

# Community Development for Older People: **Strategy, Organisation and Coordination** >

## Evaluation of LinkAge Network's Bristol Ageing Better project

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# ABOUT THIS REPORT >>

This report is a collaborative effort between BAB Community Researcher, Jill Turner and UWE researchers Mat Jones, Jo White and Amy Beardmore. We would like to thank everyone who agreed to be interviewed or take part in discussion workshops for this report, including the LinkAge staff and partners, BAB Community Researcher team, BAB staff and UWE staff.

## Further information

LinkAge Network  
<https://www.linkagenetwork.org.uk/>

Bristol Ageing Better  
<http://bristolageingbetter.org.uk/>

UWE Centre for Public Health and Wellbeing  
<https://www1.uwe.ac.uk/hls/research/publichealthandwellbeing.aspx>

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY >>

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In 2017, LinkAge Network (LinkAge) was commissioned through Bristol Ageing Better (BAB) to deliver a three year project called Community Development for Older People (CDOP) Strategy, Organisation and Coordination. The project included coordinating and supporting community development activities across three areas of the city, a training programme, a 'share and learn' exchange initiative, and work to help bring funding to groups and organisations across the city. All of this work was founded on a principle of championing asset-based approaches. The LinkAge team consisted of three community development coordinators, a team manager, and additional office support.

This evaluation has been produced at the end of the project funding period. The research is a collaboration between staff at UWE's Centre for Public Health and Wellbeing and Bristol Ageing Better Community Researchers. We undertook a range of interviews, activity observations and project records analysis over the course of the project. Relatively little previous research reports on best practice in community development 'coordination' specifically, and wider practitioner capacity building work. The majority of existing research focuses on grass roots community development.

The evaluation found that LinkAge was able to build upon a track record of community development work with older people's organisations and groups. The Community Development Coordinator (CDC) team also brought considerable experience in the use of asset-based approaches.

The first stage of the project involved a strategic scoping of the organisational assets in each area of the city. In each area – 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.

LinkAge was able to advise and inspire groups to scale up their work and open out to new partners. The team helped create neighbourhood What's On 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 city-wide training played a role in building skills for the BAB programme as a whole and 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.

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 provided 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 to visit projects. The Share and Learn programme therefore provided an informal continuing professional development platform in a context where such opportunities were rarely available.

This type of project work is very difficult to evaluate meaningfully using quantitative methods. There are few 'standardised' impact measures for partner agencies, groups or individuals. Instead the evaluation showed that the project produced diverse, complex and mixed types of impacts for beneficiaries. These impacts were also often difficult to fully predict. As a consequence the team needed to adopt an agile and highly personal approach to their work. This included building trust, making use of informal work environments, and spotting important opportunities as they arose.

This project has been quite innovative by coordinating activities amongst agencies across sections of the city rather than focusing on small area neighbourhoods. 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.

The project encountered a range of challenges. 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 was 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 make long term investments in community development.

There is little doubt that each area of focus for the project has been valued and, moving forward, constitute important parts of the community development landscape for the city. The coordination function clearly has had a role in addressing the uneven character of patch-work and often dislocated community development projects; there is a clear demand for the workforce development role of practice forums and training; brokerage and assistance with funding opportunities is particularly appreciated by small community groups. Given the scale of the issues facing the ageing population, there is a need for specialised agencies to champion the interests of older people, especially those at risk of isolation and loneliness.

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# ACRONYMS >>

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ABCD	Asset Based Community Development
BAB	Bristol Ageing Better
BCC	Bristol City Council
CDC	Community Development Coordination
CDOP	Community Development with Older People
CDW	Community Development Worker
CR	Community Researcher
UWE	University of the West of England

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# 1. Introduction >>

LinkAge Network’s<sup>1</sup> project “Community Development with Older People: Strategy, Organisation and Coordination” (LinkAge CDOP project) involves the strategic coordination, organising and linking of existing service providers and other CDOP projects in Bristol. The project builds upon a track record of LinkAge coordination and facilitation work with older people in Bristol.

Historically, community development activity is very uneven across Bristol, with some evidence that there needs to be greater strategic coordination of efforts and support for activity in selected areas, particularly with regard to older people (Woodspring, 2016). There is

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Footnote: **1** LinkAge Network is frequently abbreviated to LinkAge in this report

also considerable scope for the sharing of good practice and focused attention on those areas historically under-supported.

The LinkAge CDOP project seeks to fulfil this support, organising and coordination role in Bristol. The initiative works across the whole city, and has additional focused coordination work in three designated areas of ‘North’, ‘South’, and ‘Central-East’ Bristol. The LinkAge CDOP project works closely alongside other BAB CDOP projects and the BAB funded Community Navigator projects.

The UWE and Community Researcher-led aspects of the BAB evaluation include a focus on CDOP projects as well as evaluations of a range of other projects.





## 2. Overview of the LinkAge project >>

Community Development for Older People has been one of the core elements of Bristol Ageing Better. When considering the projects to commission, BAB looked at practice examples from elsewhere and found models that used networking and collaboration to extend their reach, share best practices and work more effectively within their own geographic area. During BAB's review of what was currently available in Bristol (Woodspring, 2016) they found that there was a lack of coordination and collaboration on a city-wide level, due in part to time and resource constraints. The review found examples of gaps as well as duplication of community development initiatives across the city. As a result of this review BAB developed an invitation to tender (BAB, Sept 2016), which LinkAge successfully applied to, winning a three-year contract to work across the whole of Bristol.

The five key areas for the project are:

- 1. Encourage new activities from organisations or groups of older people.** The CDCs identify gaps for older adults and work with existing assets to generate activity to fill those gaps. Gaps may be in a geographical area or with a community of interest or identity.
- 2. Connect and network with existing groups.** The CDCs bring together interested paid workers, volunteers and active residents in local Gatherings to discuss local community

development. There is a Gathering in the north, south and east of Bristol.

**3. Support and champion asset-based approaches;** for instance, LinkAge works with BAB to commission asset-based training in relation to the BAB 'at risk' groups.

**4. Coordinate and share intelligence,** evidence of need and lessons learned across partners: for instance, LinkAge are working with BAB to run 'share and learn' sessions for BAB-funded community development project workers.

**5. Horizon Scan for funding opportunities and coordinate collaborative bids:** for instance, LinkAge CDCs will run workshops in January/February 2020.

LinkAge was funded to employ three full time Community Development Coordinators and a part time manager. The funding also supported office and support team costs and a Community Activity Budget (CAB) to provide small awards to partner groups and organisations.



# 3. Research and local context for the project >>

## OLDER PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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, Richards, Greaves and Campbell, 2011), creating 'age-friendly' environments is an increasingly important public agenda. A key priority 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 engaging with older people on what these should look like is integral to this process. Older citizens often make a positive contribution to their communities, and therefore constitute a valuable community asset. 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, Mordey, Phuaré and Russell, 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 represent a major risk 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). The terms 'loneliness' and 'social isolation' are often used interchangeably, but it is important

to differentiate between the two states as they can mean different things to different people, and may be dependent on personal circumstances or contextual factors. Loneliness is defined by Age UK 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."*

Whilst social isolation is said to be:

*"An objective measure of the number of contacts that people have. It is about the quantity and not quality of relationships"*

Age UK, 2019

Whilst these issues can affect all ages, older adults are particularly vulnerable. The risk factors for social isolation and loneliness may be broadly the same for the whole population, but importantly they are more likely to occur amongst 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; ONS, 2015)

These problems can be further compounded by the fact that older adults are 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 age.

With evidence suggesting that older people are increasingly likely to age 'in place' and now tend to stay in their own homes for longer (Gardner, 2014), developing communities that can support and empower older people is key to them living fulfilling and rich lives. Much of this work involves utilising Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approaches that build on what already exists within a community, connecting groups and services and using them as effectively as possible (Sustaining Community, 2013; Klee, Mordey, Phuaré and Russell, 2014). Community development has therefore been integral to BAB since its inception and is seen as a key element of the overall programme.

While there has been research specifically on community development with older people,

it is important to emphasise that the bulk of the community development literature tends to be place-based, and does not start with any particular age group, such as older people (Craig et al., 2011). Indeed, most models of community development take a holistic view on the need to work with, and bridge links and create new networks between diverse interest groups (Gilchrist, 2009; IACD, 2018). This is certainly the case with asset-based models, where it is usually assumed that the lived experience of community life need not fall into the demographic categories or issues defined by outside agencies (Klee, Mordey, Phuaré and Russell, 2014). It follows, therefore, that the main points of reference for the BAB Community Development for Older People projects are similar to all community development work in urban UK settings.

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COORDINATION

There is very little literature that emphasises the term 'community development coordination' (CDC). However, coordination, partnership building, networking, and training work are widely considered to be important aspects of community development practice. While there are many competing definitions of community development, in recent years there have been efforts to renew a consensus around the core values, competencies, and codes of practice. In the UK, the Community Learning and Development Standards Council Scotland (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.

CLDSC's conceptual framework indicates that CDC is oriented towards the more strategic and

leadership end of the practice competencies, for example in terms of ‘developing and supporting collaborative working’. Similarly, the International Standards for Community Development Practice (IACD, 2018) suggest that CDC functions are strongly linked to the ‘leadership and infrasture’ key areas of practice.

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

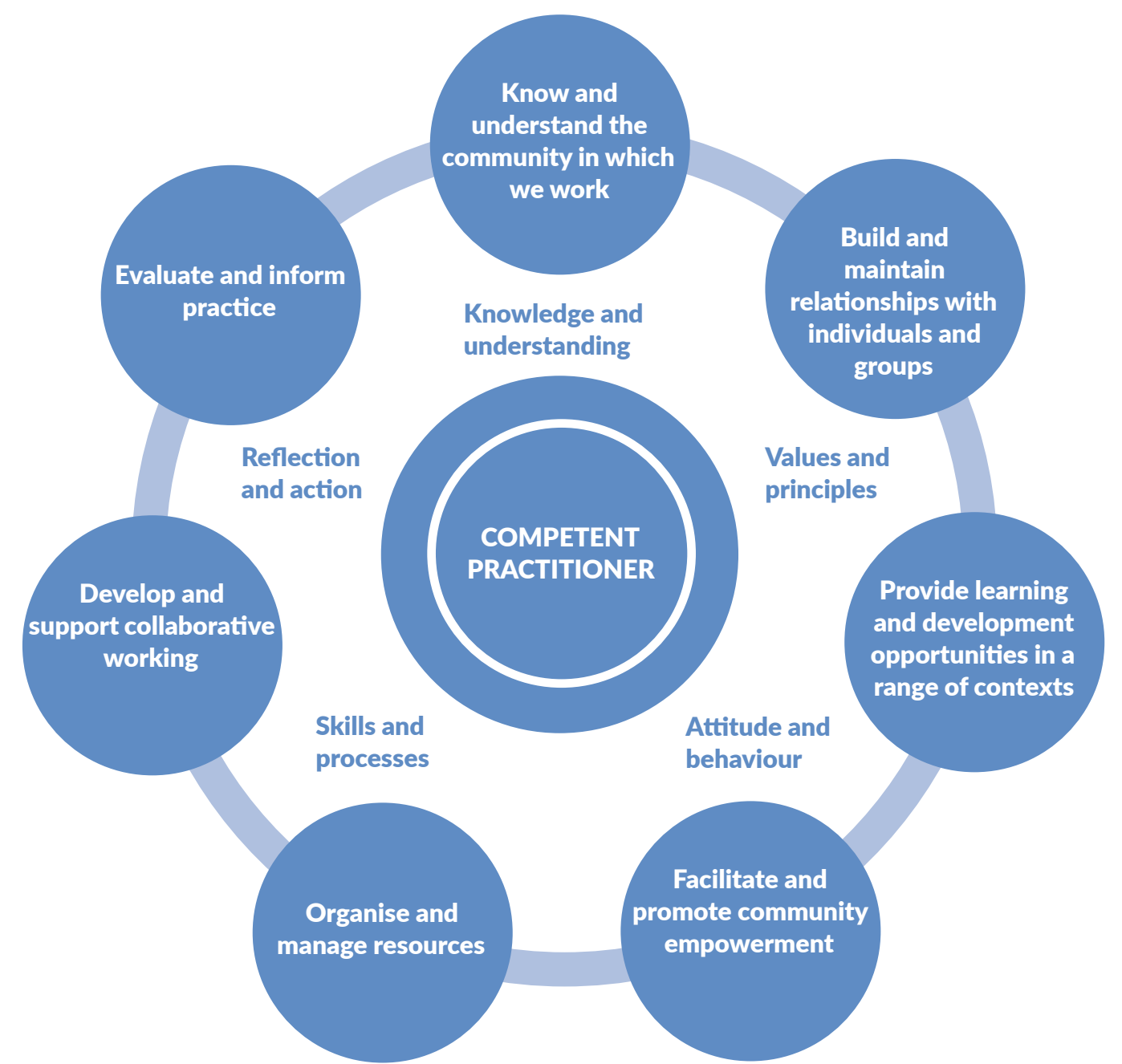


Table 1: International Standards for Community Development Practice (IACD, 2018)

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.

Asset-based community development has an interesting relationship with CDC. The literature on asset-based approaches starts with a highly bottom-up perspective on change so, for example, the Community Organiser movement (Christens and Speer, 2015) emphasises the importance of engaging individuals and groups in informal community settings, rather than working through mainstream agencies. From this perspective, CDC is likely to be the end-product - rather than the start - of a process of community work. CDC becomes necessary when there is

a need to scale up grass-roots activities and build greater partnerships. CDC therefore appears to sit uncomfortably with asset-based working due to problems of when coordination is needed, and which agency has the authority to coordinate. In this context, most community development models emphasise the importance of empowerment-based leadership whereby extensive learning and dialogue needs to take place alongside coordination work.

The LinkAge project has an important relationship to community development work

led by Bristol City Council (BCC) particularly in terms of the role of strategy and coordination. BCC has a long history of community-based work that has taken a variety of forms<sup>1</sup>. Prior to the LinkAge project, BCC had withdrawn funding from Neighbourhood Partnerships (alternatively known as Neighbourhood Forums), city wide area-based groups that had a strong emphasis on community working. This followed reorganisation in which BCC's centrally coordinated Community Development team had grown in size. This team, since 2014, had strongly invested in Nurture Development's ABCD model in a process moving from 'community work' to 'community development work'. BCC's Community Development team had advised on the design and assessment of BAB's LinkAge contract. Part of this included promoting an approach that emphasised the importance for LinkAge to coordinate and bring-together a wide range of community-based groups across areas of the city, as opposed to delivery of a conventional small area-based grass roots community development model. A major challenge from the outset for LinkAge's strategic and coordination work was that it was being delivered in a context of significant public and voluntary sector funding and service cuts across the city<sup>2</sup>.

A further consideration is that the LinkAge project benefits from being understood as one part of the wider programme, rather than as a standalone initiative. The project links to the majority of other BAB projects, notably the other CDOP projects, the Community Navigator projects, and, informally, with the Community Kick-Start Fund. As South et al.'s review (2017) of community-centred approaches for health

Footnotes: **1** This section is based upon interviews with the BCC Community Development, BAB and LinkAge teams.

**2** See the BAB Final Evaluation Report (Forthcoming) for further details

shows, evaluations need to examine the wider links between projects and the context in which they occur in order to understand their potential value for systems and organisational change.

To summarise, the literature shows that 'coordination' is one important element of community development practice. However, it is usually integrated as part of a package of largely 'bottom-up' work, rather than as a distinct project focus in itself. LinkAge's CDC approach points towards the more strategic end of the community development field. The initial concept behind the project is therefore quite novel. It is also complex given the matter of how power is exercised in coordination, especially when the work is framed in terms of asset-based principles.

# 4. Research aim and questions >>

The overarching aim of the evaluation of BAB CDOP projects has been to explore the elements of good community development with older people. For the LinkAge project the focus is on the broader practice of 'community development coordination'. In this context, the following research questions were used to inform the direction and focus of the evaluation.

Due to the evolving character of the project the final evaluation questions are somewhat different from those that initially informed the evaluation. Notably, at the outset we sought to undertake a cost-benefit analysis of selected aspects of the project. However, there was not sufficient data on which to build this analysis. In its place the evaluation provides greater depth on the process of delivering the project.

Table 2: Research questions

1. Encouraging new activities. What is the added value that the LinkAge CDOP project brings to the coordination of community development in selected areas of Bristol?
2. What is the perceived effectiveness of the training, support and networking offered through the LinkAge CDOP project?
3. What is the role of LinkAge CDOP 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 LinkAge CDOP project's model for community development coordination?
5. What aspects of LinkAge CDOP project activity are associated with core BAB outcomes for older people? [With a focus on isolation, loneliness, community activity, and decision-making]





# 5. Research design, methodology and methods >>

## DESIGN, METHODOLOGY AND FIELDWORK

This is a mainly qualitative research study that includes an evaluation of the processes of delivering the project and its perceived outcomes, and impacts. The study has a number of areas of focus that follow the core components of the BAB programme.

We used a variety of methods to gather material, including observations and interviews at organised events, observations at local network meetings and meetings amongst LinkAge staff, interviews with LinkAge staff, and a review of written reports from LinkAge Network: Year Plans, Quarterly Reports, and Work Plans, Case Studies and blogs. This was supplemented by attendance at the Share and Learn and training events, interviews with those responsible for managing these and a review of feedback data from participants.

The CR on the team (JT) collected data for the Central and East, with a focus on Clifton/ Clifton Wood, and in the North, with a focus on Sea Mills. This involved attending and observing meetings connected with the CDOP project and interviewing organisations and

individuals working with the CDCs, to evaluate the impact of the CDC's coordination role. The approach was partially ethnographic as it aimed to provide a picture of the community context and local residents' own perspectives on the activities in which they participated in, based on observation and conversations with local people. The CR is a White, middle class, professional older woman who had been living in North Bristol for the last 30 years. A UWE member of the team (MJ) undertook similar work in the South, with a focus on Hengrove/ Whitchurch. He is a White, middle class professional who had, similarly, been living in North Bristol for over 25 years.

Details of the fieldwork are set out in the following tables.

**Table 3: Summary of research fieldwork activity in different project areas**

CDOP South	
Research activity	Purpose
Observations at meetings, Churches Together (n=2) 10.01.19 / 19.09.19	To speak to activity organisers in an informal setting about their experiences of coordinated work
Interviews with local community project workers (n=6) 10.10.19 / 21.09.19 / 04.12.19	To gather views of activity organisers delivering the project and working with older people
Interviews with LinkAge managerial project staff (n=3) 10.10.18 / 15.01.19 / 04.09.19/ 15.11.19 / 05.12.19	To discuss the rationale and implementation of the project
CDOP North	
Research activity	Purpose
Observations at various classes/activities for older people (n=4) Sea Mills Birthday Celebrations Sea Mills 100 28.11.2018	To speak to older people in an informal setting about their experiences of the group and social isolation in general
Observations at Network Meetings North Bristol Gathering 27.11.2018 / 23.1.2019 / 30.4.2019 / 19.6.2019 Sea Mills Gathering 16.11.2018 / 18.4.2019 / 23.8.2019	
Interviews with community development workers (n=2) LinkAge CDC: 12.4.2018 / 14.11.2018 / 16.11.2019 VOSCUR CDW: 18.7 2019	To gather views on those workers delivering the project and working with older people
Interviews with LinkAge project staff (n=3) 12.12.2017 / 23.5.2018 / 18.10.2018	To discuss the strategic approach of the project
Interviews with: Project Leader Sea Mills 100: 29.7.2019 Sevenside Manager: 14.8.2019 Community Activist Sea Mills Community Centre: 9.10.2019 Older Participant: 26.11.2019	To speak to older people in an informal setting about their experiences of the group and social isolation in general and to people the CDCs are involved with

CDOP Central and East	
Research activity	Purpose
Observations at various network meetings East Bristol Gathering: 29.01.2019 Clifton Over 50s Forum: 19.2.2019	To observe and speak to network members
Interviews with community development workers (n=2) With CDC: 20.4 2018 / 9.7 2019 / 26.11.2109	To gather views on those workers delivering the project and working with older people
Interviews with managerial project staff (n=3)	To discuss the strategic approach of the project
Interviews with: Volunteer with Holy Trinity Hotwells (HTH), Lunch Club and Dementia Café:6.8.2019 Older Participant: 12.8.2019 Volunteer Organiser Clifton Over 50s Forum: 21.8.2109 Organizer Clifton Holiday Club: 18.10.2019	To speak to older people in an informal setting about their experiences of the group and social isolation in general and to people the CDCs are involved with

The data collection for the Share and Learn events and the Training events was undertaken by MJ and JW respectively, with JT attending a range of activities. In addition to a desk review of the programme delivery documentation, training feedback questionnaires and interviews, the evaluation of the training included a post-attendance email survey.

## DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

For interviews and other forms of data collection with participants (such as by email), we used a semi-structured set of questions. An example is provided in Appendix 3.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Interviews were audio-recorded and selectively transcribed or, particularly in the case of informal interviews, noted with regard to key points. MJ and JT compared the findings of

interview analysis in draft before agreeing the main themes and implications.

## ETHICAL ISSUES

The UWE Health and Applied Sciences Research Ethics Committee gave ethical approval for this research (Ref no. HAS.16.11.045). For interviews, prospective participants were given verbal and written information about the evaluation and asked to provide written consent, or verbal consent in the case of informal meeting events. Participants were informed of the confidential nature of the information they provided and the anonymisation of data in reporting.



# 6. Findings: Overview of the delivery of the project >>

## THE STAFF TEAM

The main expenditure of the project has been on staffing. The three full time Community Development Coordinators were each responsible for one part of the city. Each also had a specific remit with regard to the city-wide work of running the Share and Learn programme and the training programme. The CDCs had considerable prior experience in asset-based community development, and, drawing upon previous roles in the city, were able to build upon a number of existing connections. These skills and links helped move the project forward quickly, relative to other new community development projects. The project manager had a part time role to lead on overseeing the whole project, organising staff support and direction. The whole team maintained regular working meetings with the BAB programme team, especially around areas of shared responsibility such as the training events.

Each CDC engaged with a wide variety of external groups and organisations. This work included high level operational meetings with the BAB programme team and discussions with Bristol City Council. It also included grass roots community meetings with small groups

across the city and informal meetings with practitioners and older people in community settings. An analysis of one CDC's work diary indicates a busy schedule. Over a nine-month period, the CDC recorded 118 meetings, of which at least 86 involved external parties. The early stages of the project involved extensive exploratory meetings. Over time, as project work became consolidated, the CDCs focused on a narrower range of working partnerships. Nevertheless, a striking feature of the team's work diaries is the extent and range of contacts that continued to build throughout the project.

## COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES BUDGET

LinkAge has a Community Activities Budget (CAB) to provide small amounts of funding to groups. CAB applications had to meet at least one of the CDOP project objectives (e.g. develop a new activity), had to be sustainable past the funding lifetime, and had to have a foundation in known views of older people. Applicants are asked to complete a short form to show how their proposed work meets at least two of the programme objectives. To date, the CAB has been used to fund 66 activities, with costs ranging between approximately £30 and £1730 per area<sup>1</sup>. The following list provides examples of

entities funded which evidences a wide range of support including to sessional workers, workshops, social meals, transport, capital goods and newsletter production:

- Speedwell Picnic in the Park
- Transport to Hartcliffe market
- Dance workshops for over 50s
- Holiday club
- Exercise tutor for a care home
- Snack, chat and reminiscence sessions
- Resources for indoor games
- Printing costs for newsletters
- Aqua massage for Black Carers Group
- Travelling Kitchen, intergenerational cookery

The budget for this fund was apportioned, approximately equally, to each city project area. Further details on the context of the spending is set out in the following sections.

## OVERVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROJECT

The LinkAge CDOP Project began in April 2017 and finishes in March 2020. The project was planned against annual plans that were agreed with the BAB management team. The project manager was newly appointed to the project

Footnote: <sup>1</sup> Activity costs that cover all three project areas North, Central/East, and South, of the city – (Walks for Health; Dance Workshops) have been split into three.

and did not have a role in the original bid and contract negotiations. By month 4 of the project the full team had been recruited. One of the first tasks was to provide greater clarity to the project by referring back to the BAB 'CDOP Blueprint' and through discussions with BAB. There were some difficulties agreeing the scope and remit of the project, particularly with respect to the strategic role of the project as part of the BAB CDOP programme:

*"The role and remit of the LinkAge Network CDOP project was not clear and appeared to shift, consequently, staff and external professionals were unclear as to what the project was doing. Staff spent a lot of time teasing out and redefining what the project was for, with BAB support, and spent time emphasising the remit of the project"*

[CDC-4]

During the early stage the LinkAge team contacted and developed relations with BAB Community Development projects, BAB Community Navigator projects and with local organisations outside of BAB funded CDOP areas, including non-BAB Community Development projects (such as Knowle West Health Park) and community groups. The CDCs worked closely with Bristol City Council Community Development Officers (especially in the South). Each CDC undertook scoping and asset mapping work in their respective areas.

Drawing upon the ABCD approach the team felt that gaps do not have to be filled by new activity or resources: they can often be filled by connecting existing resources and supporting consideration of the gap. This view helped lend support to the overall rationale of the project.

The project plans for Year 2 (2018/19) and



Year 3 (2019/20) were more focused and refined than those of the first year. During this period the CDCs increasingly defined their work in relation to the networking, activating, learning and training goals of the project. Nevertheless, a notable feature of the plans is that they depended upon the outcomes of contact with external parties, and therefore it was not appropriate to determine the details of the delivery or all specific elements of the outcomes in advance.

In the third year of the project, there was a change of staff in the CDC team. There was a closely supported handover process, however the very personal nature of working relationships mean that the delivery plans had to be adjusted to reflect a change in staff. During the final six months of the project, the LinkAge team started to focus on sustaining the work of the project, funding opportunities, and the legacy of activities initiated under the project. The team drew heavily on ABCD principles across the course of the project, which has meant that sustainability has always been a consideration when engaging with community groups. Towards the end of the project the team produced a reflective report on their approach. The overall approach was summarised as follows:

*“The key to strategic community development is a focus on both formal and informal networks, strengthening what exists and creating new structures. A ‘web of connections’ best describes the approach developed by the team. It is strategically multi-layered, interconnecting local and wider communities; encouraging links that form reciprocal, positive relationships that can build on the strengths of community.”*

In the following sections we examine the implementation of these ideas through presenting the findings on the main operational areas of the project in further detail.





# 7. Findings: Encouraging new activities from organisations or groups of older people >>

This section explores the role of the project in encouraging new activities in each of the three city areas of the project. BAB initially set this project objective for LinkAge, although it brought into question the challenge of undertaking community development ‘work’ as well as the wider role of community development ‘coordination’. The mapping exercise identified the project’s priority areas to encourage new activities. The priorities may have been local communities or communities of interest, and were intended to relate to ‘at risk’ groups as defined by BAB. Mapping included walking the areas, identifying physical assets, building relationships with local people, local activists and local services, using the Age UK Heat Map<sup>1</sup> and the Bristol JSNA. This process helped them understand potential priorities for the project and informed the focus and priority of work.

This chapter starts with an overview of activities across the city in each year of the project. It then covers each project area in turn and focuses on a selection of initiatives.

Footnotes: <sup>1</sup> See <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/policy-research/loneliness-research-and-resources/loneliness-maps/>

## ENCOURAGING NEW ACTIVITIES IN THE CITY

LinkAge set outcomes to assess this work:

1. Community members consciously review current provision for people aged 50+
2. Community members identify their own wishes and goals
3. Community members take ownership of the work and feel confident to take action
4. Activity takes place where before there was insufficient activity

## YEAR ONE 2017/18

In Year 1 the main areas of activity were in Clifton/Clifton Down, Hengrove, Whitchurch and Sea Mills, and Speedwell. ‘Lighter touch’ areas of activity were Ashton Vale, Redland, Southmead, Lawrence Weston, Shirehampton and Avonmouth where activity was already happening but CDCs aimed to build confidence,

help allocate tasks, and facilitate mutual learning.

In the second half of the year the CDC in the North worked closely with an active Southmead resident with the aim of encouraging more community involvement and activity within residential care schemes in Southmead. She achieved this by visiting and talking to residents. (See Appendix 6: Case Study North Bristol Southmead Care Homes). She also worked in a retirement complex in Avonmouth, which provides housing for people over 50 and is managed by BCC, supporting residents to examine community dynamics and reclaim their community room. In Central-East the CDC worked with residents in an Extra Care Home in St George who requested support for community activity (See Appendix 5: Case Study East Bristol Care Home A).

## YEAR TWO 2018/19

The priorities of Year 1 remained the same.

Adopting a lighter touch, the CDC in the North supported Shirehampton Methodist Church to plan their action towards Shirehampton becoming a dementia friendly community (as identified in the Shirehampton Community Action Plan). The CDC used LinkAge CAB to fund a performance of Don’t Leave Me Now; a play looking at the experience of those living and supporting people with dementia. Shirehampton Methodist Church have since explored the possibility of setting up a Dementia Friendly Café.

In Lawrence Weston the CDC continued to support Ambition Lawrence Weston with their work on reducing isolation in the ward. They had been discussing the potential of an event which would pull together the findings of recent doorstep conversations with residents, potential for developing further activity ideas

and incentives, potential partnership working, and establishing a local steering group that can take forward the agenda of isolation and loneliness in Lawrence Weston.

In addition, the CDC started to work closely with Cotham Church and High Kingsdown Residents Association to identify how to engage the residents in the area to examine gaps in activities and generate ideas for further activities, with the aim of utilising the church as a venue.

In Central-East the CDC, exercising a more in-depth approach, worked in Speedwell exploring work with a Housing Association Community Engagement Worker and a local nursery. An initial meeting took place to consider joint working to improve ongoing activities with local older residents and explore multi-generational working. In quarter 4 two meetings were held in Speedwell to progress a summer event with local residents and organisations working together.

The CDC also worked with BME organisations such as Dhek Bhal, Sammy’s Pop Up Club, Evergreens, Malcolm X and Golden Agers.

In the South, Hartcliffe and Withywood were inspired by the Hengrove and Whitchurch What’s On Guide to produce their own. This was a piece of partnership work, orchestrated by the CDC; the new What’s On Guide was disseminated and received great feedback. The CDC continued to lightly support the Ashton Vale Together group, including sending them relevant information.

## YEAR THREE 2019/20

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, collect potential project

ideas and encourage people to support groups in order to take 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<sup>1</sup>.

Following this event Ambition Lawrence Weston looked at developing a Readers and Arts Project. The CDC will continue to work with Ambition Lawrence Weston to establish a local steering group focussing on the subject of isolation and loneliness, in order to develop potential project ideas.

In Southmead the CDC supported a cookery session, hosted by the Travelling Kitchen Project in a sheltered housing Scheme in Southmead.

In High Kingsdown the CDC’s attempts to communicate with the Residents’ group had limited success and she continued to try and make contact with Cotham Church.

In Central-East, in Speedwell, the CDC’s coordination progressed well and two further meetings were held to progress the Bringing Speedwell Together, Big Picnic in the Park event on 13th July with the involvement of eight groups. From these meetings the following activities and collaborations ensued:

- a joint meeting with Scrapstore and local community group Smiles Matter, to progress craft activity workshops and publicity for the event;
- the support and involvement from a local gardening group;
- group resources were shared and agreed

Footnotes: <sup>1</sup> See news item: <https://www.link-agenetwork.org.uk/lets-connect-tackling-loneliness-and-isolation-in-lawrence-weston/>

between groups (these included skills, knowledge, networks, materials, buildings and financial); and

- an event application to Bristol City Council confirmed

In Quarter 3, LinkAge’s CAB was used to pay for furniture at All Saints, Clifton, for a refurbished room to offer a place for over 50s to meet as a group, improve the current Memory Café space, encourage a drop-in space, and plan activity in the Clifton/Pembroke Road area. In addition, several new applications are currently being developed with communities. In summer 2019, the CDC referred groups working in Central-East to VOSCUR (the local support and development agency for the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector) for governance and future funding support.

## ENCOURAGING NEW ACTIVITIES IN THE NORTH: SEA MILLS

The CDOP project identified Sea Mills, a suburb of Bristol, as an area with very little activity for older people. Sea Mills is situated roughly 3.5 miles (6 km) north-west of the city centre, towards the seaward end of the Avon Gorge. It borders Shirehampton, to the west, Westbury to the North and Stoke Bishop to the east. The wide A4 Portway trunk road passes along the south-west edge of Sea Mills and links Central Bristol with its out port at Avonmouth. It forms part of Kings Weston Ward with Coombe Dingle and Lawrence Weston and is within Bristol North West Parliamentary constituency. According to the 2001 Census there are 10,844 people living in Kingsweston ward, over 95% of whom were White. Originally Sea Mills was the site of a Roman settlement, known as Portus Abona. It was designated as a conservation area in 1981 as it has an intact example of

a planned Detached Garden Suburb model which Ebenezer Howard and Raymond Unwin planned following a holistic, homogeneous design, in line with the principles of the garden cities and suburbs movement. The Sea Mills Garden Suburb was designed as a sustainable, self-contained community and its allotments, gardens, recreational areas, library, shops, schools and churches were all fundamental elements of its character. It is also Bristol’s finest example of planned post-WWI council housing, which celebrated its centenary in 2019.

Today housing is much the same - a mix of terraced and semi-detached properties - but there are limited shops in the neighbourhood, only a convenience store, a post office, a takeaway, a hairdresser and two nail bars and no pub (the nearest being The Millhouse at the bottom of hill on Shirehampton Road). It has three buses which serve it, Numbers 3

and 4 which go into Bristol City centre, taking approximately an hour, and a Number 508, which goes to Southmead Hospital hourly. For residents who have good mobility a Park and Ride bus can be caught from the Portway to the city centre.

## Community organisations and facilities

When the project began there was a Sea Mills Community Centre (SMCC, Sunny Hill, BS9 2NQ), built by the community, and run by Sea Mills Community Association, a charity which took ownership of the centre through an asset transfer from Bristol City Council. The centre was one of the very limited secular spaces available to the community in Sea Mills. During the project, the CDC spent considerable time working with a volunteer from SMCC, which had no paid staff, expanding activities and putting on an event. In November 2019, SMCC was closed as the building was not fit for purpose, with any





activities, including those for older people, being halted and having to seek new premises. The committee of SMCC are seeking legal advice to transfer the asset back to BCC.

In addition to SMCC, Sea Mills Over 50s Social Group is a group of residents aiming to connect people who are over 50 and enable them to make friends through activities in their local community. The group meets at Sea Mills Library. Sea Mills Together is a community group which was formed by interested parties who live and work in Sea Mills and Coombe Dingle. They are responsible for the “Community Plan Survey” and Sea Mills Community Forum<sup>2</sup>.

The three churches in Sea Mills have a strong presence in the area and all seek to be open, modern and relevant. Highgrove Church is family-oriented with a vibrant community of around 150 adults and 70 children, St Edyth's, an evangelical Anglican church, has a diverse congregation from many different backgrounds and church traditions, and Sea Mills Methodist Church, located on Sea Mills Square, which does not hold services but owns a double decker bus (known as Ark Bus) which is used to host events and art sessions.

Sea Mills Community Initiatives is a small local charity set up in 2009 by the three churches of Sea Mills. It aims to support and serve those who are vulnerable, either because of age - both young and old - ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage. They are responsible for Café on the Square, located right at the centre of the community of Sea Mills and Sea Mills Community Garden<sup>3</sup>.

Footnotes: <sup>2</sup> See <http://seamillstogether.org.uk/>

Footnotes: <sup>3</sup> See <http://www.smci.org.uk/community-garden.htm>

## LinkAge CDOP in Sea Mills

The focus of the Community Development Coordinator, CDC, in Sea Mills is to encourage new activities where there are gaps. In practice, there is an overlap between this strand of work, and other activities such as some of the Gatherings.

After commencing work for LinkAge in June 2017 the focus of work by the CDC after the initial asset mapping and scoping, was meeting with local existing organisations. This was initiated by a resident and the CDC brought resources to support this request. Focused work started with residents in July 2017, working with a retirement complex in Sea Mills, with 21 retirement flats, plus communal facilities, run by the charity MHA. This involvement was the result of a resident contacting the LinkAge office. The CDC met with the resident and provided her with information regarding the BAB Community Kick-Start Fund and contact details for the organisation Alive. The CDC subsequently facilitated funding from the Grateful Society for an eight week programme of activities and exercise sessions delivered by Alive in April 2018. The sessions consisted of guided reminiscence, artifacts and movement exercise sessions (see Appendix 4: Case Study North Bristol, Care Home A).

During October 2017, the CDC met with Highgrove Church, the Methodist Church and community members who were intrinsic to the Community Action Plan for the SMCC, to discuss possible events at which to explore what people aged 50+ would like from their locality. The CDC also connected with Severnside Community Rail Partnership regarding the potential for engaging with older people on the Severn Beach line, given the diverse range of people who live in North Bristol and use this line.

During the second year of the project, the CDC aimed to:

- Develop opportunities for conversations with older people in Sea Mills;
- Build a knowledge base of the types of activities and events older people took part in;
- Find out what new activities older people wanted to see in Sea Mills;
- Gain working relationships with the key organisations, with the aim of developing new activities;
- Support older people to contribute to local decision-making, especially in Sea Mills.

During Quarter 1 the CDC supported SMCC to put on a 1940's tea dance, funded by LinkAge CAB and used this event to gather information from local people about what activities they enjoyed, what they already did and what they would like to see more of. A large amount of information was gathered and reviewed to inform planning. This example reflected the aim of the project to support the older voice in local decision making.

The CDC started to work with a local Bristol City Council care home (Case Study C) to support their efforts in encouraging others in the area to sign up to their trips. This was an existing resource being under-used by the community and it was reported that take up increased.

During Quarter 1 the CDC attended a variety of one-off events in Avonmouth (Summer Festival), Lawrence Weston (Rockingham Gardens) and Sea Mills (Summer Fayre) where the CDC ran an exercise to generate ideas for future activities from those over the age of 50. These ideas were fed back to organisations

such as Avonmouth Community Centre and SMCC for implementation, helping to support the older voice in decision making.





## Sea Mills Gathering

Following the departure of a BAB Community Navigator who had convened one Gathering, the CDC continued to facilitate a Sea Mills Gathering for paid workers and residents who live, work or volunteer in the area. The aim of the Gathering is to provide a space where people can exchange contacts and information. The group has met regularly, on seven occasions between November 2018 and November 2019. It is attended by local residents, local organisations, including churches, Bristol City Council libraries and museums, and ward councillors. Although the numbers attending varies between two and seven, with numbers falling over time, those who attend bring interesting and valuable information that has then been shared through the CDC email contact list. These meetings have created the conditions to stimulate conversations about community activity within the area. The CDC is not always available to chair so a series of local residents and organisations have taken responsibility for chairing the meetings. The work of the CDC in Sea Mills has established links between the various entities already described, namely Sea Mills 100, Sea Mills Community Centre, Sea Mills Together, Café on the Square, St Edyth's Church, Sea Mills Methodist Church, and residents and the Gatherings have been instrumental in this.

## Sea Mills 100

In November 2018, the Sea Mills 100 project commenced a heritage project for the Sea Mills estate in Bristol, funded for one year by the Heritage Fund. This was an opportunity for the CDC to channel the interest of older people towards local decision-making. The initiative received additional funding from Bristol City Council's Bristol Cultural Development Partnership Homes for Heroes programme and from the Architecture Centre's Open

Doors programme. The first event was held in November 2018 at St Edyth's Church and following the Project Manager approaching the CDC, the CDC began a very active involvement with the project. Sea Mills 100 activities included:

- An ongoing mini-museum in a K6 red telephone kiosk;
- A heritage trail of the estate in June 2019;
- Snack, Chat and Reminisce events for older people in which the CDC played a considerable role;
- Sea Mills Sunflowers;
- Historical research;
- A oral history project

## Games on the Train

During follow-up work the CDC discovered that events had been held on the Severn Beach Line train, such as The Fun Palace, and that they had been successful. As this was a proven approach she contacted the Partnerships & Social Inclusion Manager for the Severnside Community Rail Partnership (SCRP) who was keen to collaborate. Initially the CDC approached a member of the Sea Mills Over 50s Group, a community activist from the SMCC, and a knitting group in Avonmouth, bringing these groups together for a Games on the Train event, with LinkAge CAB providing funds for prizes for the Bingo and SCRCP funding 16 seats. An important element of this event was using it to publicise the various activities taking place in the area.

The event was a success and the CDC continued to work with the Partnerships & Social Inclusion Manager for the Severnside Community Rail Partnership (SCRP) and the





community activist from SMCC, introducing her to the Marketing and Communications Officer at LinkAge (funded through the BAB CDOP project), to produce a sustainability tool for future publicity. Further Games on the Train were held, with the CAB funding new games and prizes and with the additional help of a volunteer, an Avonmouth resident. On one event over 30 local people were involved. Games on the Train continues to flourish as a successful partnership between CDOP, SCRP, Avonmouth Community Centre volunteers, a Sea Mills Community Centre volunteer, Sea Mills Over 50s Group and more recently, Shirehampton Community Centre. One unexpected success of the project has been the production of a short video commissioned by SCRP which won third prize in the video and photography category of the National Community Rail Partnership Awards<sup>4</sup>.

### Snack, Chat and Reminisce

Snack, Chat and Reminisce activities, an element of the Sea Mills 100 project, in which the CDC had considerable involvement, galvanised residents and involved volunteers. An unexpected consequence of these events was local interest in perpetuating the event as a regular, social occasion. The CDC began exploring this idea with those who volunteered on the day and the possibility of using CAB monies. In the summer of 2019 at a Snack, Chat and Reminisce session 30 participants completed a questionnaire eliciting their ideas about potential future Sea Mills 100 and Snack, Chat and Reminisce activities. The ideas shared included carols and picnics in the square, an art and craft market, clubs for older people, and history groups. The CDC connected people, used her resources of CAB fund, knowledge and time to support it. And a new activity was generated as a result.

Footnote: <sup>4</sup> See [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=85&v=QK7p8DhlsGm](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=85&v=QK7p8DhlsGm)



September 15th 2-5pm - Vintage buses on the Square, "Snack, Chat and Reminisce"

### Sea Mills and Coombe Dingle Community Plan Survey

During January to June 2019, the CDC worked to support the involvement of older people in the Sea Mills and Coombe Dingle Community Plan Survey, published by Sea Mills Together, providing an opportunity for older people to engage in setting priorities, and being part of a decision-making structure in Sea Mills. The CDC provided resources, via the CAB Fund, to provide incentives in the form of gift vouchers to encourage people over the age of 50 to complete the survey<sup>5</sup>. To further ensure older voices were represented in the plan, the CDC distributed it to local sheltered accommodation. The survey has been collated and analysed with the aim of releasing the final results in January 2020. In addition, the CDC attended two Sea Mills Forums and commented on numerous

Footnote: <sup>5</sup> See [www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/SMT2019/](http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/SMT2019/)

emails in supporting the development and completion of the Sea Mills Community Plan. The CDC also compiled the "What has Sea Mills been doing so far" web page, which pulled together information on the various organisations and groups in the area for the plan.

A member of Sea Mills Together told the CR that future plans will involve greater use of the library, an asset, especially as SMCC has now closed, and a new community association will be formed to include Coombe Dingle where a considerable number of older people live who feel disconnected. They will be building on the legacy of LinkAge Network's CDOP project and Sea Mills 100 project and applying for funding to support social events e.g. trips out and exercise activities.

### Let's Talk Sea Mills

Resources were also put aside to create a meeting 'Let's Talk Sea Mills' to discuss and secure a long-term decision-making structure for the area. However, the 'Let's Talk Sea Mills' event did not come to fruition; when the CDC contacted the respective community members, they were unable to commit enough time to it. Instead, the CDC started to explore with the chair of Sea Mills Together the idea of linking the work with their AGM held in late June. The CDC played a role in advertising the event and updated attendees on the work taking place in the area.

### Film Club and Singing Group

The CDC worked closely with two residents of Sea Mills who researched two project ideas for Sea Mills; a film club and a singing group. The CDC and the two residents spent two months looking at local venues to investigate the suitability of both project ideas and visited established film clubs. On the May 2019 Bank Holiday, with the support of BAB Community

Navigators, Sea Mills Community Centre, Sea Mills Craft Group, Sea Mills 100, Sea Mills Methodist Church and Sea Mills residents, a pop up event took place on the green with the Ark Bus (from the Methodist Church) with the aim of continuing to have conversations with people about the two project ideas, and other potential projects. The CDC supported with time, connections and CAB money. The project was supported to sustain beyond CDOP lifetime.



On the celebration of Sea Mills 100th Anniversary the CDC took the opportunity of using the Ark Bus again, this time to show a film and talk to people about the two project ideas. To pursue this initiative further, one Sea Mills resident visited an established singing group in Lockleaze to appraise whether this was the type of group she would be willing to support in Sea Mills. The first session of the new singing group took place in September 2019 in a Care Home in Sea Mills. The second local resident, who lives in a Care Home, consulted other Sea



Mills residents regarding the film club project idea and gained the support of 38 people. She identified the resources needed to establish and run the club - projector, screen (donated), licences (£83.00 per film show), hall hire etc. and raised some funds through raffles at her Care Home, with LinkAge CAB covering the first year's expenditure in addition to a small fee which will be charged for attendance. She has approached the minister at the Methodist Church to see if the film club can be held there.

Between July and September, the CDC brought together groups and individuals to consider what is available for over 50s from Sea Mills and supported them to contribute to a Community Action Plan.

## ENCOURAGING NEW ACTIVITIES IN THE CENTRAL AND EAST

Clifton, situated to the west of Bristol city centre, is both an inner suburb of Bristol and the name of a ward which also includes the areas of Cliftonwood and Hotwells. Other parts of the suburb lie within the ward of Clifton East. Clifton includes Whiteladies Road, a shopping district to the east, and Clifton Village, a smaller shopping area near the Avon Gorge to the west, and is one of the oldest and most affluent areas of Bristol, much of it having been built with profits from tobacco and the slave trade. Clifton Down is served by Clifton Down railway station on the local Severn Beach railway line, while Clifton village has very



limited bus services, just Nos 8 and 9 which run infrequently from the centre of Bristol.

Clifton ward, which includes Hotwells, has a population of 10,452 in 5,007 households, according to adjusted figures for the 2001 census. On the same basis, Clifton East ward has a population of 9,538 in 4,741 households. In Clifton ward, 27% of the adult population is in full-time education. 11.7% of the population are over 65 compared to 13.0% in Bristol, not significantly different. Life expectancy is significantly higher than the Bristol average: Clifton males 82.9, Bristol males 78.7; Clifton females 90.5, Bristol females 82.8.<sup>6</sup> For adult social care, clients receiving a community-based service aged 65+ is significantly lower than Bristol average. Clients receiving a domestic care service aged 65+ 13.2% Clifton, 37.7% Bristol (rate per 1000).

### Community organisations and facilities

Clifton and Clifton Wood have a number of local community organisations and facilities. These include the Hotwells and Cliftonwood Community Association<sup>7</sup> (HCCA) a network of local people committed to enhancing life in the community. The HCCA area includes Hotwells, Cliftonwood and Spike Island. HCCA aims to:

- Share skills, knowledge and experience within the community
- Help people to be involved in local decisions
- Organise social and creative activities for everyone
- Work towards the development of a sustainable local economy

Footnotes: <sup>6</sup> See ONS 2017 in BCC 2019 in BCC Clifton Statistical Ward Profile 2019 May 2019, v3

<sup>7</sup> See <https://www.hotwellscliftonwood.org.uk/>

- Act to tackle social, economic, political and environmental problems in our area in partnership with Bristol City Council.

Clifton Down Community Association covers the area between Whiteladies Road, Pembroke Road, Alma Road and Apsley Road. It is a membership organisation, with individual annual membership costing £3.00 and household membership £5.00. The Association runs the Corner Club which aims to help older people get out, meet people and engage in activities including quizzes, exercise classes, talks and day trips<sup>8</sup>.

After limited use for many years, Jacob Wells Dance Centre underwent a Community Asset Transfer to Fusion Facilities in October 2018 when a license was signed prior to signing a lease<sup>9</sup>.

The area has several churches of different denominations in different clusters:

All Saints 68 Pembroke Road, Clifton Bristol BS8 3ED. This is an Anglo-Catholic church, part of the Church of England and Diocese of Bristol, it serves east Clifton and draws people from across Bristol and beyond.

- Christchurch, Clifton BS8 3BN, is an Anglican Church.
- Clifton Cathedral Church of Ss Peter and Paul, Clifton Park, Bristol BS8 3BX, is a Catholic Church.
- Redland Park United Reformed Church, Whiteladies Road, BS6 6SA.
- Victoria Methodist Church, Whiteladies

Footnotes: <sup>8</sup> See <https://www.facebook.com/Clifton-Down-Community-Association-299249113499260>

<sup>9</sup> See <http://jacobsdwellscommunityhub.com>



Road, BS8 1SU.

- Tyndale Baptist Church, Whiteladies Road, BS8 2QG.

### LinkAge CDOP in Clifton/Clifton Down

The CDC for Central-East Bristol started working for LinkAge Network in July 2017. Clifton/Clifton Down was identified as one area with very limited provision for older people, Clifton Library in Clifton village provided a focus for some activities but there was little else identified except church-based activity. The CDC focused on identifying different groups and organisations with ideas and connecting them to each other, building capacity, confidence and trust. The area covered has a number of “centres”, Clifton Village, Clifton, Clifton Down, and Hotwells. There was overlap with respect to encouraging new activities with the CDC in the North which resulted in both CDCs working on the Clifton Holiday Club project, and also between Holy Trinity Church in Hotwells who attended Gatherings in the South. The CDC met with local existing organisations, including local churches, with the aim of bringing them together to try to generate activity and a sustainable framework for future provision. Some organisations committed to community development, for instance All Saints Church, which was already very interested in outreach work with older people. During the January to March 2018, planning of a Clifton Over 50s Forum began with All Saints Church, to be held in April 2018. The CDC’s role was to empower the existing assets and to develop the Forum, providing a coordinating role.

### Holy Trinity Hotwells (HTH), Lunch Club and Dementia Café

When new in post the CDC visited the Lunch Club and met with the Coordinator and one of the volunteers who she introduced to Clifton Over 50s Forum. She retained contact at the Lunch Club, by email, face-to-face and at the Clifton Over 50s Forum and other events. The CDC:

- Disseminated information (regular email updates);
- Introduced and assisted with application to BAB Community Kick-Start funding for a Memory Café;
- Introduced the volunteer to a Fundraiser at LinkAge Network; and
- Made further connections, putting the volunteer in contact with useful people and networks.

### Clifton Over 50s Forum

The CDC worked in partnership with All Saints Church, Clifton to initiate a Clifton Over 50s Forum. All Saints takes an active approach to being involved in the community and has a Creating Connections Action Group, set up to reach out and create links with the local community – both residential and business – in order for people not only to get to know All Saints and the role the church plays in the community but to forge links with each other, all with the aim of combating loneliness and social isolation. The CDOP fitted well with this, broadening their activity.

At the first Forum in April the group identified that it believed it did not know what was available to them in the local area. The group decided to develop a What’s On Guide for the area of Clifton, Clifton Down, Redland and

Cotham that could publicise all community activities for over 50s, to be published by Autumn/Winter 2018. This fitted well with the expertise of LinkAge Network in the production of local What’s On Guides. The CDC worked hard to involve all stakeholders in the production with a view to subsequent editions being sustainable. The launch of the What’s On Guide in October was successful and people were pleasantly surprised by the quantity of publicised events.

At the meeting in early 2019 the Forum decided that now it knew what local opportunities existed, it wanted to explore transport issues, hoping to build on BAB’s work in this area. The Forum met again in February 2019 to discuss travel and a local councillor, who is on the city’s Transport Strategic Committee, was invited to talk to the Forum about public transport. A new bus service was being planned for Clifton to alleviate the impact of the rerouting of one of the two local services; the Forum was offered places on a small working group to help shape this service but at the time of writing this report BCC had not progressed this work (See Appendix 7: Case study Clifton Over 50s Forum).

To showcase the work it had done, the Forum held an early evening information event on 19th June 2019 at All Saints Church in Clifton. The purpose of the event was to showcase the variety of activities, support and services for over 50s in the city, and to enable local residents to make new connections<sup>10</sup>. Key aspects of this event were as follows:

- Two members recruited the local groups

Footnote: <sup>10</sup> See: <https://www.linkagenetwork.org.uk/the-clifton-over-50s-forum-held-an-early-evening-information-event-on-19th-june-at-all-saints-church-in-clifton-the-purpose-of-the-event-was-to-showcase-the-variety-of-activities-support-a/>

which were in attendance and took responsibility for publicity and information distribution;

- 24 organisations (secured through the CDC) offering activity, support and services with/for older people, attended this Forum information event;
- Around 40 people attended;
- This was the first time this type of event had been held in the area, and good feedback was received from both organisations and residents, with new contacts made;
- A transport questionnaire carried out on the night with local residents increased evidence of local transport need, an issue of importance to the Forum and which had been agreed at a previous Forum meeting.

A Forum meeting was held following the June event but only one person attended. A review is taking place to establish whether the Forum is still relevant to support local older people in the future.

### Holiday Clubs

In the summer of 2018 the CDC worked with the CDC from the North to support and co-produce the Redland, Cotham and Clifton Holiday Club for older people in the area. The idea of the club originated from one of the local churches which had been actively engaging with more older people in the area.

Running over two years, the aim of the Holiday Club was to create a space where older people could build friendships, feel safe and supported but also have fun. The Club took place over two weeks, three days per week at the end of June and into July, with activities which were organised via personal and organisational contacts. Both CDCs actively advertised the

Holiday Club through local networks, posters, Facebook and the Linkage Network website and the CDC spent half a day walking the streets of Redland and Cotham talking to people and displaying posters wherever she could for the club. In this first year, no internal evaluation of the Club was undertaken.

In the spring of 2019 the CDCs in Central/East and the North worked together for a second year to support and co-produce the Redland, Cotham and Clifton Holiday Club for older people in the area in collaboration with three Whiteladies Road churches and Active Ageing Bristol. The Club ran for six days over two weeks. Activities included:

- Making a Holiday Club banner with Scrapstore;
- A visit to the Natural Selection exhibition at Bristol Museum;
- A guided tour of the Concorde Museum;
- A story-telling workshop and music with Wyldwood Arts and African Drumming workshop;
- Gig boat rowing and canoeing on the docks and a tour of Underfall Yard;
- Bread-making, lunch and a concert at a local primary school;
- A guided tour of Thatcher's Cider with tastings.

A total of 26 people attended the holiday club: a core group of 16 people signed up for all six days, and the rest booked separate days due to other commitments. Several people stated that signing up for all six days was good value for money at £60. The alternative, of £20 per day, discouraged people booking trips only. This had been a learning point from 2018 and it worked

as less people booked individual trips only.

Nine people returned to the club from having attended in 2018, and all booked for the full programme, having enjoyed their previous year's experience. There was a noticeable change in atmosphere in 2019 as people spent more time together connecting and talking, creating a supportive club, inclusive of those with a mobility issue or who struggle to take part in a group, enabling people to get to know each other, while doing activities together. The partnership between the churches helped promote the sustainability of the club activities.

## ENCOURAGING NEW ACTIVITIES IN THE SOUTH

LinkAge worked across a number of areas within the southern part of the city. This section focuses on work in Hengrove and Whitchurch Park, Ashton Value, and bereavement activities (that involved multiple agencies and areas).

### Hengrove and Whitchurch Park

Hengrove and Whitchurch are suburbs in the south of the city, one part of Whitchurch is inside the city boundary, and another - 'Whitchurch village' - located in North Somerset. Hengrove is a council ward of Bristol situated between Whitchurch, Knowle and Bishopsworth, running along both dual carriageways, Wells Road and Airport Road. The area of Knowle it adjoins is known as Knowle West. Hengrove and the area of Whitchurch falling within the city boundary have a population of 17,200 with a significantly different percentage of older people compared to Bristol: 12.7% are between 55 and 64, compared to 8.9% in Bristol as a whole and 20.9% are 65+ compared to 12.9% in Bristol as a whole. In addition, the area has a significantly different profile of ethnicity, with 93% being White British compared to 77.0% in Bristol as a whole and 4.2% of BME groups compared to 16% in the city as a whole. It also has significantly higher owner occupation with 74.8% of properties owner occupied compared to 54.8% in Bristol as a whole (Bristol City Council 2019)<sup>11</sup>. Poor bus transport links to the centre of the city have been a focus of concern,

Footnote: <sup>11</sup> Bristol City Council Hengrove and Whitchurch Park Statistical Ward profile Dec 2019 <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/436737/Hengrove+and+Whitchurch+Park.pdf/24bc4b46-509b-4db8-88a2-34efda4de0e4>

with residents reporting feeling cut off from other parts of the city at times. Some local community activism is evident. For example, local residents formed the Whitchurch and Hengrove Neighbourhood Planning Forum in opposition to outline planning permission being given in October 2019 for over 1,400 new homes, a park and other facilities to be built in Hengrove Park as part of a mixed use development off Whitchurch Lane. Opposition has rallied around the amount of new housing and loss of green space in the area.

### Community Organisations in Hengrove and Whitchurch

Two pre-existing community facilities in the area are Hengrove Community Centre (Fortfield Road, BS14 9NX) run by volunteers, with activities including a group for over 50s and Whitchurch Community Centre (Bristol Road, BS14 0PT) which runs an over 60s exercise class for £4.00. This area no longer has a Bristol City Council Community Development Worker or any other professional Community Development input. There are anecdotal reports that the area is overlooked by voluntary sector city agencies.

### LinkAge CDOP in Hengrove and Whitchurch

At the outset of the project, the CDC spent several months networking with groups and agencies in the area, often attending events that were not widely publicised. On the basis of initial meetings, the CDC learnt that there were few environments where local community groups met each other. The exception to this was the Churches Together group.

### Churches Together in Hengrove and Whitchurch

This forum consists of representatives from the six churches in the area. The group has been meeting periodically for a number of years.



The CDC asked if she could attend the group and discuss areas where her role might assist, which led to discussion about the issue of older people and loneliness. The CDC identified a common theme between the churches and the work she could progress, a lack of knowledge amongst local older people about local opportunities. It was felt that one potential new development could be an area What's On Guide that could publicise community activities, with a focus on older people. This fitted well with the expertise of LinkAge in the production of local What's On Guides. After wide-ranging engagement with local groups and three months of work, LinkAge helped produce a What's On Guide for the area. Churches Together used their channels to distribute the What's On Guide. The CDC encouraged the group to also consider door-to-door and alternative venues for distribution.

*"The What's On Guide has brought new members into both the Yoga and the Knit and Natter groups run at our church. As a whole Churches Together group we will carefully consider issuing a third edition of the What's On booklet in the next year or so and are appreciative of the initiative given by LinkAge to set it up and to pass on the production and printing information necessary to follow it up in future."*

CT-2

A challenge, however, has been extending the scale of the work undertaken by Churches Together, given that church members are already highly active in their community. An issue discussed at meetings is the difficulty of finding additional support from local residents. For example it has been hard to find volunteers to help organise the Whitchurch annual fete:

*"We've struggled to run events in recent years. We've had a lot of trouble getting people to help organise the fete. X is over 90 years old and heavily invested in the village but she's now struggling to keep events like this going."*

CT-2

*"Most families are working hard to afford expensive houses and two cars. They just don't have enough time to do anything in the community."*

CT-4

Limited community help is compounded with other issues, such as the recent loss of the central field for the fete after its sale for housing development. The combination of a fall back in local community volunteering and a growing older population is therefore an ongoing concern for Churches Together. While the group are positive about supporting the production and dissemination of What's On Guides in the future, it appears that the chances of continuing with this work is strongly dependent on supplementary support.

A complication has been a change of staff in the final year of the LinkAge project. Given the very personal relationships and the informal knowledge of staff, it is difficult to hand over asset-based practice in the same way as a more highly structured project:

*"It's a bit of tricky one because there's not a huge amount of time left. There's no time to build trust and relationships... So it's a case of working with what's already there and what's been supported."*

CDC-S2

Nevertheless, towards the end of the project the new CDC has been able to work closely with Churches Together to help the group take forward their own priorities for the Hengrove and Whitchurch neighbourhoods.

### Hengrove Over 50s Club

The Over 50s Club meets in Hengrove Community Centre and is a self-organised and self-funded group, with a membership fee of £2.50 a month. The group seemed to be used to a set routine and the members who were involved in running the sessions did not think that other members would be interested in anything new (see Appendix Case Study Hengrove Over 50s Club). The CDC met with them during Year 1 and since February 2018 they tried out two new activities: a SingAlong, with financial support from LinkAge CAB, and an exercise class. They managed the CAB funding for the singalong so that participants also part-paid for the sessions and then began to fully pay for them once the CAB fund had expired. This funding model has helped to make the activity sustainable over the longer term.

### Ashton Vale community meetings

The CDC had repeatedly heard stories from Ashton Vale residents: "no one listens to us", "we are isolated", and "things are being done to us". There appeared to be disengagement between older people and a new Community Centre, Ashton Gate House, in the Old Ashton Gate School which has a manager for two days a week. As a consequence of this the CDC introduced the idea of an Ashton Vale community meeting, the first of which took place in July 2018 and involved six people; it aimed to start a conversation about Ashton Vale, to connect people and groups, and to think about possibilities for change. The CDC employed various participatory tools to stimulate conversation, look at motivations, local assets and partners to invite to the next

Gathering. The idea was to gradually gather as many people who care for Ashton Vale as possible. This was to be followed by building a vision and taking action to make change happen – and to change the community narrative through having collective, more powerful voice and say on community life. It also involved building wider community connections that go beyond Ashton Vale.

The second meeting took place two months later and members shared personal stories of Ashton Vale. The CDC reported that:

*"There was great energy in the room, and a plan for the next event was emerging – inviting young people and families and sharing our skills, while also gathering everyone's ideas for the Vision of Ashton Vale"*

CDC-S1

One outcome of the Ashton Vale work was a street party to bring together different sections of the community. The CDC supported the organisation of the event from arms-length, but worked directly with a local over 50s group to ensure their participation in the planning and delivery. The CDC also supported with CAB funds.

There were several community assets in Ashton Vale but the CDC found that there was an overall lack of community cohesion; generations felt resentful, isolated, and not listened to. Residents in Ashton Vale have many potential partners they could work with, such as local businesses, youth workers, shop owners, BS3 organisations. The CDC believed that if all these assets were working better together, the area could realise its potential.

There were some new connections and support offered between groups. But the ultimate

goal of building a strong partnership between community assets and developing a community plan was not realised within the project period.

### Share Talk and Remember: the role of LinkAge in developing bereavement support in South Bristol

Bereavement support has emerged as an important issue for older people, with the bereaved identified by BAB as a group particularly 'at risk' of loneliness and isolation. As part of their social prescribing contract Knowle West Health Park (KWHP) have been working with local surgeries. One surgery wanted to refer over ten patients for bereavement support, however there were no opportunities in the area. KWHP and the LinkAge CDC worked together to find a solution that involved helping re-establish a bereavement support group at one of the local churches:

*“Counterslip Church bereavement group was closing after having run for about twenty years. The volunteers wanted to move on and it couldn't be revived... [The CDC] did a great bit of work to ask about how to carry the group forward by working with other churches in the area. So now it's been brought over to Whitchurch.”*

KWHP-1

This helped fill a vacuum given that other support agencies were not in a position to help. Cruse Bereavement Care was not taking referrals and the Harbour specialised in more complex cases. The new support group, called Share Talk and Remember (STAR), not only worked with new referrals, but became a new source of support for people from the original group based at Counterslip.

While this work came from the community, the CDC opted to support it because it met her agenda, especially because bereavement is a BAB 'at risk' group. The CDC shared ownership of the group with other community organisations and gave direct support with CAB funds. KWHP and the CDC worked to organise training and clinical support for volunteers. The idea of 'volunteering' was not attractive to most participants, so KWHP and LinkAge promoted the term 'friends' to describe informal roles such as helping set up the meeting hall, or offers to greet and 'buddy' newcomers to the group. Although it is less than one year old, both agencies see a prospect that the group can become largely self-regulating. LinkAge's work was very much in partnership with KWHP, with LinkAge being in a position to find connections between low-profile community groups in the area as well as link disparate activities in the city, for example between the STAR group in Whitchurch and another STAR group in Stockwood, set up by St Monica Trust, which have agreed to share logo and learning. The work has helped other agencies such as the Harbour look to develop a more community focus for its clinically oriented bereavement services.

## KEY LEARNING POINTS

### Conditions for action

LinkAge's work to encourage new activities from organisations and groups of older people took place in a wide variety of contexts across the city. In order to move forward effectively the team found that a number of conditions helped support action, regardless of context. These conditions were:

- The presence of groups / organisations / active workers and active residents taking responsibility for the activities within the community.
- A community with the ability to look outwards not inwards.
- A common purpose, willingness and enthusiasm to work together and with others for change.
- Spaces to meet where people feel comfortable.

### Bringing value to local contexts

While the CDCs did not have the time and resources to undertake in depth place-based community development work, they were able to bring value to areas of focus through advice, mentoring, and access to small grants. These inputs did not necessarily require substantial investments of time, but did require making careful choices about the timing and focus of the support.

### Networking and bridging

The CDCs were also well placed to bring together groups and individuals that would not have otherwise met. This convening role was possible through ongoing work to explore

potential connections at local and city area levels. These are activities that some council officers also undertake, but not with a primary focus on the interests of older people, and with reference to issues of isolation and loneliness.

### LinkAge's specific resources and expertise

The project was able to make progress in each of the city areas in part due to specific features of the lead organisation and its staff. For example, LinkAge's experience in developing What's On Guides was an attractive offer for groups in a number of places. The knowledge, experience and connections of the staff team was also of key importance, for example in terms of bridging connections with sections in the city council, identifying local funding opportunities, and awareness of organisational politics.

### Timing and circumstances

As with much community development work the specific timing and circumstances of their contacts had a significant bearing on the outcomes of work. Therefore some initiatives - such as bereavement groups, holiday clubs and train community activities - took off largely due to the right combination of people, venues and events. By contrast, work in areas such as Ashton Vale and Avonmouth was difficult to move forward. The team therefore had to make agile choices on where to invest project resources and where to strategically withdraw.

### Sustainability

The CDCs had to make careful choices about which groups to engage with based in part on an assessment of whether there would be the capacity to move forward after the end of the project period. A difficult, but perhaps positive, aspect of the short project duration was that it focused decision-making on quick wins for local capacity building.









## 8. Findings: Gatherings >>

‘Gatherings’, were an objective of the coordination role of LinkAge Network set out by BAB. This area of work reflected the project’s second objective to “connect and network existing groups”. A ‘Gathering’ is an event that provides opportunities for practitioners and others who work with, or want to work, with people over 50. The nature of this work is very varied and reflects the diversity of the community development field. At Gathering events people can meet and network, share learning and good practice, and collaborate. Gathering events evolved differently in each of the three project areas of the city. For example, those in the North

were only attended by paid workers, while Gatherings in the South and Central/East has both paid and unpaid workers. The aim of this section is to focus on the development of LinkAge’s Gatherings and to explore their strengths, challenges and impacts.

At the start of the project, LinkAge identified the need for localised networking opportunities, in addition to city-wide events. After exploring options with partners such as Bristol City Council and VOSCUR, LinkAge developed a set of local partnership arrangements for Gatherings in each project area of the city.

Table 4: Number of Gatherings in each city area

	South	North	Central & East
Year 1	4	0	1
Year 2	7	3	3
Year 3 (to Q2)	1	3	3
Total	12	6	7



# GATHERINGS IN THE NORTH

In the North, the CDC decided to work with an existing group, North Bristol Community Development Network (NBCDN), facilitated by a Community Development Coordinator (CDC) for the Dementia Wellbeing Service (DWS), who founded the group, thus preventing duplication. The Network aims to provide an opportunity for community workers to meet face-to-face, to make connections with other workers in the north, to share details of their work and to discuss issues related to community work practice. The group meet approximately every six weeks at different venues around the North of the city. This

determined the format and agenda, with sessions of one and a half hours, the first hour is chaired by the CDC from DWS, and the last half an hour is chaired by the BAB CDC for people working with or wanting to work with people 50+. In the initial meetings, during Year 2 there were discussions regarding befriending projects and transport and the potential opportunities of working together were established. For example BAB Community Navigators worked with Bristol Charities to research types of befriending activities such as men’s shed and intergenerational projects. In addition, the issue of bullying in care homes was raised by the BAB CDC who wrote a report which was sent to BCC for consideration.

As the project moved into its third year the North Bristol Community Development Network meeting continued to meet every six weeks or so. It tried to develop its format, introducing members of the group to recently published articles to develop their practice. This happened once, some members found the level difficult. The CDC initiated and organised a presentation by Marilyn Taylor in March 2019 on The Future of Communities Perspectives on Power.

The group expressed appreciation of the value of face-to-face contact enabled by the meetings. Feedback was very positive with one member saying, “I thought both sessions were some of the most thought-provoking sessions I have been to of late”.

In the third year of the project, it has been via the Gathering that member organisations such as Bristol Charities, Southmead Development Trust, Bristol City Council libraries, Dementia Wellbeing, Community Navigators and Friends Ageing Better have been working closely on project ideas such as Friends with Pens and the Over 50s Disco. However, the numbers attending meetings have fluctuated, with eight participants or fewer, often the majority from BAB projects. The CDC met with the Dementia Wellbeing Service, who oversees the NBCD Network, to devise an online questionnaire for members of the Gathering, the result is unknown but there have been few responses.

Meet Your Street initiative came out of the NBCDN following a conversation about lack of befriending services in the north of Bristol. LinkAge helped support the project through funding, while another charity contributed experience and a third charity allocated staffing. Meet Your Street adopts a community development approach<sup>1</sup> with the

aim to encourage friendships within streets, between neighbours. The idea is this is more sustainable than a volunteer programme from which volunteers may leave. The project runs over five streets in Henbury and Brentry which the CDW identified as most in need of support. The model is based on a similar one run in Edmonton, Canada.

Table 5: Gatherings in the North of Bristol

Month	Location	Host (and focus)
11/18	Greenway Centre Southmead	Southmead Development Trust 6 attended, 3 BAB, 3 others
01/19	Gloucester Road	North Bristol Community Project 8 attended, 3 BAB 5 others
03/19	Lawrence Weston Youth Centre, Lawrence Weston	
04/19	Langley Centre Lockleaze	North Bristol Advice Centre 6 attended, 4 BAB, 2 others
06/19	Greenway Centre Southmead	Southmead Development Trust 8 attended, 4 BAB
11/19	Henbury & Brentry Community Centre	11 attended 4 BAB
01/20	Greenway Centre Southmead	10 attended , 2 BAB

Footnote: 1 See brief outline: <https://www.link-agenetwork.org.uk/projects/meet-your-street/>

# GATHERINGS IN THE CENTRAL AND EAST

In Year 1, Quarter 4 the CDC met with Bristol City Council Community Development workers to discuss the possibility of a co-produced East Bristol Community Development Gathering for all activities and ages, and in January 2018 the first meeting was held at the Beehive Centre Whitehall, with 19 attendees and 6 apologies. The meeting explored if there was an opportunity for people interested in Community Development to come together, support each other, share practice and learn together. This reflected the community development approach of sharing power to develop the Gathering. Whilst there are other community networks and resident led forums, such as St George’s Community Network, there appeared to be a lack of space for practitioners to network and reflect in East Bristol.

Table 6: East Gatherings

Month	Location	Host (and focus)
01/18	Beehive Centre, Whitehall	19 attendees 7 apologies
06/18	Beehive Centre	8 attendees 4 apologies
09/18	Meadowvale Community Centre	16 attendees
01/19	St Georges Community Centre	8 attendee 4 apologies
04/19	The Care Forum	12 attendees 1 apology
07/19	Glenside Hospital Museum	5 attendees
09/19	The Beehive Centre, Whitehall	7 attendee 5 apologies

A second East Bristol Gathering was held in June 2018 at the Beehive Centre, Whitehall. Key areas for community involvement expressed at this meeting were St George Community Plan and Park development, and the development of a What’s On Guide for over 50s for East Bristol. The meeting also considered less well known community venues to host Gatherings to enable learning about East Bristol areas and improve communication and collaboration in the area. A review of the need for a Gathering in the Central area was undertaken but there was no evidence of such a need.

The third East Bristol Gathering was held at Meadowvale Community Centre in Speedwell 25th September 2018 Y2 Q1 with the purpose of connecting the centre committee members with opportunities to meet others, discuss community development practice, share ideas, connect groups and collaborate on emerging activity.

A Gathering was held in St George in January 2019 to improve information sharing and networking. It also considered compiling an East Bristol What’s On Guide for the over 50s.

The East Gathering was held in April 2019 in Fishponds with two new people joining the group. The new East Bristol What’s On Guide was published and delivered in May 2019 with support from the East Bristol Gathering Group members.

New connections were made between the Carers Support Centre and Glenside Hospital Museum; between Wellsport and local organisations working in East Bristol; a local gardening group in Speedwell with Bringing Speedwell Together event, and as a result they will sell plants at the event and check interest of a new over 50s gardening activity.

An online survey was circulated to the

membership in Aug/Sept 19 with 10 questions asked to find out the value of the Gathering, what learning has been realised and how the networking opportunity have supported the work. Nine out of a possible thirty were returned.



# GATHERINGS IN THE SOUTH

In the South the CDC sought to initiate the Gatherings, but drawing upon asset-based principles, making the process very collaborative in character. Different organisations took it in turns to run each Gathering, and the events were hosted in different venues. Each Gathering lasted for two hours, had an activity as a focus but also a strong remit of information sharing, professional reflection and problem solving. There is no set pro-forma, and no prescribed expectations apart from creating a space to grow as community development practitioners.

Table 7: Gatherings in the South of Bristol

Month	Location	Host (and focus)
9/17	The Park, Knowle West	LinkAge CDC. Initial meeting
11/17	Knowle West Health Park	Community Access Support Service (CASS)
01/18	Gatehouse Centre Hartcliffe	Hartcliffe Health and Environment Action Group
02/18	South Bristol	Bread making and discussion about community capacity
04/18	Chessel Centre, Bedminster	BS3 Community Development
06/18	Withywood Centre	Community Centre and BCC Public Health team
07/18	Ashton Vale	Ashton Vale community meeting, focus on establishing a local community group
09/18	Ashton Vale	Ashton Vale community meeting
09/18	Stockwood	Stockwood Community Association, focus on the role of community development in supporting social justice
12/18	Hartcliffe Community Centre	BCC Community Development Team
02/19	Inns Court Centre, Knowle West	Community Access Support Service (CASS)
04/19	Monica Wills House, Bedminster	St Monica Trust and The Care Forum

The numbers attending each Gathering ranged from 10 to 31, with the network growing to about 45 members in total. Most Gatherings included discussion about key ideas linked to asset-based community development. The CDC observed learning and practice change, for instance:

*“... we talked about community capacity, and practitioners were looking into questions around creating activities that no one attends and why it could be, rather than recruiting to projects thinking about supporting residents in what they want to build.”*

CDC-S1

The CDC also observed professionals making new connections:

*“Absolutely. People share information, ask each other questions, to learn about new community hubs. Every month a new worker wants to be connected with the group and Gatherings.”*

CDC-S2

At the Stockwood meeting, community development academic Marilyn Taylor started a conversation about the role of community development in supporting social justice, power and how Community Development workers can be better organised. Participants left with a collective pledge to have conversations with residents about change and their potential contribution. There are other examples where the group built consensus around priorities for action. At the Hartcliffe meeting, the group agreed to work together on how to make local groups and communities more welcoming to newcomers and ‘outsiders.’

In April 2019, the CDC compiled an online questionnaire for the members with questions about the impact and future purpose of the Gatherings.

## KEY LEARNING POINTS

### The value of different models: ownership and power sharing

The Gatherings in different parts of the city adopted somewhat different models to match the types and interests of participants, and the local opportunities. For example Gatherings in the North were attended by paid workers, whereas the South and East had paid and unpaid workers. The South only focused on work with older people, whereas the North and East had a wider demographic scope.

The Gatherings in the South adopted a shared power structure, with rotating hosts. In the North, the CDC worked with an existing group and organisational lead, with focus on older people at the end of the meeting. While the South and East Gatherings documented their work through notes, no record of meetings was held in the North. In the East, the Gathering was initially established by the CDC with BCC CDW support. BCC subsequently pulled out due to a team restructure. For LinkAge, these different models point towards the question of: ‘Who ‘owns’ the Gatherings?’ Clearly, local power relations are a central driver of the how the format developed in each area.

### Outcomes

While the North Gatherings led to outcomes such as a befriending service, friends with pens and a paper on bullying and harassment, those of the South and East had a greater focus on the softer outcomes linked to networking, learning and sharing. Participants have been asked to respond to evaluation



questionnaires about the Gatherings in each area of the city. The pattern of feedback has been mixed, with higher numbers of returns for the South and East, than the North. While there are different models, the main themes arising from the evaluation feedback had a lot of similarities. Participants joined Gatherings as an opportunity to network; peer support; share resources, information and experiences, learn from each other, encourage partnership working and develop understanding and practice around community development.

Overall, Gatherings were perceived to be a highly relevant experience and to have potential to create more opportunities for learning, networking and responding to things as they happen. Participants thought the Gatherings influenced their work through having a focus on key topics, sharing experiences of challenges, successes and knowledge of the area. They opened up to new ways of working and collective working potential within the network.

### Developing the Gatherings

In the South, there was enthusiasm for hosting a Gathering and those who have say it is a positive experience that has helped with relationship building. There was awareness that it is time-consuming to prepare, creates anxiety but is worthwhile.

There has been interest in developing the Gatherings to give space to move from the discussion around a topic into action planning, whether in an individual's own work or to develop partnerships and collaboration across the network on key issues. This could provide for greater impact for workers and the community as a whole and could either be part of the Gathering or a separate space for those who would be interested. Some respondents felt that the CDC role is a central point for information. The role has been able

to support people working in the sector; share and disseminate information and funding opportunities through regular updates.

Some key areas to enhance Gatherings include the value of having a clear theme, host preparation, and attention to timings and venues to maximise opportunities for attendance.





# 9. Findings: Training programme >>

## OVERVIEW

Over a period of almost two years, from early 2018 to early 2020, as part of its brief LinkAge organised a wide-ranging training programme. The original target audience for this programme was BAB delivery agency staff and associated volunteers. Following early discussions with BAB staff LinkAge agreed to facilitate training drawing upon an asset-based community development model (the 'ABCD' approach). This initial planned approach was revised due to the fact that an existing programme of ABCD-based training was already being led by Bristol City Council. The focus of the LinkAge-run training programme was therefore re-oriented, in consultation with BAB, towards sensitisation regarding nine key older population groups being targeted by BAB due to their particular risk of loneliness and isolation.<sup>1</sup> BAB delivery staff had expressed a need for better understanding as to how to engage with these groups, which were: people aged over 85, those of Black and minority ethnicity, those identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender, carers, people who have been bereaved, people with sensory loss, people with alcohol and substance misuse issues, people in care homes and those living with dementia. Efforts were made to retain elements of the original plan for an ABCD-focused

Footnote: <sup>1</sup> <http://bristolageingbetter.org.uk/our-projects/>

training through linking with established local organisations, drawing on the personal, lived experiences of members of the key population groups where possible, and working in a spirit of co-production. Attempts were therefore made to share decision-making and ownership of the work amongst LinkAge, BAB and the different community organisations, and there was an expectation that older people from the various population groups would play a role in the design and/or the delivery of the training.

Different agencies and community-based organisations were commissioned to carry out the training, based on their expertise related to the specific area, not their experience of training, which was an unconventional approach to sourcing trainers. Indeed, one underlying aim was that learning should be a two-way process, with the training providers also gaining from the experience. While no specific target number of attendees was established, the LinkAge team was proactive in publicising events to all BAB agencies. The training programme was promoted under the title 'Everyone Invited', which aimed to convey how trainees would develop greater awareness and skills. Each session was offered at no cost to attendees and often included refreshments or lunch. Each session was repeated twice across different days in order to reach a wider audience. Over time, some of the training was opened out to staff and volunteers in other agencies in the city, which succeeded in attracting a wider range of participants.

The process for the development and delivery of sessions evolved over time, typically including the following steps:

- scoping relevant agencies, community organisations and individual trainers and making contact;
- commissioning the trainer, based upon the submission of a short tender (the budget ran to approximately £1000, depending on the specific features of the training);
- holding meetings to refine the content and format for the training through a process of reflection and 'co-production', with trainers expected to involve older people in the design and /or delivery of the training content;
- publicising the events through the BAB mailing list and other city networks;
- registering participants, which was initially managed through an email to BAB but subsequently through a more efficient online registration system;
- delivering two half-day training events;
- collecting immediate evaluative feedback from attendees which fed into the second training session on the same topic which (where possible), took place some weeks later;
- reflecting on the training – successes and scope for improvement - by the trainer, LinkAge and BAB;
- sharing a 'Learning Digest' of the training to BAB staff and volunteers, through other local and national networks and the BAB website<sup>2</sup>;

Footnote: <sup>2</sup> <http://bristolageingbetter.org.uk/learning-and-evaluation-hub/>

- refining the model for future training events.

In some cases the original target group was revised. For example, the focus on the black and ethnic minority population was narrowed down to working with Somali communities, given the particular lack of training which existed in this area. LinkAge and BAB approached Midnimo, a Somali women's group, to develop a training session which focused on older Somali women. This was a new experience for the group, which was advised on how to meet the training brief, but otherwise group members designed the sessions themselves, which were highly participatory. An additional training session was also established under the umbrella of working with older people from black and ethnic minority communities which focused on engagement, culture and inclusion and was prepared by Bridging Gaps, another community organisation new to training provision. The planned focus on sensory loss resulted in two sets of training, one on sight loss and dual sensory loss, delivered by Sense, and one on hearing loss, delivered by the Centre for Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The training on care homes and those over 85 was merged into one training session.

To assess the quality and immediate success of the training participants were asked to complete a feedback form following their attendance<sup>3</sup>. A further activity aimed at enhancing the impact of the programme, established during its early stages, was the establishment of 'Reflection Sessions'. Participants were to be invited to these sessions some months after attending training in order to re-cap key messages and reflect on the application of their learning, in other words how their practice had changed or could

Footnote: <sup>3</sup> The feedback forms for training participants broadly adhered to the same format for each session but in some cases were adapted to include questions related to the trainers' own specific interests.

change further. These follow-up sessions were based on the recognition that attendees, many of whom have busy professional lives, might benefit from the opportunity to deepen their understanding and practice by reflecting together on the potential or proven impact of the training on their working practice. It was also an opportunity for trainees to ask the trainers any questions which had come to mind since their attendance. The original aim was to have reflective sessions for as many training events as possible<sup>4</sup>. In October 2018, three different organisations which had delivered individual training sessions jointly ran a reflection session on engaging older people with sight loss, hearing loss, dual loss or experience of substance misuse. The aim here was for attendees to recognise and appreciate the overlap of key messages from different training topics, and also how these might play out when working with an individual who falls into multiple communities/characteristics (e.g. someone who is hard of hearing and also a carer). This joint session also enabled training providers who had not previously met each other and were not aware of each other's work to learn from each other and reflect upon how they could bring value to each other's work.

## TRAINING PROGRAMME EVALUATION

The evaluation of the training programme presented was conducted by drawing on a range of sources and data. Project delivery records were reviewed and feedback forms from participants in the various LinkAge training sessions were analysed. Interviews were also conducted with two members of LinkAge staff and one BAB staff member. In addition, a short email survey was sent to all training participants who were still contactable

Footnote: <sup>4</sup> See Implementation Year 2 Delivery Plan, LinkAge report.

(n=15) in November 2019 and the responses analysed (n=3).

## FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION

### 'REACH' OF THE TRAINING SESSIONS

Table 8 summarises all of the training events delivered and the number of participants, including BAB and non-BAB delivery partners. The programme achieved an estimated 319 training 'interactions' through 21 sessions (some individuals may have attended more than one session so the actual total number of participants is not known). The majority of the BAB partners who participated were Community Development Workers and Community Navigators, but staff associated with BAB-funded projects such as Community KickStart, Food and Nutrition-based projects and The Reader also participated. BAB staff reported challenges in predicting the uptake of the various training sessions, with some attaining much higher numbers of participants than others. Records reveal that the sessions on reaching and engaging people over 50 with dementia were particularly popular, for example. LinkAge staff described a process whereby they regularly reflected upon attendance at particular training events and ways of diversifying participation. The decision in 2019 to open up training to individuals from non-BAB-supported organisations was considered by LinkAge staff to be a very positive development, as following this shift not only did the number of attendees visibly increase, but LinkAge staff observed that the consequent pool of attendees led to greater overall diversity and made the training sessions more dynamic. Unavoidably, some of the training events occurred late into the LinkAge contract due to problems in identifying trainers - the bereavement session being one particular case in point - which limited their potential

impact within the timeframe of the BAB programme.

### PARTICIPANTS' FEEDBACK

The overall feedback was that attendees found the sessions extremely rewarding. The vast majority of participants reported feeling more informed about the particular subject covered in their training; in some cases dramatically so. The only exception to this was the Dementia training, where most participants reported a relatively high pre-existing awareness and there was a less marked increase. The vast majority of participants also reported that the training had met or exceeded their expectations. A key theme which emerged from feedback form responses was the value of examples and exercises in order to build confidence in applying learning. Some participants noted how much they appreciated the tips and hands-on practice the sessions in supporting those with sight loss, communicating effectively with those affected by hearing loss in particular, and enhancing engagement with people aged over 85 through music and memory apps in particular. In contrast, some of the participants who attended other sessions felt that they would have benefitted from further practical guidance and practice, the provision of more focused discussions and longer training sessions.

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. This approach left a significant impression on a number of trainees: "inspiring", "moving", "really interesting" were some of the descriptors used. It was felt that providing a window into different lived experiences had an important impact in terms of developing greater understanding and sensitivity, including challenging one's own assumptions. As LinkAge

staff described:

*"We've found that the stories that people share have been very powerful, and seem to be effective in encouraging [attendees] to think deeply about the issues."*

CDC-C1

*"We've found it was possible to challenge things and encourage people to think deeply about how they can do things differently."*

CDC-C1

A desire to learn more about the lived experiences and needs of older communities from black and ethnic minority communities in relation to particular topics such as sight loss and dementia was flagged by some participants. This suggests the potential for including a more diverse range of stories and personal experiences as well as a more 'intersectional approach' to the planning of training overall.



## IMPACT OF 'REFLECTION SESSIONS'

The overall feedback from the first Reflection Session in October 2018 was that this was a successful cross-over event, which provided new insight across social groups of over-50s affected by different conditions/dependencies, and was valued both in terms of its format, content and practical implications<sup>5</sup>:

*"The whole session was informative from the round table breakfast and especially all the presentations from the different groups"*

*"It was great to have people from three different organisations rather than just one, making the training even more useful"*

*"I learnt about practicing complete inclusivity. To be honest it had not crossed my mind to think about black and minority ethnic people with hearing and visual loss as a minority group"*

*"I learnt about hearing loss in people with dementia and how to refer them to the Centre for the Deaf, which is really important"*

The trainers who planned and delivered this session also considered it be a positive and worthwhile approach, with one describing it warmly as a "true collaboration with openness

Footnote: <sup>5</sup> NB. One participant, who had not attended any previous sessions, considered that the Reflection Session had been advertised inappropriately, and recommended future sessions should be promoted more explicitly to those who had existing experience of the training programme on which to draw.

and honesty". BAB staff also commented on the value of this joint working:

*"One of the biggest things we've learnt has been the importance of building reflection into the process of delivering the training. We've found a lot of value in bringing together trainers to jointly share and review their own learning about the running of the sessions"*

A Learning Digest was produced from the first session, which was distributed to attendees and made available on the BAB website<sup>6</sup>. The session was also documented in a BAB blog<sup>7</sup>. Based on this positive experience, attempts were made in October 2019 to run a second joint reflection session bringing together organisations in relation to four topics (carers, LGBT+, the Somali community and dementia). Not enough attendees signed up to the session so it was not viable. While the reflection sessions were understood to be a valuable approach, BAB staff posited, in retrospect, that staff might have considered these to be rather a 'luxury' and difficult to justify time away from their daily work for. Ultimately it was hoped that even the invitation to a reflection session – despite the fact that relatively few people signed up – might have prompted participants to remember the original training, what they had learnt, and how it could be applied in their work. Bridging Gaps disseminated a 'reminder' postcard composed by training participants

Footnote: <sup>6</sup> <http://bristolageingbetter.org.uk/userfiles/files/Inclusive%20Communities%20-%20Engaging%20older%20people%20with%20sight%20loss%2C%20hearing%20loss%2C%20dual%20sensory%20loss%20or%20experience%20of%20substance%20mis-use.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <http://bristolageingbetter.org.uk/blog/an-innovative-training-reflection/>

and addressed to themselves three months following the sessions they led, which may have served a similar purpose.

## LONGER TERM IMPACTS OF TRAINING

The follow-up email survey, conducted in November 2019, asked participants who it was still possible to contact, to share how they had put their training into practice over the months since they attended a training event. Given only three of the 15 potential respondents completed the survey, findings can only be interpreted with caution. Similar to the responses in the feedback forms collected immediately following the training events, however, respondents largely highlighted the value of being exposed to new lived experiences of ageing and how this had transformed both their thinking and empathy in their everyday work. They also reported sharing what they had learnt from the training with colleagues, some of whom had attended subsequent LinkAge-supported training events themselves. In the words of one individual who had attended a session on Engagement, Culture and Inclusion:

*"The training has confirmed my thinking about making sure we are targeting different BME communities specifically, and perhaps separately. I have taken this back to my workplace and it will be informing our conversations and practice from here out"*

However, one respondent who had attended Dementia training over six months prior to the survey, as well as the more recent Engagement, Culture and Inclusion session, flagged some of the difficulties of applying training into working practice post-event:

*"I felt the training was informative overall, however I feel there were missed opportunities for putting learning into practice within the training e.g. coming away with an action plan rather than coming away with ideas for an action plan. All of the sessions I attended I felt missed the opportunity for people to have time within the sessions for planning and skill sharing"*

This latter feedback appears to highlight the challenges some participants faced in putting the new awareness and ideas they gained from training into practice, and the associated potential for trainers to assist participants in developing a plan with clear tasks as a component of each session.

It should be noted that some of the BAB partners who attended the training left their post prior to the evaluation phase and it is feasible that they have taken any learning into their new areas of work, widening the reach of the training further. As one commented in their immediate feedback following their attendance at the combined reflection session, "I will not have time now to instigate changes at my current organisation, but will take the learning to my new role".

## UNANTICIPATED IMPACTS OF TRAINING

The exposure both training attendees and LinkAge staff had to community organisations resulted in unanticipated impacts. Attendees gained awareness of a group/organisation which is a 'specialist' in a particular field, enabling them to establish new collaborations, for example, which was particularly the case for the Somali and Dementia trainings. In the case of the dementia training, various community development workers asked for the provider to run a similar training session in their local

neighbourhood. Several of the trainers on the programme subsequently joined the LinkAge Network. LinkAge CAB funding was also offered to the Midnimo women's group for a set of three traditional Djembe drums to use in their cultural activities (with support from Barton Hill Settlement) and mini bus driving lessons were funded for two Somali women which enabled them to pick up Somali elders from different parts of Bristol to attend monthly lunches and associated activities. These new connections diversified the support being given to local organisations and enabled community assets to be strengthened.

## PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF THE TRAINING PROGRAMME

### TRAINING FOCUSED ON 'AT RISK' GROUPS HAD SECTOR-WIDE IMPACT

The training programme achieved its aim of sensitising a range of service providers to the needs of certain groups of people over 50 which are known to be at high risk of loneliness and isolation. The programme encouraged attendees to be constantly learning and proactively taking steps to reach groups of people that they might not otherwise have been aware of as 'at risk', and also equipping trainees with knowledge and tips on how to reach out to, engage and include these different groups in their work. The Reflection Session, further, encouraged intersectional thinking and practice. The LinkAge-run programme provided free training to many individuals who otherwise would not have been able to access it enabling them to step back from their daily tasks and reflect upon their practice, and by opening up training beyond BAB delivery partners a concerted effort was made to contribute to the 'skilling up' of the sector in areas where training had previously been lacking.

## ADDED VALUE OF THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT APPROACH TO TRAINING

The training programme can, to some degree, be considered as having followed an Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, which brought important impacts and lessons. Story-telling and 'listening conversations' are a core element of ABCD practice<sup>8</sup> and the strategy of incorporating the sharing of lived experience within the training sessions drew on important stores community knowledge and experience. This characteristic of the training programme was highly valued by participants, who described how it both sensitised and enlightened them, increasing their empathy, as well as leading to new awareness of practical measures they could employ to enhance the inclusivity of their work. The emergence of this successful approach may have been partly accidental in some cases with the local organisations new to training 'playing to their strengths' and drawing on the experiences and knowledge which existed within their community/ies. Hence, as planned, the impact of the training was incremental at different levels and was not a one-way process. For those local organisations new to training the programme can be understood as strengthening local assets through building new skills and experience amongst community members.

## KEY LEARNING POINTS

### Ongoing need for innovative new training

The training programme highlighted the level of demand for free training within the voluntary sector in Bristol focusing on particular demographic groups 'at risk'. Most sessions had waiting lists and the majority of participants

Footnote: <sup>8</sup> <https://www.nurtureddevelopment.org/asset-based-community-development/>

expressed a firm interest in any future training offered. The training session with by far the highest demand was that on dementia which suggests current availability of training in this area is inadequate. Any new training should build in some time to support participants in thinking through and devising practical strategies to apply their learning in their work.

### Value of including lived experience

As already described, a 'hallmark' characteristic of much of the training programme was placing lived experience at the heart of each session, whereby one or more individuals personally affected by the topic shared their personal histories, ideas and expertise. Participants were highly appreciative of this approach, which provided them with new knowledge, insight and empathy, and in some cases challenged their assumptions and stereotypes through new exposure. The inclusion of practical tips, building on this lived experience, was also greatly valued by training attendees.

### Value of intersectional approaches

The training programme was evidently successful in sensitising trainees (and in some cases trainers) about the needs of key population groups, and the importance of developing inclusive approaches. However, the need to consider the multiple characteristics of the individuals with whom staff work, and the various 'communities' to which individuals might be seen to belong has emerged as a key lesson from the training programme experience. The approach of the Reflection Session, whereby three organisations came together and ran a training event collaboratively, focusing on three 'at-risk' groups, was found to be productive and successful for both participants and trainers alike and points towards a new model of intersectional working.

## Co-production

Shared ownership of the work was established amongst LinkAge, BAB and the training providers. The process of meeting with training providers face-to-face once their proposal was accepted, to clarify the purpose of the training, who it is for, and BAB/LinkAge expectations was considered important. This proved to be vital in ensuring some of the principles of the wider co-production approach were adhered to, that older people need to be involved in the design and/or delivery of the content, and the provider was not to simply repeat a training that they have previously delivered. While trainers decided the capacity of each session, in retrospect BAB staff observed that it would have been advisable to discuss participant numbers in detail as a group from the outset to ensure an optimum trainers/facilitators-attendees ratio for each session, and cap numbers if necessary.

Both LinkAge and BAB staff reported that local community groups new to training with whom they worked were often more flexible to this co-production approach than some of the more established agencies, which suggests that there is considerable scope for further training in partnership with local organisations embedded with particular communities which have no prior experience of training. This fits with the model of recommended asset-based approaches (Christens and Speer, 2015).

Overall, experiences with the programme have highlighted the need for clear lines of responsibility to be established early on amongst the various stakeholders. Given an asset-based approach focuses on community strengths and potential, there are potential points of tension here as to how power is exerted by the coordinating agency, or indeed by any of the partners in a co-production approach. This issue is raised in the co-production literature (e.g. Boyle and Harris,



2009) and is important to tackle early on in any similar interventions in the future.

#### Reflection sessions valued but may require re-framing

While participants valued the Reflection Sessions, uptake was poor and it might be advisable to re-frame these activities as a recap process jointly established from the outset in tandem with the initial training sessions, with each training package being composed of two parts which potential attendees sign up to.

Across the page:

**Table 8: Training Courses Completed**

Training Theme	Provider	Dates	Attendees	BAB delivery partners	Non-delivery partners
Sight Loss & Dual Sensory Loss	Sense	20/2/18 & 13/3/18	14	14	NB. These three training sessions and the reflection session were not open to non-delivery partners
Hearing Loss	Centre for Deaf and Hard of Hearing	27/2/18 & 8/3/18	17	17	
Substance misuse	Bristol Drugs Project	23/2/18 & 20/3/18	18	18	
Reflection session: Sight Loss & Dual Sensory Loss, Deaf & Hard of Hearing and Substance Misuse combined session	Sense, Centre for Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Bristol Drugs Project	2/10/18	15	15	
Over 85s	Stand + Stare & University of Bristol	21/11/18 & 6/12/18	17	17	0
Reaching & Engaging Older People from Somali Communities	Midnimo Women's Group	5/11/19 & 11/2/19	30	20	10
Reaching and Engaging Older People who are LGBT+	Diversity Trust	26/2/19 & 13/3/19	25	13	12
Reaching & Engaging Older People who are Carers	Carers Support Centre	5/3/19 & 28/3/19	37	21	16
Dementia: Reaching and Engaging People Aged 50+with Dementia	Bristol Dementia Action Alliance	25/4/19 & 30/4/2019	68	30	38
Engagement, Culture and Inclusion	Bridging Gaps	20/11/19 & 21/11/19	40	18	22
Bereavement and Loss	St Peter's Hospice	28/11/19 & 31/1/20	36	16	20

# 10. Findings: Share and Learn Events >>

As part of the project, the LinkAge CDCs organised Share and Learn events across the city. These were due to run on a number of occasions and were open to BAB-funded community development workers only and were commissioned, managed and led by LinkAge at the start of the programme, unlike the Gatherings. Over time, BAB took over half of the management, to share their formalised learning.

As the title suggests, the session format involved both an opportunity for presentations of key topics i.e. sustainability, but also a chance for all participants to talk about their work. The main aim of the Share and Learn events has been to coordinate and share intelligence, evidence of need and lessons learned across partners.

Table 9: Share and Learn Sessions

Date (Venue)	Theme	Attendance and monitoring
<b>15th November 2017 (St Paul's Learning Centre)</b>	Sharing what each project is working on	14 attendees (8 community development workers, 2 managers in community development projects, 2 BAB staff, 2 CRs) Feedback collected
<b>12th March 2018 (Zion Community Centre)</b>	Sustainability, presented by VOSCUR	14 attendees (8 community development workers, 1 community navigator development worker, 1 BAB staff, 4 CRs) Feedback collected
<b>3rd July 2018 (The Hub, Lockleaze)</b>	Reflecting on the first year	12 attendees (9 community development workers, 1 community navigator development worker, 2 BAB staff) Feedback collected
<b>13th November 2018, (St Peters Methodist Church Brislington)</b>	BAB Community Development Projects	6 attendees Feedback collected
<b>20th February 2019 (Katherine House, Cote House Lane)</b>	BAB Community Development in Care Homes	13 attendees (10 community development workers, 1 BAB staff, 2 CRs) Feedback collected
<b>15th May 2019 (The Horsefair)</b>	BAB Community Development Projects	8 attendees (5 community development workers, 2 BAB staff, 1 other project worker for a different BAB-funded project) Feedback collected Notes from BAB team and presentation
<b>30th October 2019 (Bedminster)</b>	BAB Community Development Projects	12 attendees (7 community development workers, 1 CR, 1 UWE staff, 3 BAB staff) Notes from BAB team



The above table shows that the pattern of attendance has been mixed, indicating a lost opportunity to build a consistent learning group over the course of the programme. Nevertheless, the overall impression from the feedback forms is that those attending found the sessions very rewarding. The main themes were:

- A good opportunity to meet and network with others involved in community development with older people
- Learning about general good practice; tips, hints, tools and techniques
- An opportunity to learn more about the delivery of the BAB programme and, in so doing, enhance their project
- An opportunity to reflect with other practitioners
- An opportunity to go to other parts of Bristol and visit projects

A minority of sessions produced a full record of notes. The shift in management created a power issue and at times inhibited discussion, where interviewees felt that there was some tension between the sessions acting as formal 'project presentations' versus their role as 'open and reflective' occasions. This tension reflected a difference in perspective: while the LinkAge team were keen to develop an informal learning group, a priority for the BAB team has been to document and formalise the knowledge generated. One interviewee felt this was a missed opportunity:

*“While the sessions were meant to be collaborative, it has been clear that the power lay with the funding authority”*

CDC-3

The Share and Learn sessions have run alongside other fora, notably the Bristol City Council sponsored “Community Development Learning Circles”. Feedback indicates that these additional settings have all contributed towards opportunities for practitioners, particularly in the context of funding cuts to Continuing Professional Development courses. The Share and Learn programme therefore provided an informal professional development platform in a context where such opportunities were rarely available.



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# 11. Discussion >>

## OVERALL DELIVERY

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This evaluation has reported on the overall delivery of the programme, the development of new activities, the Gatherings, Share and Learn events and the training programme. These show that the LinkAge project has been an extensive initiative that has covered all areas of the city, and engaged a wide range of practitioners and individuals with an interest in community development with older people. This has been an ambitious project, not least because of the innovative character of the design of the project: as the research context shows, there are few previous initiatives that have been framed in the same way. LinkAge has an established reputation, capacity and a track record of work with older people's interests - upon which the project has been able to capitalise. In addition, the CDC team have brought considerable experience in community development - which in turn helped LinkAge to quickly roll out the project. 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.

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. 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. The following discussion revisits the main research questions and aims of the project through drawing together the different areas of fieldwork findings and the wider research literature.

## CONNECTING AND NETWORKING EXISTING GROUPS

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An important aspect of the project has been to bring together existing groups across the city. The approach was adapted to reflect the specific characteristics of each area of the city and the skill-set of the respective CDC. The Gathering events clearly created a new environment for practitioners and other parties to meet and share experiences. The project also developed a participatory model for training, which includes an emphasis on building the capacity of community-based trainers.

There were differences for each area of the

city. In the South and East areas of the city 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 Wellbeing 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. For example, The Market Place evening event where local organisations set up stalls to publicise their work at the Clifton Over 50s Forum and expanded the thinking at what All Saints Church now feel they can do. 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. However, in the timescale available it was not possible to develop some relationships. For example, the Holiday Club organiser had no success in trying to work with local GP practices, despite attempts to build a relationship.

One limitation is that a three-year project is not sufficient time for community development because an asset based approach means working at the pace of the community, finding ways to talk and gather information. There are also questions of how power is exercised in coordination 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 organisational 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 south Bristol Gathering has 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 50s; linked with St George Community Network for involvement in Future Parks and Community Infrastructure Levy for the area; citywide 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.

## ENCOURAGING NEW ACTIVITIES

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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 What's On Guides



for city neighbourhoods. For this project, the team worked with intermediaries – local groups – to support the development and distribution of these What's On 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 match-making 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.

While needing to retain holistic work with all communities, the project has shown the value of focusing on the interests of older groups that 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, level of engagement to expect, what works, what has been tried before, and bringing a wider perspective.

There are examples of practice that show how the asset-model has success 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 were 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.

The CDCs helped inform groups of funding opportunities either through the BAB programme (Community Kick-Start Fund), and through assisting with applications, some of which were successful such as the Memory Café at Holy Trinity. 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.

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 coordination. While CDCs facilitated local meetings and outreach activities, in both areas there was low expressed interest from residents, some significant social divides, and disjointed or poorly resourced venues and other assets. Despite a strong sense of possibility in both areas, the timing and duration of the LinkAge project did not appear to match well with the local contexts. This indicates the importance of local circumstances, particularly with very time-limited projects.

A further challenge has been the bureaucracy involved in running groups. For 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.

A further feature of the project was there were a lot of avenues pursued that did not lead to community action. This is a common feature of community development work (Gilchrist, 2009),

and is important to factor in to project planning.

## ADDRESSING ISOLATION AND LONELINESS AMONGST OLDER PEOPLE

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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 the community activist with CDC on Games on The Train. 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 endeavor 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.

The team helped increase local opportunities through bridging contacts. For example, in Sea Mills the CDC worked with a Care Home, Y, to support their activity schedule, she put them in touch with Sea Mills Community Centre who then ran bingo sessions at Y, involving residents who did not attend events previously. Y also got in touch with other local homes brought to their attention by the CDC to bolster their numbers for trips outside of Bristol. Some organisations, such as Ambition Lawrence Weston, now have loneliness and isolation on their agenda more actively than before.

While the general work of many of the project activities is likely to help create constructive responses to isolation and loneliness among older people, it is hard to demonstrate outcomes in the short term.

## SHARING INTELLIGENCE AND CHANGING DECISION-MAKING

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The team have actively tried and tested a broad range of approaches, which in turn has helped develop practice across the city. A major challenge has been the decision at council level to withdraw funding from Neighbourhood Forums. 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 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. The CDC in the North also 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<sup>1</sup>.

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

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Footnote: <sup>1</sup> See news item: <https://www.link-agenetwork.org.uk/lets-connect-tackling-loneliness-and-isolation-in-lawrence-weston/>

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 consider their role and 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.

The city-wide training played a role in building skills for the BAB programme as a whole and 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.

LinkAge's seven Share and Learn events adopted a strategic approach to bring together BAB-funded community development workers 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 organisations' perspective on the subject, a firm basis was put in place for further development.

## SUPPORTING AND CHAMPIONING ASSET-BASED APPROACHES

One of the original aims of the Community Development Coordination project was to run a training programme to support other BAB community development professionals and volunteers. Initially, the training topic suggested by BAB was asset-based community development. However, as the BAB programme rolled out, it came to light that the local city council was also intending to run asset-based community development training. Therefore, the subject matter of the training shifted to support BAB workers better engage with the BAB nominated 'at risk' groups, a training topic identified by other community development projects.

From the onset a community development approach was taken in the recruitment of groups with lived experience of the training

subject, to deliver workshops. This was to ensure shared learning, and trainers were able to enhance their skills, strengths and experience using an inclusive training model.

The subject areas had been identified by Bristol Ageing Better as specific groups of people who are at heightened risk of social isolation and loneliness. The workshops were initially aimed at BAB-funded professionals and volunteers, and then, in the second year, opened up to a wider group who wished to improve their organisational knowledge of best practice.

The Community Development Coordinator (CDC) networked with several groups and organisations across the city, to encourage interest in delivering a workshop style training. There was a transparent application and selection process. The groups were paid to deliver two identical sessions, on different days. Several meetings with the training provider took place prior to the sessions to support the organisation and ensure asset-based approaches were used to enhance learning for all.

The CDC's role built good working relationships with the successful groups and advised on delivery to maximise involvement of participants. This included small group activity and talking about personal experience. An important element of the training was to create the conditions where participants felt able to ask questions about best practice and tips on how to be more inclusive.

There were a number of positive outcomes to arise from this area of work. Participant feedback was positive about their learning and taking next steps to becoming more inclusive. New trainers were encouraged by the response of participants and new networks were built with further training opportunities e.g. The Midnimo Somali Women's Group had not delivered training before. Developing the

training for this programme meant that they are now better connected with groups who attended the training; 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. For example, Bristol Dementia Action Alliance 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.

## LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COORDINATION

Community development coordination work is time consuming – as is a feature of most community development work (Klee, Mordey, Phua and Russell, 2014). The CDCs found that some of their coordination time was actually taken up by doing basic community development work rather than coordination.

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 programme, and the Share and Learn programme. 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.

It was important to find out as much as possible about the areas – for example what has happened in the past, who has been involved etc. - because this will influence what the dynamics are. At the beginning of the CDOP project time was spent asset mapping and scoping, to inform work. The CDCs were experienced community development workers with extensive knowledge of Bristol, which helped with this local knowledge.

There is an argument that pure asset-based CDW is 'without agenda', but the LinkAge contract had an agenda to reduce social isolation and loneliness among the over 50s. When doing CDC work it is therefore important to be clear about any coordination or strategic priorities. 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 be greatly appreciated. Similarly the isolation issue also meant that facilitation of networking and learning was appreciated.

Isolation and loneliness are issues that affect people from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. Therefore, work in more affluent wards such as Clifton was legitimate, but difficult to justify through area-based needs data.

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 attending meetings. CDC work involved clarity and honesty about practice boundaries, the project remit, and the time limited nature of any

support. Building upon asset-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.

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, what quality they expect etc. 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.

The CDCs used a variety of tools that are common employed by community development workers including door knocking, listening, pop-ups, being at community festivals, and online or paper questionnaires.

The LinkAge project adopted a holistic approach - making connections between organisations, bringing groups together, supporting and funding. For example, in the North, the CDC supported, co-produced and part-funded a community 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<sup>2</sup>.

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Footnote: <sup>2</sup> See news item: <https://www.link-agenetwork.org.uk/lets-connect-tackling-loneliness-and-isolation-in-lawrence-weston/>

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

- use 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.

## SUSTAINABILITY

All activity under the 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, and 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 to 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.

## STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE EVALUATION

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A major strength of this project has been the extensive fieldwork with activities delivered through the project. This is largely the work of the Community Researcher who attended over 30 project events and meetings. We were able to trace the development of the project from before the point of commissioning. The project team have been very supportive throughout, through assisting with access to events and taking part in a series of interviews. Therefore, although the project only lent itself to limited quantitative and economic analysis, the evaluation includes depth of qualitative investigation.

A limitation of the evaluation is that we have not traced the project through to its final stage – a point at which it may be possible to better understand its legacy and sustainability. The standard BAB evaluation questionnaire, the CMF, did not match the needs of this project given its priorities to work with organisations and groups rather than directly with individual older people.

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# 12. Conclusions >>

Rather than focusing on small area neighbourhoods, LinkAge's team have been focusing 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.





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## APPENDIX 1: EXAMPLE OF TEXT FOR PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

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You are being asked to take part in an evaluation of a Bristol Ageing Better project. We would like to ask you about LinkAge's BAB Community Development for Older People project. Before you decide whether or not to take part it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

### Why is the research taking place and who is organising it?

A group of Community Researchers are working with the University of the West of England and volunteer support from Age UK Bristol to evaluate some of the activities that are taking place across Bristol as part of Bristol Ageing Better (see: [www.bristolageingbetter.org.uk](http://www.bristolageingbetter.org.uk)). We would like to invite people who have taken part in projects to an interview.

### Do I have to take part?

No, taking part is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form. But you are still free to change your mind and withdraw your data without giving a reason; we ask that you do this within one month of taking part. Nobody will be upset if you do decide not to take part or change your mind.

### What do I have to do if I want to take part?

If you decide to take part in an interview this would take place at a time and place convenient for you. If you do agree to take part, we would like to audio record and then transcribe the interview.

### What are the possible risks and benefits of taking part?

We are always required to tell you about any risks to you should you agree to take part in research. However, in this instance we are not aware of there being any such risks to you, although it is important to note that the evaluation will involve you spending a little time thinking about loneliness which can be upsetting for some people. We don't expect there will be any direct benefits for you; however, some people find it interesting to take part and to talk about their experiences. The information you give us will help us to understand your experience and this is your chance to discuss your ideas about the project you were involved with and its value in reducing isolation and loneliness.

### What will happen to the results of the research and will my taking part be kept confidential?

Any personal information which is collected from you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and will only be used for research and evaluation purposes. Quotes from your responses may be used when we are explaining our findings but we will not use your name



or identify you. They may also be reported in professional publications or meetings and events including the organisations running the project you have taken part in and The Big Lottery who is funding the work.

**Who has reviewed this study?**

This study has been reviewed to make sure that it is being carried out in an ethical and scientific manner that will not put participants at risk by the University of the West of England Research Ethics Sub-Committee.

**Can I ask more questions about this project?**

Yes of course, you can contact Mat Jones (Evaluation Lead)  
01173288769  
matthew.jones@uwe.ac.uk

Thank you for reading this information sheet.

**APPENDIX 2: EXAMPLE TOPIC GUIDE FOR STAFF/  
VOLUNTEERS WORKING ON A PROJECT**

- 1. At the start, what did you understand were the goals of the LinkAge BAB funded project for [area]?
- 2. How would you describe the model that you have been using? Prompt: community development coordination model if relevant.
- 3. **KEY QUESTION.** Can you give a few short examples of how the Linkage project has benefited (or otherwise affected) groups/communities/organisations? Could you be specific?
- 4. How does the LinkAge project connect to other aspects of work in the area? How does it add value to what is already happening?
- 5. What has surprised you, what has been unexpected?
- 6. What priority is placed on supporting activities to engage isolated older people (as opposed to general forms of community engagement)?
- 7. How – if at all – have you connected with other BAB funded projects? Prompts: Community Navigators, Kick-Start, Age Friendly.
- 8. Could you describe any difficulties or challenges with the project? Prompt: have there been any dilemmas in being non-directive/facilitative, maintaining boundaries on the scope of the project etc.?

- 9. Is there anything specific about the local context of the project that we should know? [Cuts in another project, a similar project already taking place]
- 10. If you were advising someone how to run a project like this (Linkage BAB) what would you say? Prompt: what skills, resources, knowledge etc. is needed?
- 11. After the project ends, what do you think will be the legacy of the project?

**APPENDIX 3: EXAMPLE TOPIC GUIDE FOR PROJECT  
PARTICIPANTS**

- 1. How did you **meet** X [LinkAge Network worker]?
- 2. Could you describe how much **contact** you have had?
- 3. At the start, what did you understand were the **goals** of the LinkAge BAB funded project?
- 4. **KEY QUESTION.** Can you give examples of how the Linkage project has **benefited** (or otherwise affected) you/your organisation/your community? Could you be specific?
- 5. How does the LinkAge project connect to other aspects of your work in the locality? How does it add value to what is already happening?
- 6. What has **surprised** you, what has been unexpected?
- 7. What **priority** is placed on supporting activities to engage **isolated older people** (as opposed to general forms of community engagement)?
- 8. Could you describe any **difficulties or challenges** with the project?
- 9. Is there anything specific about the **local context of the project** that we should know? [cuts in another project, a similar project already taking place]
- 10. If you were **advising** someone how to run a project like this (Linkage BAB) what would you say?

## APPENDIX 4:

### CASE STUDY: NORTH BRISTOL, CARE HOME A, SEA MILLS

#### Community Development Coordinator

July 2017

##### Details of the project/signposting/activity:

A woman from Sea Mills contacted the Linkage office with a question, “how could I start a gentle exercise session where I live?”

##### What action I took within the project/activity:

When I contacted her she expressed how she used to take regular exercise where she lived before but since moving to Sea Mills she found nothing and was disappointed by this. This was why she had initially phoned Age UK Bristol, who then gave her the contact details for LinkAge.

As the newly appointed Community Development Coordinator for the North, I arranged a time (20th July 2017) to meet to talk about exactly what she wanted to do. We spoke for an hour and I left her with information regarding the Kick-Start fund and contact details for Alive. Before leaving her flat she contacted Alive and left a message for them to ring her back.

On my return to the office and with her permission, I passed on her contact details to Active Ageing Bristol and Alive.

A few weeks later and after several attempts to find out how she was getting on I finally got through to her via telephone to find out that Alive were funding some sessions within A.

I J from Alive confirmed that A were receiving funding from the Grateful Society for a 6 week programme of activities and exercise sessions. Followed by a further 4 weeks in April. The sessions consisted of guided reminiscence, artifacts and movement exercise sessions to run through to April 2018. I later found out that Alive had only been able to secure funding for a further 2 weeks not the 4 weeks as first hoped.

##### What difference did it make?

The sessions were “stimulating”, “interesting”, “engaging” and also “got you thinking”. Those involved with the sessions said “didn’t do anything” before this, “feel part of A, enjoyed “getting to know people and learning people’s names”

The sessions “got people together”, provided opportunities for “conversations”, chance to “exchange new ideas” and make “new friends”. The session has “spurred people” into thinking about chair exercise. A now has chair exercise sessions lead by two residents who have taken the time to source DVD’s to share with other residents. A tea and cake session now takes place on a Thursday afternoon at 3pm as well as the Tuesday morning session.

##### What was the learning?

The sessions that Alive delivered regarding local projects such as the Bristol Suspension Bridge and the SS Great Britain were “more dynamic”, “provided amazing information” and so people “enjoyed them more” and felt that they “worked best” for people at A.

Some of the props for the sessions needed to be clearer, for example having dark photographs made it difficult for people to engage in what was being shown and what was being said. Also having limited resources also made a difference to how people engaged with the sessions for example during the Wallace Collection session only having one or two pieces to show was “disappointing”.

Very few men had engaged in the sessions provided by Alive and so when I visited A last a conversation started about what men were interested in? A male resident was part of the discussion and mentioned that he had lots of photographs of the woodwork he’d done in the past. The idea of a show and tell session was agreed, along with a possible singing session.

I was excited and pleased by the progress that the residents had made and commented on the change from my first meeting. On the 5th April I was sent an email where the person who was taking the lead expressed how “encouraging” I had been with regards to her ideas.

## APPENDIX 5:

### CASE STUDY: EAST BRISTOL, B EXTRA CARE HOUSING

#### Community Development Coordinator

January and March 2018 (and ongoing)

##### Details of the project/signposting/activity

In early January 2018 a resident from B contacted LinkAge Network by phone stating that she was bored at the extra care home and felt quite lonely. She said she would like some help to start new activities with other residents. She had been given the contact number by a chiropodist who continues to visit her regularly following her move to the care home, following a stroke.

I arranged an initial meeting with the resident and her friend who also lives at the home. I asked that the Home Manager be involved in the meeting to ensure good communication and buy-in from staff. The first meeting generated lots of discussion about the type of activities they would like to see, what they had done previously and what might be possible. It was agreed that residents discuss this with a wider group to gain more views.

##### What community development activity took place?

After the initial meeting, residents decided to take this discussion to the weekly coffee morning the following week, where more residents could contribute and voice their views. Six people attended the coffee morning.

I arranged with the manager to attend the more formal monthly Residents Meeting, to explain in



more detail how I could support residents to develop a programme of activity, and would need the active involvement of a small group of interested residents. 14 people attended the meeting and five people volunteered to be involved as the 'organising' group.

The five residents decided together that they would undertake an activity questionnaire which they delivered to all 48 flats. This built the evidence of activities residents wanted to do. A list was compiled of all the activities suggested. Several meetings took place between myself and the residents between January and March. This resulted in a clear plan of what they wanted to do. A BAB Kick-Start application was discussed and completed over several weeks by the 'organising' group. The results are not yet known of the funding application.

### **Why the project took place**

The work took place because St George Central /Speedwell are areas identified and agreed by the LinkAge Network project and BAB as areas to focus on for more in depth community development work. The extra care home fulfilled this criterion. In addition, a resident had made the initial approach for support. This helps in terms of motivational factors and engagement in community development work

### **Why the project/activity/signposting took place**

Gentle exercise was seen as a priority by residents who had enjoyed regular sessions in the past. I was aware of the newly launched Public Health, Staying Steady Programme in five centres across the city and had attended the launch. The possibility of a Pre Staying Steady gentle exercise class at the care home with staff from Brunel Fitness (a Staying Steady hub) was considered. This offers a pathway for some residents to join the programme as fitness levels improve. Discussions with Public Health, Brunel Fitness and Active Ageing have taken place.

### **Outcome**

Funding for one year has been found to enable five care homes to participate across the city with gentle exercise, with the opportunity of linking some into the local Staying Steady hub at a later date.

The gentle exercise class at B Extra Care Housing will start at the end of April 2018 for one year with a staff member from Brunel Fitness, as the first pilot.

### **Organising**

At the residents meeting with staff, it was discovered that there used to be a resident's association, but this had ceased when signatories had both died and the bank subsequently froze the account. I suggested that VOSCUR may be able to help the 'organising' group restart the resident's association, creating a formal group to save and deposit funds for activities. A meeting between VOSCUR, residents and the manager of the home has taken place, to provide death certificates and other admin tasks to enable the bank to reopen the account. VOSCUR is helping with the setting up of a new model committee with opportunities for free training for community small groups. When skills were identified early in the process, I discovered that one resident had been a committee member of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and had a wealth of experience to offer the group. He has joined the 'organising' group.

### **Local Information sharing**

An important aspect of residents reducing their isolation has been to connect them with other activities in the area. The Beehive Centre is aimed at the over 55s and is about four miles from the home. I met with The Beehive staff who encouraged local residents from the home to call and arrange a visit. I took leaflets to meetings to share with residents at the coffee morning and residents meeting and encouraged them to visit the centre. To date one resident has been to The Beehive for the community lunch and had a look around. More recently, the community manager from The Beehive has visited a coffee morning, to talk with residents and encouraged a group trip to the centre. Watch this space!

### **Transport and travel**

Public transport is not so easy for residents, and the nearest bus stop is a bit far for some to walk. During discussions with residents I encouraged several residents to join Social Access (Dial A Ride) to help them get out and about. The 'organising' group is finding out about Bristol Community Transport and Kingswood Community Transport to enable them to take trips out together. One of the residents is also checking out deals with local taxi companies to compare prices.

### **What difference did it make?**

It has been noticeable over the three months that residents have become more motivated and enthusiastic with the possibility of new activities.

Small steps have been taken to enable residents to be fully involved in the process and pace of doing things. More residents have joined the discussions and taken on tasks in between meetings. This has included finding out more about travel options, choosing games for a grant application, organising a residents meeting with The Beehive manager and Brunel Fitness and meeting with VOSCUR staff with little of my own involvement. Several residents found the process of being involved empowering and have grown in confidence.

### **My learning and observations**

The main learning for me has been observing the learned helplessness residents slip into when they move into a residential setting. Despite having their own flats and living independently within this care setting, they have high expectations that they will have things done for them in the setting.

This has been an area that has taken time to work on with residents to reinvigorate confidence and independence through the community development process and reclaim some control over what they do.

It was noticeable how the ideas residents came up with initially, changed as their confidence grew. They became more ambitious in activities they wanted to do. By creating an environment over several weeks, where people could come together to explore what they wanted to do, and get to know each other better, roles started to emerge for the basis of a residents committee. One of the ideas for the future, included inviting older people from the local community and The Beehive in, for the Sunday Carvery lunch at Hillside, once a month with a film afterwards in the community lounge.

The other area of learning has been observing how the staff and residents interact with each other. The staff have been less involved in this work, although kept informed of progress. There is now a

need to help the senior management team understand the process of community development to support residents moving forward. Staff are essentially carers and their role can create dependency. This was demonstrated initially by residents who expected staff to organise activity for them. This has been a process of learning on both sides for staff and residents. As an outsider I have had to consider both sides in this process, keep communication channels open and bringing staff and residents together for specific organisational development discussions i.e. re-starting the residents association and involvement of VOSCUR.

**Moving forward**

- This is the first stage of this work and residents are now awaiting the results of the Community Kick-Start grant to develop new activities, including a film club, gardening club, board games and trips out.
- The residents are also working with VOSCUR to decide on the best way to reinvigorate their residents association and take up training opportunities.
- The gentle exercise classes with Brunel Fitness will start at the end of April.
- The second stage will be getting the new activity going, creating a varied programme of activity and encouraging residents to attend other activity in the community.
- There is also work to be done to help the staff help residents to be more independent.

**APPENDIX 6:**

**CASE STUDY: NORTH BRISTOL SOUTHMEAD RESIDENTIAL HOMES**

**Community Development Coordinator in the North  
2017**

I met with members of the Southmead community back in September 2017 with the aim of making a decision as to whether to concentrate my time on developing further activities in Southmead. I later meet with a resident who has been trying, with limited success, to take forward the older people section of the Southmead Community Plan around November time. With the lead local resident I started to visit older people residential properties in November 2017 and have continued through to March 2018.

**Details of the project/signposting/activity:**

The project aims is to visit every older people’s residential property in Southmead, both Bristol City Council and private. A group that includes the lead Southmead resident, two local councillors,

myself and any other relevant officer agree to attend, by invitation, a coffee morning at each of the properties.

**The aim of this project is to ask local residents within the older people’s properties the following questions:**

1. Are you happy with where you live, if not why not?
2. Do you feel that you have someone to talk issues through with or gain support?
3. Do you feel that you are listened to?
4. Do you feel you have use of the community room here, if not why not?
5. Is there anything specific you would like to do here?
6. Do you go to any activities within the community, if not why not?
7. Do you feel that there is sense of community here?
8. What can we do to support you in bringing the residents back together?

**The overall aim of the project is to deliver on the aims agreed in the Southmead Community Plan (Chapter 2 Older People):**

- To improve older people’s ability to access services and activities locally.
- To make contact with people who are isolated.
- To improve community links and support.

**Why the project/signposting/activity took place (include written or photographic evidence):**

Whilst door knocking during the consultation for the Southmead Community Plan the lead resident experienced some very hostile responses when asked the question; “What do you like about living in Southmead?” Many expressed how they felt isolated, “no one bothers with us?” Many also stated that they “couldn’t complete the survey because they were not included in the community of Southmead” (verbal evidence given by the lead resident).

Southmead has a considerable amount of activity that concentrates on older people and so I felt my resources were better placed in supporting the continuation of the work relating to the Southmead Community Plan. But also in supporting the lead resident in taking this work forward.

Alongside this, two residents of Southmead had been toying with a project idea, “The Travelling Tea Pot”. The idea was to take tea and cake into the various residential properties as a tool to start conversations and encourage residents to use their community rooms. This project had been tested in The Woodnock and was successful at engaging the residents there. The project would



run alongside the various visits to the other residential properties in Southmead as soon as The Travelling Tea Pot had been launched at the Woodnock. The launch took place on Monday 9th April.

Resources from the LinkAge CAB were sourced to finance tea and cake starter kits that will be left with the residents of the residential properties. The hope is that through the visits of the “Travelling Tea Pot” residents in the properties will gain the confidence to volunteer and run their own sessions in their community rooms.

### **What difference did it make?**

Based on the joint experience of the lead resident and my own:

- For those who live in the residential properties, it's that they will be listened to.
- That together we can make Bristol City Council, specifically, aware of the issues and find ways of addressing them.
- Provide a voice for the residents that are frail and frightened to speak.
- An opportunity to say what they want to see in “their” community room even if that's nothing at this time.
- Others are willing to take time to introduce the residents to something that they, in time, can deliver themselves and provide them with the resources to start their own a tea and cake sessions.

Lead resident stated that:

- “LinkAge Network has given support, via the Community Development Coordinator,
- Has listened to the resident leading the project,
- Has given confidence and support,
- Hasn't taken over,
- Believed in the resident for example where to go next and not forced the LinkAge Network's agenda.
- That the resident is important”.

### **What was your learning?**

The lead resident:

- “Gob smacked” at what has been learnt, in respect to the issues that have been raised during the meet ups,

- There has been an assumption that because older people are in properties specifically for them they are fine, behind closed doors and safe,
- Learnt to listen to people,
- Has a good sense, now of what their life is like,
- Has learnt to listen to people,
- Learnt to work together to address issues”.

As Community Development Coordinator I have learnt:

- To step back and not push my agenda.
- The lead resident had already spent a considerable amount of time on this project and there was no need to start from the beginning again.
- Trust her experience and knowledge.
- Ask questions when it's appropriate and there is a need to ask something further.
- Put my resources into something that needed a further push and not waste my time on something that needed no further work.
- Do research beforehand to establish where my resources were best placed.
- Support a project idea that worked and had the confidence of the community behind it.

The local councillors have been very supportive of this project and committed, like the lead resident, to address all the issues raised.

Come out into the community – 84-year-old woman who lived in one of the residential homes for 20 years, whispered “it was like living in hell”. Now she comes out to bingo, Over 50s forum and the Greenway Café. She is everywhere and smiles. (Lead resident's verbal experience).

Other residents have heard about what's been going on and have spread the word and want it to happen where they live.

## APPENDIX 7:

### CASE STUDY: CLIFTON OVER 50'S FORUM

#### Community Development Coordinator's Central-East

April 2019

##### Background

At the beginning of the LinkAge Network Community Development for Older people project, the Community Development Coordinators (CDC) undertook a scoping exercise to identify areas where social isolation may be prevalent. Clifton was one area identified to explore further, as there appeared to be limited activity for over 50's and a large mobile population that dominates the area (students and young professionals). Reports about the area were examined and a range of people were included in initial discussions. The key purpose was to find out if there was an opportunity to enrich the work taking place already, do more to connect people with activity and find out what might be impeding people 50+ getting involved.

##### Over 50's activity initially found

Initially, the CDC found the main hubs of activity were local churches and Clifton Library. Most activity was for over 60's and run through the local churches. These were day centre activities, lunch clubs and memory cafes where transport was mostly provided. In addition, there were regular day and evening talks and music events taking place at churches and at the library. There is an active Friends of Clifton Library who were holding events and a film club. They also actively campaign to stop the closure of the library. The library was also being used by a new carers support group. There was Tai Chi for over 50's, held at the university student union building and yoga at the library. Other physical activity and sport was held at Clifton College Sports Centre.

##### Setting up the Over 50's forum

The CDC had discussions with All Saints Church who were keen to try something new, to enhance their Creating Connections programme and to involve more local residents. They wanted to work in partnership with LinkAge Network as there were similarities in approach and a desire to connect more with local residents over 50. Local residents from the church thought a forum type meeting would be the most appropriate and achievable way to bring local people together to start a conversation. An early evening meeting was agreed, to enable working people over 50 to attend. There was an intention to hold the meetings three times a year.

##### The first forum meeting

The aim of the first meeting was to:

- Bring local residents together to share local activities they were involved with or knew about
- Find out what activity people would like to see more of, and identify gaps
- Find out what might prevent isolated people in the Clifton area accessing activity.

Local connections were important for bringing people together. The church designed the poster and included LinkAge Network in the publicity. Both organisations sent the information out to their networks and flyers were circulated at the library. A local resident advertised the first meeting on [www.nextdoor.com](http://www.nextdoor.com) this proved very valuable as it brought in most people to the first meeting, including local councillors. People who attended the first meeting were mainly local residents and some worked locally too.

The Creating Connections members and CDC ran three short activities at the meeting to address the key aims and gathered a wealth of local knowledge of what was going on, where and when. Local knowledge proved to be the key to find more activity.

We invited U3A to promote their activity in the area and talk about their asset-based approach, with self-organised interest groups.

Local councillor support at the first meeting was invaluable for additional local information. The discussion and information at this meeting helped to build links between residents and knowledge of local activity and organisations. Key issues raised at the meeting have helped the forum decide future topics.

We found out that more activity was taking place in the wider area than was widely known. There were local small businesses who attended the meeting who had an interest in older people and support. A lot of sharing took place at the meeting and links established between people and groups.

From Creating Connections:

*"Over 50's are a big feature of the church community and we know they have a huge amount of skills and knowledge to give. We need new people to get involved in activity to help in changing attitudes."*

##### Key Outcomes

- At the first meeting it was agreed to produce a What's On Guide for over 50's for the area. Residents and workers in the area expressed this as a priority. They wanted all the activity in one place, as this would help people find out and access a range of activity. Local residents contributed information to the guide, and local businesses, councillors and organisations advertised in it. LinkAge Network coordinated the production. Local residents helped with distribution. The What's On Guide was launched at the second forum meeting.
- At the second forum meeting there was consensus that transport in various forms was a key issue in over 50's accessing activity across the area. There was particular concern of a circular bus route ceasing that had taken people across and through the area, and from the village to Whiteladies Road; two main shopping and facility areas.
- The third forum meeting invited a local councillor from the Transport Strategy Group to hear



local concerns and share development about public transport. The local councillor was able to share information about the councils' new collaboration with Bristol Community Transport for public transport improvement in the area. There may be an opportunity for forum members to work on the public transport issue with local councillors to ensure best routes within the area for a new service starting May 2019.

- The initial idea for the forum has changed, with priorities being led by local residents attending. Flexibility has been key to engaging local people on topics of interest to pursue.

#### Other outcomes

- Members of the forum are now connected to LinkAge Network mailings. Therefore, between meetings they are sent relevant information about a range of activities and events that they can participate in across the city, including free theatre and film festival tickets.
- The church office shares information with their networks.
- The Forum now has a connection with the U3A through email information and the What's On Guides.
- Finding assets in the community has kept costs to a minimum. Use of the church building for meetings, sharing resources (both people and funds) for meetings. The local Co-Op is now involved with the forum to better understand its community and their opportunity to contribute to community life. They provide refreshments at Forum meetings, distribute the What's On Guides and publicise Forum meetings with local people who shop at the Co-Op.
- Connecting members and the wider community with local development and sharing ideas, is beginning to lead to resolving issues collectively. Other transport support is being explored at future meetings, to improve access for lonely and isolated people over 50.
- The CDC played a key coordinating role by networking with others, bringing people together, sharing information, contacting key people outside of Forum meetings and being part of the organising group.

#### What are the challenges?

- Maintaining the momentum of attendance.
- Most isolated people are not attending.
- Transport issues to attend meetings (some people have brought others to the meetings).

#### Future sustainability of the forum

- The Forum meetings have been developed in partnership with All Saints Church, Creating Connections programme who wish to remain involved.

- The frequency of the meetings ensured from the outset, realistic and manageable activity.
- A regular group of people attend Forum meetings and support it in different ways. More involvement in topics of interest is growing and there is now opportunity to increase involvement and share tasks in organising.
- The development of the Forum will continue to be led by members.

## APPENDIX 8:

### CASE STUDY: NEW ACTIVITIES AT HENGROVE OVER 50S CLUB

Community Development Coordinator

July 2017 - March 2018

#### The background information



In June I met briefly with committee members of the Hengrove Community Centre. The group consists of people over 50 who expressed their frustration with no one else in the community being interested in helping to run the centre. It was built over 50 years ago by the community, the land belongs to BCC. It's well maintained and there are some paid activities taking place, plus a club for over 50s. I heard twice from older people, independently, that there was not much of a 'community spirit' in Whitchurch and Hengrove area.

The Over 50s Club meets in Hengrove Community Centre. It's a self-organised and self-funded group, with a membership fee of £2.50 a month. The group seemed to be used to a set routine and the members who are involved in running the sessions didn't think that other members would be interested in anything new.

M. who is the Chair of the Club had a chat with other members and said that no one was interested in adding anything new. However, with Maureen's encouragement the group decided to try two things: sing-along and sitting exercise.

### **What happened and why?**



I asked M. what did she think changed people's minds about trying something new and she said she didn't know. It could be many things, and one of them could be the fact of being asked without assuming anything.

Together we arranged the first sing-along session with an entertainer, John, who sung and encouraged everyone to sing and shake marakas he brought along. People gradually joined in and very quickly everyone was smiling and singing and sharing a joke.

Some members were more reluctant and didn't want to attend the actual session and came later. However they joined in as well and later commented how they enjoyed it.

In total 32 people took part in the activity.

After the session M. had a quick chat with everyone and they all agreed to plan more sessions with John. We talked about funding and agreed that the project's community activities budget will cover

half of the cost (total amount for the whole year is £150) and the group will raise funds for the other half. All agreed to contribute towards the cost of the future sessions.

### **What difference did it make?**

Currently the group has planned five sing-along sessions for the rest of the year – every other month. They are also looking into sitting exercise activities, and M. made some contacts already.

I happened to come across a group member in a different setting and she was telling people there what a wonderful time she had at the sing along session. She said “the group needed a boost, and she was looking forward to new things”.

M. started looking into promoting the group more and recently added a notice about them in the Whitchurch News local magazine.

### **What was my learning?**

It took seven months from my initial visit in the Club and various chats with members, to the actual first new activity at the end of February. It's an example of the importance of trust and relationship building in community development work and moving along the community at their own pace.

The group is leading organising the activities. My initial role was to start the conversation about trying new things and then supporting in the organising of the first session. Now the group is in direct contact with the entertainer and looks for other activities completely independently. I am there if they need me but I am not rushing into anything.



