor location of activities, the lack of nearby parking, and the lack of volunteer drivers. The lack of accessible secular community buildings, in comparison to faith-based venues, has been a recurrent feature of CDC work across the city.

In summary

Rather than focusing on small area neighbourhoods, LinkAge's team focused on coordinating activities between agencies across sections of the city. LinkAge's CDOP project illustrates the potential for community development work at a large population scale where, in many instances local agencies appreciate the support from LinkAge to build partnerships and to act more strategically.

LinkAge have adopted a strategic approach to skills training in which local agencies with niche expertise have been supported by LinkAge to develop training events. This contrasts with standard training packages that are led by specialist consultants. LinkAge's share and learn events have taken a strategic approach to bring together a dislocated field of community development practice across the city and to transfer innovative and practical solutions to common issues faced by practitioners, volunteers and community members.

3. Conclusions ≫

The six BAB-funded CDOP projects evaluated in this report have benefited from the BAB ethos of 'test and learn', which gave organisations the freedom to try new and innovative methods of community development alongside more traditional approaches. It has allowed individual providers to design development activities that take into account local contextual, geographical and physical factors, preceding this with asset mapping activity in an attempt to build on what already exists within communities. Inevitably, some of these attempts have proven to be more successful than others over time, and it was those providers who were most willing to flex and adapt in response to local need that tended to fare best overall.

It is a common complaint within the field of community development that funding cycles seldom allow enough time to build trust and make strong connections within communities, and that this has a detrimental effect on what can be achieved within such tight timeframes. Many CDOP projects found this to be challenging and all stated that they would have benefited from a longer funding period in order to truly embed themselves in the community in which they were working. However, many organisations benefited from a strong existing presence and proven track record within communities, and in all cases staff were knowledgeable and very capable community development workers. These workers frequently demonstrated their ability to work with local people and organisations and connect up members of the community, working in collaboration and avoiding duplication of services wherever possible.

The collaboration and co-ordination role that LinkAge Network played in the project at a citywide level proved to be a big factor in the overall success of the CDOP programme. Their provision of quality training and collaborative events - along with their work horizon scanning for new funding opportunities - meant that they were instrumental in supporting community development workers across all projects.

Some barriers to success were beyond the control of local organisations, and structural factors such as poor transport systems created issues with delivery. Some found temporary solutions to this problem in the form of offering subsidised lifts through local taxi firms, but this was not felt to be sustainable long term. It was therefore often difficult to find venues that could be accessed easily on foot or through public transport systems.

Reaching the lonely and socially isolated remains the perennial problem for providers, and although efforts were made to ensure as much outreach as possible was achieved, those affected remain inaccessible by the very nature of their situation. It is clear that more needs to be done in order to locate these people and give them the means and the confidence to attend activities. This is perhaps one area in which the silver lining of Covid 19 may assist, as more efforts are made to bring older people online and ensure they have access to the internet. In doing so, perhaps those who are less mobile or who lack confidence to attend activities in person might find this approach works for them in ways that face-to-face contact has previously failed.

Where organisations had a clear structure and sense of purpose, and where there were contingency plans in place to mitigate staffing issues, momentum and progress were maintained throughout the funding period. Likewise, in those projects with stronger record keeping and reporting procedures, outcomes were easier to measure. However, where providers struggled with internal management of staff this was often reflected in their ability to deliver consistent lasting change and to maintain project momentum. Therefore strong organisations with good contingency plans should be a pre-requisite of any such programme. Equally, for evaluation teams to be able to measure success or monitor outcomes, being able to provide clear and concise reports throughout the duration of the programme is highly desirable.

Providing a meaningful way to consult with older people that moves beyond simply asking opinions and is more akin to coproduction also proved challenging in almost every project. Those that found some success in this area were able to do so by making voices heard within wider community groups, and it therefore may be the case that older people need to be included in community decision making at a broader level. This also relates to the point that some older people spoken to during the evaluation made about their discomfort with designing activities specifically for older adults – again, many felt that they just wanted to be included and for their needs to be considered in community activity more generally. This may also explain the success of those projects who willingly embraced intergenerational activity.

If projects and activities are to be sustainable long term then it is likely that older people's issues need to be considered at a systemic citywide level, and that they must be represented in conversations that take place within local communities. However, perhaps the ideal scenario is that this becomes an unconscious part of developing and designing healthy cities, with age friendly policies and inclusive design factored into all levels of community development.

KEY LEARNING AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Laying the groundwork for success

1. Finding the right organisation to deliver the project
Projects delivered by local, well established organisations with good knowledge of the area and a strong community presence tended to be more successful in terms of community engagement and local buy-in. Where community development was attempted by an organisation based outside of an area, there tended to be some level of disconnect or less of a community presence. In Horfield and Lockleaze, for example, the Lockleaze-based Buzz Lockleaze CIC found it more difficult to develop the community in Horfield, and this may have been connected to a lack of local knowledge or a reduced presence in that area. Likewise, in Old Market and St Paul's the worker was less accessible to the community because Livewest did not have offices in the area and the workers had no local hub in which to physically sit. Whilst these problems are not insurmountable, they do appear to add a layer of difficulty in establishing community connections, and care should therefore be taken when choosing delivery partners.

2. Finding the right people to deliver the project
It is important that projects employ workers who are experienced in community development and who preferably are familiar with (or even better who live) in the local area. Some came from outside of the area of interest and enjoyed

much success, but more time was spent scoping the area in these cases, which may be a consideration for short term projects that need to 'hit the ground running'. Additionally, care should be taken where possible to ensure project workers are representative of the communities they are working in and have a strong understanding of the needs of residents.

3. Asset mapping the local area
ABCD approaches to community development were used in all projects, and asset mapping was seen to be a crucial element of this work. Scoping the area and making connections with local people, venues and organisations early on was a vital part of building trust and laying the groundwork for future collaboration. It was also an effective way of identifying local people who were willing to participate in the work of the projects and who could disseminate information to others.

Building on what already exists and using the skills of those from within the community in this way has been universally beneficial and some found novel ways of approaching the task. In Stockwood, for example, local people were asked to participate in the asset mapping exercise, which proved to be an effective way of engaging local people in the project and getting them to think about their wants and needs for the local area.

Asset mapping should also be regarded as an ongoing process rather than a one-off event in order to continually meet the changing needs of a community.

4. Relationship building
A key element of these early stages is to identify those people within communities who will collaborate with the project and help bring about change. In some areas workers faced the challenge of existing organisations working in silos, making this process difficult. However, in many cases the CDWs were able to make

strong connections and build trust which led to effective collaboration between local agencies. CDWs were also adept at engaging wider stakeholders at a citywide level, as well as other elements of the BAB programme, such as the Community Kick-Start Fund and Community Navigators.

Relationship building and building trust should be regarded as a crucial part of the process and viewed as an ongoing activity. Initial work in this area will always be slow, and sufficient time should be dedicated to it, particularly at the start of any new community development project.

5. Door knocking
Many projects engaged in door knocking activity, especially early on in the project as a scoping exercise. Although very time consuming and not a consistently fruitful method, in some cases it did yield good results. However, this was very dependent on the area and workers tended to ultimately turn to other ways of consulting with local people. Some areas found that success rates would vary greatly from road to road, whilst others – such as the Fishponds CDOP - found greater success when they asked local people to participate in door knocking activity, thus making it less formal and more of a peer-to-peer exercise which people found more approachable.

Door knocking can therefore be a useful exercise, but consideration should be given to who will do it, at what time of day and in which areas in order to gain the best results.

Meaningful consultation, participation and involvement for older people

6. Steering Groups
The participant questionnaire outcome findings demonstrated statistically significant improvements for co-design and involvement in decision-making. This indicates the potential of the projects for those taking part in the

questionnaire-based part of the evaluation.

All projects began their CDOP work with the idea of establishing some kind of steering group for older people as a means of consulting with the community and designing activities in a collaborative, co-produced way. However, creating a steering group solely for older people proved to be challenging in many areas, largely due to a lack of buy-in from within the community, inconsistent attendance or a reluctance to participate in what some residents saw as strategic level decision-making. In other areas of the city it was hoped that steering groups could be formed by recruiting people attending existing activities, but many didn't want anything more than to take part in a group and go home at the end. Other providers persevered with steering groups with falling numbers, only to find that they petered out over time and had to be abandoned.

The most successful steering groups were established in Stockwood and Brislington, with the former becoming part of the Greater Stockwood Group (now the Greater Stockwood Alliance), a wider group for the Stockwood area. In Brislington some success was found in the form of the Over 50s forum which met on a monthly basis, but latterly again this joined forces with the wider Greater Brislington Together group. In both cases, by aligning with more established groups aimed at the whole community, older people's interests were more effectively represented as part of a broader community conversation rather than as a specific, targeted endeavour. Future projects may also benefit from further re-thinking the formalised monthly meeting approach to consultation as many older people do not want to commit to what they perceive to be regular strategic thinking in this way.

7. Finding alternative ways to consult
In some cases alternative ways of consulting were found, largely as one-off consultations at

taster days or pop-up activities. Although not a longer term pressure group approach to shaping local activity, this did prove beneficial in terms of canvassing opinions and finding out the sort of things that older people wanted within their communities. However, it might be argued that this level of consultation is not as empowering as true co-production of activity where older people collaborate with workers in developing communities.

Activities for older people

8. One-off, pop up and taster events
These events proved to be uniformly popular as a way to register and gauge interest in activities in the community, as well as allowing people to try what was on offer without having to commit to attending long term. They provided an excellent opportunity to showcase a community development project and all it has to offer, but also provided a space in which local people could come together to meet and make new friends. Many areas held regular one-off community events, with OM hosting a series of community barbecues in the summer and Stockwood various get-togethers that included a community picnic and an apple pressing day. Generally these ad hoc activities were very well attended and popular.

9. Regular activities
A range of regular activities were held across all CDOP projects, from Tai Chi to lunch clubs, repair cafes, men's sheds, cooking clubs, craft clubs and drop-in events such as tea and talk. Drop-in events, often held in venues that did not charge - such as local libraries - were far less reliant on the number of attendees to support the continuation of the group and therefore were less concerned with numbers. These groups also provided an informal opportunity to meet people without the pressure of committing to regular attendance, which some older people preferred.

Providing a broad range of regular activities was crucial given the very broad range of tastes to cater for within the 'over 50s' category. Many projects saw a distinct difference between the 'younger old' and the 'older old' and found that the sort of groups they wanted to participate in very much depended on a range of factors such as mobility, confidence levels or levels of fitness. Individual motivations for participating in activities also varied greatly (for example wanting to meet new people, learning a new skill, getting fit, low mood or loneliness).

Knowing which activities are right for the area in which an organisation is working will be dependent on the original scoping activities, asset mapping and ongoing collaboration and consultation with older people. Many found that this was sometimes a case of trial and error, with fluctuating attendance that meant some activities could not be sustained. Others found that combining activities with existing groups or intergenerational activities was a successful way to gain regular attendance.

10. Intergenerational activity
Providing groups that attract all ages was a popular choice for some projects (for example Horfield and Lockleaze's animation workshops or Stockwood's allotment group). There were a number of advantages to providing intergenerational activities, the primary one being that in doing so more people attended and therefore groups were more sustainable longer term. An additional positive was that many older people did not necessarily only want to socialise with other older people exclusively, and in bringing different age groups together barriers could be broken down. Equally, there were cases where community groups worked together towards a common purpose (such as in Stockwood's asset mapping activity) which helped develop a common sense of purpose.

11. Activity venues
The situation of a venue can have a bearing on who is able to attend groups and therefore the popularity of events. If venues are far from transport links then attendees will need to rely on private transport to get there, which may be acceptable for the more able but will prohibit those without cars. Equally, for those less mobile it can be difficult if the venue is a long walk from a bus stop or if the individual has to walk there from door to door. The most successful and well attended groups and clubs tended to be those situated in a central place in the community with good transport links. However, there often isn't a great deal of choice in the venues available for activities as cost implications can prohibit the use of some buildings, and often churches and community halls offer venue hire for a discounted rate or no fee.

It is worth noting that although venues such as churches tend to be cheap or sometimes even free, there are certain connotations associated with using religious buildings for non-religious activity and not everyone is comfortable attending groups held in those venues.

12. Transport and mobility as a barrier to participation
It is clear that transport is a significant barrier to participation for older people as many do not have access to their own vehicles or have mobility problems that prohibit them from using public transport. Some projects attempted to overcome this by providing subsidised taxi services, but this was not a long term solution to the problem. As transport comes under the remit of the local authority, providers may need to continue to lobby for better provision and work with local authorities to find transport solutions.

Raising awareness of groups and activities

13. Marketing messages
Some of the older people who were interviewed during the evaluation stated that they were sometimes put off by labelling a group as being for the 'over 50s' as they did not identify with being a person in need of separate activities specifically for their age group. Whilst it is true that some people would prefer to actively seek out groups for older people for personal reasons, many of the 'younger old' preferred groups that were simply open to all ages. Care should therefore be taken in order to get marketing messages right and providers should be wary of all-encompassing age labels which may be off-putting to some.

In areas that produced a booklet to advertise local activities it was found that avoiding a separate booklet specifically aimed at the 'over 50s' was beneficial, instead including it as a section within a community wide publication. This way activities that are open to all ages can also be included. This also has the added advantage of shared costs in terms of publicising activities, with advertisers more likely to sponsor a booklet with a much wider reach.

14. Promoting activities on and offline
Although older people are increasingly online, many still have limited access to the internet, therefore printed copies of marketing materials remained popular. These were frequently placed in public places such as libraries and doctors surgeries.

Flexibility and adaptability in response to community need

15. Flexible activities in response to contextual factors
In some areas it was necessary to be flexible with activity times according to the needs of the local area. In multicultural, inner city areas like Old Market and St Paul's, for example, there were times of the week or during the year where it was not possible for people to attend groups, either because of prayer times, cultural celebrations or local festivities. Community development workers therefore need to communicate with local leaders and venues in order to pre-empt these events and to provide activities that are accessible to everyone.

16. Flexible project strategy
The test and learn nature of the CDOP projects has meant that there were times when original project strategies needed to be adapted or even abandoned in favour of alternative activities. Steering groups were a good example of this, as was Fishpond's attempt to establish a network of 'community champions'. Being adaptable is a crucial element of any community development project and is necessary if projects are to be truly collaborative and empowering endeavours.

Staffing, line management and organisational structure

17. Contingency planning for staff and organisational changes
In two of the projects there were significant issues associated with a loss of momentum in project delivery due to staff absences. In one case a member of staff went on long term sick leave and was not replaced for some months, by which time all prior progress had been lost. It is therefore imperative that contingency plans are clearly in place within organisations to ensure that there is sufficient cover in the event of a member of staff becoming unexpectedly unavailable. Leaving long gaps with no one in post – particularly in projects with short funding periods – should be avoided at all costs.

Where there is capacity in larger organisations other members of staff may be drafted in, but this is not always successful given existing commitments and commissioners should ensure that project work does not suffer if this is the case. Furthermore, staff should be encouraged to keep written records of the contacts they have made, activities on offer and general project progress so that there can be a handover to new staff if necessary. Again, this did not happen in some of the projects, resulting in replacement staff having to start again from scratch.

18. Contracted hours

Projects should think carefully about the hours that staff are contracted to work. In one case a community development worker was contracted to work 21 hours a week, covering a large area of the city incorporating three wards with very diverse cultural and socioeconomic needs. Not only did this not appear to be sufficient in terms of time, the worker also had other personal commitments that meant they were unable to be flexible with their hours. This meant that some of the activities took place outside of the worker's contracted hours and they were unable to have enough of a local presence during part of the week.

19. Clear managerial structure

Staffing issues are not only a problem for frontline community development workers, but also for those in managerial positions. Some of the CDOP projects lost managerial staff who were then not replaced, leaving workers feeling somewhat rudderless or without the support of the wider organisation. Furthermore, managers need to have good knowledge of the project that they are taking on and cannot simply be drafted in without a clear understanding of the aims and objectives (and therefore the support needs) of staff.

In Brislington the community worker was well supported by his manager and there was a strong presence from both members of the team throughout. However, in other areas such as Horfield and Lockleaze, workers reported that they did not have a clear hierarchical structure and these individuals experienced periods where they were unclear about what they should be doing as a result. The most successful projects therefore tended to be those where management structures were clear and where there was strong leadership and support from other team members from the wider organisation.

Performance monitoring

20. Record keeping and reporting

In order to ensure that providers are performing in line with service level agreements it is imperative that good records are kept by members of staff. For example, CDOP projects submitted detailed quarterly reports at the start of the project, but these became less thorough as time went on, making it difficult for the evaluation team to establish the extent of activity in some cases. This was especially frustrating for projects that had also provided fewer opportunities to observe activities, as there was little way to assess the success of the project outcomes.

Loneliness, isolation and mental health

21. Reaching the lonely and socially isolated

All projects found it inherently difficult to reach the lonely and socially isolated, and to demonstrate that they had done so. Given that by their very nature this group isdifficult to access, getting to them is reliant on making some kind of initial connection. Projects made numerous attempts to do this, but there was worry that some older people were still unable to access activities. Numerous barriers to attending groups were identified, and there were some impressive examples of providers trying to overcome them. These included Fishpond's work with Considerate Friends – the over 50s carer's support group – as well as Brislington's efforts to engage with older people in their homes through contacts made with tradespeople. There was recognition that engagement needed to be spontaneous and opportunistic, and where isolated older people were identified they were given information of contact details about local groups and organisations. It is therefore likely that a move towards a community-wide level of awareness, whereby all citizens are able to intervene when they make contact with an isolated person will give the best chance of success in this area.

Those projects that encouraged participants to complete the registration and outcomes questionnaires could demonstrate that they were reaching people with disabilities, health conditions, carer responsibilities and residence in areas of higher deprivation. They could also show that about one third of their participants scored as 'intensely lonely' on the De Jong Gieveld scale. These projects also showed a statistically significant positive impact on loneliness, wellbeing, general health and social participation.

22. One-to-one intensive support

Once isolated and lonely people are contacted, there are still barriers to participation. One of the most commonly reported issues was that of low confidence, something that was particularly profound for those who wanted to take their first step towards engagement but had reservations about doing so. These people tended to require more intensive support over a longer time period, which was difficult for busy community development workers to provide. It may therefore be the case that increased collaboration with local social prescribing services (such as BAB's Community Navigators) would be beneficial when people requiring additional support are identified.

Sustainability

23. Low or no cost activity

It is no surprise that keeping costs of attending activities down encourages participation. This is easier to achieve in funded activities, but any commissioned project needs to build in sustainability from the outset and think long term about how groups will be funded once the project is over. Some projects relied on the goodwill of others to do this, either through finding venues that would give them space for free, or by finding group leaders who would provide activities at low or no cost. However, thought should be given to what would happen if this goodwill were to be withdrawn or if

members suddenly had to pay for activities.

24. Training members of the community

Community projects work best when people are doing things for themselves, and volunteers have played a key role in many projects. Local groups have been offered training through a number of CDOP projects, including Old Market and St Paul's, Stockwood and LinkAge Network. A range of training activities have been provided, including risk assessment, first aid, food hygiene, grow your group and asset mapping, and LinkAge Network has actively supported local organisations to develop their own training. Training is therefore a necessary element of any programme that aims to utilise local groups who are able to organise themselves and become self-sufficient long term.

Project boundaries and perceptions of community

25. Geographical boundaries

Thought should be given to how geographical boundaries given to projects are interpreted and whether project resources are adequate to cover such an area. Again, this will largely be reliant on contextual factors and there is no hard and fast rule for deciding the size of areas to be covered. However, learning from this report suggests that some providers took on areas that were too vast and/or diverse for a single project worker to effectively handle. Equally, questions need to be asked at the beginning of a project about what constitutes 'community' locally, as it could be that some attending activities are coming from outside of an area to attend activities within a cultural context or just in an environment in which they feel safe. If funding for the project is being targeted at a certain geographical area then some flexibility about who can use local services and come to activities is likely to be necessary.

26. Age boundaries and inclusive communities
A recurrent question raised throughout the CDOP project work has been whether applying specific age boundaries to activities is desirable, or whether it can in fact be prohibitive to some people. Although it is clear that some funders are keen for providers to target a specific age group, evaluation of the CDOP projects does indicate that there would be many benefits in projects combining their efforts to focus on developing inclusive communities that offer something for everyone. Not only would this avoid an 'othering' of older people and conversations that segregate parts of the community, it would also mean greater financial power for projects, as well as being able to offer a more holistic approach that is inclusive of everyone of all ages.

Provider funding

27. Addressing the issue of short funding cycles
There will seldom be an instant response from the community when trying to establish development activity and it may take many months for a new idea or concept to become established. As discussed, building local relationships and trust is time consuming, as is understanding the contextual needs of the community in which development is needed. Therefore, the tendency towards short funding cycles of 2-3 years may need to be revisited. Alternative options such as initial funding with the promise of extensions for projects that perform well may be an option in achieving this.

Dedicated citywide coordination

28. The role of LinkAge Network
The dedicated role that LinkAge Network played in coordinating CDOP activity at a citywide level and providing workers with the opportunity for collaboration has been invaluable. Their provision of quality training and collaborative events - along with their work horizon scanning

for new funding opportunities - meant that they were instrumental in supporting community development workers across all projects. This kind of broader level provision should therefore be considered in any citywide community development initiative.

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