



BRIGHTLIFE LEGACY REPORT
BRIGHTLIFE BRIGHT
IDEAS SURVEY

*Evaluation
Status Report*

The University of Chester Evaluation Team

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PART 1 Background

1.1 Background

This is the first occasion on which Bright Ideas (B.I.) service providers have been included in the Brightlife evaluation and the purpose of this report is to formally update the Brightlife Partnership Board regarding the progress and experience of B.I. service providers who were successful

It is envisaged subsequent waves of B.I. commissioned providers will continue to be surveyed at the outset using the pre-phase survey. However, working reflexively with the test and learn ethos, a decision was taken to conduct a learning event with the B.I. service providers, in place of the follow-up online survey.

PART 2 Evaluation Methods

2.1 Method

Data was collected using an online survey developed on and distributed via the “Online Surveys” platform. Use of this tool enabled flexibility for B.I. service providers to complete the survey at a convenient time. The core questions from the previous Commissioned Provider interviews and survey were utilised to formulate the questionnaire. Additional information was requested regarding sustainability and recruitment of volunteers, as both have been identified previously as potential areas for investigation.

We aspired to understand and report the experience of B.I. service providers in designing and delivering activities for the Brightlife target population; thus, a descriptive, qualitative approach was employed. We also aimed to identify and understand challenges and enablers faced by B.I. service providers involved with Brightlife.

The survey questions were a mix of multiple choice and free text answer styles covering aspects of participant recruitment, design and delivery of services, support mechanisms, and sustainability. The survey explored the experiences of B.I. service providers in relation to:

- Participant recruitment and selection
- Service design and delivery, including service support mechanisms
- Sustainability.
- Common measurement framework (CMF) understanding and preparedness to use.

Data collected from B.I. service providers will also be triangulated with data obtained from other sources in the evaluation.

2.2 Respondents

Thirteen B.I. service providers were invited to complete the survey (see Table 1 below). Ten of the thirteen responded giving an overall response rate of 77% (76.92). For the purpose of this report, results are reported as a percentage of those who responded ($n=10$, 100%).

Table 1: Bright Ideas (B.I.) service providers and funded project

Organisation/Provider	Service
Bridging the Gap (LIVE!)	An inter-generational project bringing socially isolated older people and young people with disabilities together to share skills and experiences.
CommUnity Kitchen (CHAWREC)	A cooking club for older people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds; including Chinese, Japanese, Bangladeshi, Hungarian, and Indian.
Blacon on the Move (Holy Trinity Church)	An accessible minibus service providing transport for local older people to attend social activities.
Fabweld 50+ (The Welding Academy)	A mentoring scheme allowing retired engineers to help young welding apprentices, along with free welding and construction courses and workshops for any older people with an interest in construction.
Vision Supported Communities (Vision Support)	A dedicated support worker to provide advice and support to reduce isolation amongst older adults with sight impairment in CWAC.
Lite Bites Lunch Club (Flatt Lane Community Centre)	Expansion of a community-run, volunteer-led lunch club in one of Cheshire West's disadvantaged areas.
Sporting Memories (Active Cheshire)	A social group providing reminiscence and light physical activity for older sports fans.
Sparkle Café (Cheshire Deaf Society/Deafness Support Network)	A monthly club for older people in Northwich who are experiencing hearing impairment.
Create For Nature (Cheshire Wildlife Trust)	A hands-on scheme to allow older people to create attractive furniture from recycled timber to sell on to the public.
Growing Connections (Groundwork Cheshire Lancashire and Merseyside)	A gardening project for older people living in assisted housing.
Engaged Motivated Informed (MHA Ellesmere Port/Neston Live at Home Scheme)	An activity programme for older people who have recently retired or been made redundant.
Bright Stars (Motherwell Cheshire CIO)	A mentoring project connecting older women with young mums who have mental health and/or family breakdown issues.
Read and Connect (The Neuromuscular Centre/Cheshire Centre for Independent Living/Cheshire and Warrington Carers Trust)	A book club especially designed for over-50s with a long-term disabling condition and their carers.

The Brightlife team assisted with recruitment by reminding B.I. service providers to complete the survey. Each B.I. service provider that responded was issued a unique number to facilitate anonymity; accordingly, for this report we have randomly labelled those who completed the survey ($n=10$) as B.I.1 through B.I.10,

The survey results are reported as:

- Percentage of responses to multiple-choice questions.
- Summary of responses to questions requiring a written response.

PART 3 Results

Ten out of thirteen B.I. service providers completed the online survey. This section presents the results and lists the key points within each of the four sections.

- Participant information (target group, recruitment)
- Service provided (design and delivery, including considerations towards support)
- Sustainability of the service post Brightlife funding
- Common Measurement Framework (CMF)

3.1. Participant Recruitment and Selection

This section focuses on how B.I. service providers plan to recruit participants and determine if they are members of the Brightlife target group.

3.1.1 How are the target group recruited.

The B.I. service providers' responses indicate they intend to adopt a wide range of approaches to advertise and target potential participants. Half appear to already have contact with some of the target group through existing newsletters, word of mouth and advertising. Overall, methods included:

- Posters, newsletters and flyers in wide ranging locations.
- Advertising in local handbooks,
- Contacting other groups/agencies that work with older people,
- Utilising existing specialist services working with specific target groups, such as individuals with sight and/or hearing impairment.
- Social media (including encouraging friends and family to refer individuals), a range of websites.
- Sending posters to GP practices.
- Word of mouth.

3.1.2 Support or information required to help recruit from the Brightlife target group

Three (30%) of B.I. service providers indicated they did not require support at the present time to help recruit participants. Of the remainder, there were several generic comments around needing help to promote the service to the target group, obtain the contact details of other organisations working with isolated individuals aged 50 years and over, and “spread the word”. In one case (B.I.10) working with Brightlife to raise awareness was specifically mentioned. One of the small organisations (B.I.6) stated they need help producing leaflets and flyers.

The overall impression is using existing contacts and word of mouth will enable the projects to start, but increasing the scale is a challenge and often requires outside support and contacts. However, many are not aware of other organisations supporting the same target group who they could contact, and some providers have not considered the resources needed to increase scale.

3.1.3 Most effective method of recruitment

In a ‘yes/no’ response question, half the B.I. service providers answered ‘yes’ when asked if one method in particular had been effective for recruitment of new participants to commissioned activities. When subsequently asked to describe these effective methods, they listed:

- word of mouth,
- social media,
- housing associations and other local organisations,
- Brightlife referrals.

One organisation utilises home visits

3.1.4 Do you, or do you plan to establish that potential participants are members of the Brightlife target group before enrolling them in your service?

Although only 40% of B.I. service providers answered ‘yes’ to this question (for the Commissioned Providers report was 100%), all ten responded to the follow-up question regarding what mechanism they will use to ascertain whether potential

participants are members of the target population. Planned strategies ranged from, those who would simply ask potential participants whether they fell into the target population and in one instance the B.I. service provider would simply ask for individuals' date of birth; to, at the other end of the continuum, B.I. service providers who planned to discuss whether the individual meets the criteria for participation, or utilise a questionnaire. However, two B.I. service providers did not appear to recognise the need to screen potential participants prior to recruitment stating:

“We will ask them after recruited, before asking them to complete the evaluation”
BI3

“Seems highly unlikely and therefore not worth asking. Presumably the central Brightlife database would flag duplicates from details submitted” BI2

Two organisations indicated they have no intention of implementing screening and expressly state they will accept all individuals:

“We will not exclude engaged individuals who are not isolated (or at risk of being so) from taking part, but we will not include them in our numbers”. BI8ⁱ

“...promoted to the target group however we will accept anybody into our sessions”. BI4

3.1.5 Information or support to help establish whether people are members of the Brightlife target group

When asked to describe any support or information they would like to enable screening of potential participants for eligibility there were six responses. One B.I. service provider noted Brightlife had already provided the necessary information to enable them to check eligibility, while another seemed confused and responded: ⁱⁱ

“the people we deal with are just general public who would not be part of Brightlife”. BI6

One B.I service provider said feedback from the CMFs they send to Brightlife would help them ensure they were accepting people in the Brightlife target group. The Brightlife data co-ordinator undertakes activity this when visiting all service providers; thus, this support is already availableⁱⁱⁱ.

Interestingly, one B.I. service provider indicated no intention of excluding non-eligible individuals in Q6, however in Q7 stated:

“if there is a simple questionnaire that we could use (or answers to one/some of the evaluation questions), then that would be helpful to show who is (and who isn’t) considered to be isolated.” B18

This may help the organisation to identify eligible individuals to include in the returns to Brightlife.

B.I. service providers were asked to indicate if they were aware of sources of information and support to help establish whether potential participants are a member of the Brightlife target group. Table 3 details the number of B.I. service providers who knew of the existing information or support mechanisms/source.

Table 2: Awareness of sources of information or support

Source of information or support	Number of B.I.s aware of existing source
Brightlife commissioning workshops	9 (90%)
Brightlife contract management meetings	8 (80%)
Chester Voluntary Action	10 (100%)
University of Chester workshops	4 (40%)
University of Chester Co-researchers	6 (60%)

One respondent referred to the “network” meetings; this may refer to the Brightlife Provider Network Meetings hosted by Chester Voluntary Action.

3.2 Service Provided: The Design and Delivery of the commissioned Brightlife service

3.2.1 What assists or will assist in delivering your Brightlife Commissioned Service

B.I. service providers listed a range of suggestions that could assist in delivering the service. Two organisations were happy with the “excellent support to date”, with the initial joint Brightlife and University evaluation team workshop, and meetings with Brightlife’s Data Coordinator.

Chester Voluntary Action were seen as helping to promote some B.I. services and the evaluation of participant questionnaires centrally is clearly appreciated by two of the respondents.

Support with marketing and publicity activities was also highlighted as being important, and others noted a range of suggestions that would assist in delivering the commissioned service:

- publicising the skills and professionalism of their volunteers’ partnership working to promote into the target audience,^{iv}

3.2.2 What additional support or information could help deliver an effective service

All B.I. service providers responded “No” with no additional comments. This may be viewed as a positive outcome, i.e. there is no need for support, or it may indicate a lack of insight as to what support would be useful for the organisation.

3.2.3 How are the commissioned providers involving or planning to involve older people in the design and delivery of their service

All B.I. service providers stated they are involving or planning to involve older people in the design and delivery of the Brightlife funded service. Requests for further support or information to help involve older people in the design and delivery of the service related to:

- mystery shoppers attending the sessions and providing feedback on customer service, engagement etc. (BI4)
- Increasing the number of volunteers and providing training.

The involvement of older people by B.I. service providers included:

- Verbal feedback on the service and future suggestions, focus groups to help shape the activities offered and involvement in delivering some aspects of the service, e.g. leading sessions etc.
- One (BI7) has involved older people in the recruitment process, helping to tailor publicity material to attract the target group.

3.2.4 Recruitment and Training of Volunteers

B.I. service providers were asked how they recruited and trained volunteers. Table 3 indicates the primary sources of volunteer recruitment.

Table 3: Volunteer recruitment sources

Source of volunteers	Number of B.I.s recruiting via this route
Contacts of existing staff and volunteers	8 (80%)
Contacts of service recipients	6 (60%)
Via local organisations, e.g. CVA, council	8 (80%)
Specialist national recruitment websites	1 (10%)
Other	5 (50%)

Other approaches included:

- industry contacts,
- individuals referred by Jobcentre Plus,
- event stands
- volunteer recruitment fairs,
- website,
- Facebook,
- newsletter,
- other press, talking newspapers,
- radio,
- EPNAVCO in Ellesmere Port.

Each of the above approaches was mentioned once. Table 4 shows the type of training provided to volunteers.

Table 4: Volunteer training

Type of Volunteer training	Number of using his method
Volunteers only recruited if they already have required skills and experience	4 (40%)
Accepted volunteers are given training 'on the job'	9 (90%)
Volunteers receive separate training and/or participate in workshop	8 (80%)
Written guidelines and advice given to volunteers	7 (70%)

3.3 Sustainability

This section explored B.I. provider plans for sustainability after Brightlife funding has ended.^v

3.3.1 Ensuring the service is sustainable without Brightlife funding

All B.I. service providers answered they are planning or already have a strategy for sustainability of their service, once Brightlife funding ceases. Sustainability strategies included a range of techniques:

- utilising volunteers to run groups post-Brightlife
- securing corporate sponsorship
- delivering training to organisations/individuals
- establishing fundraising activities
- charging participants for services
- establishing a community café to generate funding

One organisation stated it cannot sustain the project without the funding they receive from Brightlife and are seeking to find alternative funding sources. Conversely, another organisation states it will continue to deliver service post-Brightlife, with existing funding.

With regards to contingency plans designed to ensure the service continues if resources are constrained, generally, the organisations seem confident they would be able to continue to deliver should resources be constrained. Contingency plans included:

- seeking funds from elsewhere (internally and externally)
- reducing the frequency of activities
- charging participants for the service.

With regards to any support or information to be available to assist in developing sustainability strategies there were three responses:

“information about other groups that we could signpost members to e.g. men in sheds etc.” (BI1)

“contacts in local businesses, potential sponsors would be helpful” (BI3)

“any support or information would be useful” (BI10)

The final question on sustainability asked what the next steps each organisation will be taking towards implementing their sustainability strategy. Responses included:^{vi}

- sending letters to local businesses (this is consistent with B.I. service providers whose sustainability strategy involves seeking corporate sponsors)
- expanding a “patchwork of funding” initiative so the project is not reliant on only one source of funding,
- finding trainees to help continue the service,
- discussing sustainability with both volunteers and participants (this is consistent with the ethos of involving older people in design and delivery of services)
- collecting donations at a football match in September 2018.

Two B.I. service providers indicated the project was in its infancy, thus they had other priorities or had not yet considered this

3.4 Common Measurement Framework (CMF) understanding and preparedness

Eight of the B.I. service providers (80%) had received adequate information about the Common Measurement Framework (CMF). Of the two B.I.s who indicated they had not received adequate information about the CMF, one reported they were unaware of the CMF. Other respondents had knowledge of the CMF; four indicated they were prepared and felt able to administer the CMF while one highlighted they were anxious about some of the CMF questions. Nine of the B.I. service providers felt prepared to undertake the CMF with participants.

Two respondents indicated the workshop where Brightlife and University of Chester staff presented and explained the CMF, was beneficial. Seven B.I. service providers reported they did not need additional information and/or support. The comments provided referred to the Brightlife staff being approachable and professional, although one organisation stated it would be useful to discuss any issues once using the CMF. Further there was a request for the CMF to be provided as a “translated document” for participants whose first language is not English. Ecorys have translated versions of the CMF available so can provide copies on request.

PART 4 Discussion and Conclusion

It is important Brightlife funded service providers (both commissioned services and Bright Ideas) recognise the potential challenges of reaching socially isolated people, assess the design and delivery of activities, and consider long-term sustainability.

This initial survey was used to gain feedback from B.I. service providers about participant information and target group recruitment, design and delivery of service, information and support needed, recruitment of volunteers and sustainability of activities. The results from this survey will inform the evaluation and the learning event which the University team will conducted with B.I. service providers.^{vii}

An important issue to highlight is the initial low response rate from B.I. service providers, i.e. only seven from the thirteen that were contacted completed the survey at the first request. In all, ten from thirteen B.I. service providers responded. It is clear in the Bright Ideas commissioning documents organisations successful in obtaining funding are expected to cooperate with the evaluation, yet this did not occur either in the survey or subsequently planned learning event. The University team have highlighted this to the Brightlife Contracts and Commissioning Manager for follow-up.

4.1 Participant information

Bright Idea service providers used a range of media to advertise and target participants for recruitment and many appear to have some contact with the target group using existing newsletters, word of mouth and advertising. No single form of communication dominated and there were references to several other methods. The most effective were considered to be word of mouth, social media and Brightlife referrals.

Interestingly only one organisation requested help with producing leaflets and flyers; given several of the groups are small such requests may have been expected to be more widespread. It should be highlighted the Brightlife Marketing and Communications Manager has offered all B.I. service providers assistance and

support with developing marketing materials and strategies^{viii}, thus other B.I service providers may already have received this assistance.

Only 40% of respondents stated they would establish whether potential participants are members of the Brightlife target group before enrolling them; whereas for the Commissioned Providers the figure was 100%. Moreover, the level of rigour with which the target group are identified may not be high given the screening methods outlined by providers; as examples, “The target groups is stated in the promotional material”, “ask them” or “ask their DOB”. Two organisations indicated they would not exclude individuals who are were outside the Brightlife target group. However, doing so may actually disadvantage Brightlife, in that when individuals who are not socially isolated enter the project there is little or no room for improvement in the level of isolation as it is already low. Consequently, the evaluation may be skewed with Brightlife appearing to be ineffective in tackling social isolation. It is also somewhat surprising these organisations were so open about allowing anybody to access Brightlife funded services^{ix}; this suggests recruitment from the target group is viewed as a low priority and additional input from Brightlife may be required to ensure services understand the importance of ensuring participants are in the target group.

Furthermore, it is important to note the Big Lottery has funded Brightlife to provide services for socially isolated older people; thus, Brightlife may wish to consider whether its funding is being utilised to provide services for ineligible individuals. This could become of particular importance if an activity has limited places or funding is constrained and eligible individuals are excluded due to participation of non-eligible individuals^x.

All B.I. service providers who responded to the survey were aware of at least one of the listed sources of information or support currently available to them and often three or four. Chester Voluntary Action was identified by all and there was one reference to the network meeting as a new source of support. The level of awareness of support is clearly higher than that understood by the Commissioned Providers in 2017. Although, no respondents requested further information or support from these sources to help establish if potential participants would be within the Brightlife target group.

4.2 Design and Delivery

The B.I. service provider responses were largely favourable and spoke positively of the meetings with and support of both Brightlife and Chester Voluntary Action. None expressly requested additional support or information although again there were references in the question on “what will assist in delivery” to marketing and publicity by 30% of respondents.

It is positive all B.I. service providers are currently involved or are planning to involve older people in the design and delivery of their Bright Idea; many have already sought feedback and one has also involved older people in the recruitment process.

The most common approach to recruiting volunteers (80%) is via existing staff and volunteers or local organisations (e.g. CVA, council) and 60% found volunteers via service recipients. The Brightlife Engagement and Volunteer Manager provides assistance to service providers wishing to recruit volunteers; however, none of the B.I. service providers stated they had recruited volunteers in this way.

The responses to questions about volunteer training were contradictory with four B.I. service providers stating they only accepted volunteers who already had the required skills yet nine said they provide on the job training. It would be useful to follow up this aspect further with respondents.

4.3 Sustainability

All B.I. service providers state they are currently planning or already have a strategy for sustainability. Five (50%) of the Bright Ideas appear to be self-sufficient in that the service can continue with the current level volunteers and/or funding, although there is a little ambiguity in the responses. However, this is much more positive than for the Commissioned Providers survey in 2017. Another 40% of the B.I. service providers plan to fund the service from the profits of commercial activity i.e. a café or the provision of training and other agreed fund-raising activity.

It is interesting that one of the larger organisation's response was vague regarding sustainability; and although it is looking into funding the service in future, it would be expected to be embedded in the service from the outset^{xi}.

While all providers stated they had plans or would plan for sustainability only 30% provided details of specific actions they intended to take. The remaining 70% either did not know the next step or thought it was early days or indicated discussions were required. This is interesting, as the Brightlife Commissioning and Contracting team highlight they have undertaken much activity with Brightlife service providers to ensure sustainability is considered. Moreover, applicants are expected to detail how they intend to ensure the project is sustainable in the initial funding applications, indicating the importance of this aspect of service delivery.

4.4 Information on the Common Measurement Framework (CMF)

The comments here were almost all positive with 90% reporting they had received adequate information and felt prepared. There were positive additional comments regarding briefings with most respondents stating they are well prepared, experienced and ready to help participants. There was one request for documents to be provided in languages other than English; Brightlife may wish to contact other projects delivering to people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups to ascertain whether they require such documents.

One B.I. service provider appeared to be completely unaware of the CMF. As this information is included in the application for funding and in the Bright Ideas celebratory events it may be the survey respondent had not been involved in these but others in the organisation had, alternatively they may have misunderstood what CMF referred to in the context of this survey. However, as the Brightlife Commissioning and Contracts team have regular contact with all providers, any issues with CMF completion can be picked up by the Brightlife data coordinator.

4.5 Recommendations

There are a number of recommendations we would like to offer for consideration of Brightlife and the Brightlife Partnership group:

- The Brightlife Contracts and Commissioning Manager reinforces the requirement all Brightlife funded service providers cooperate with the evaluation and that surveys should be completed at the first request^{xii}.
- Brightlife should ensure service providers have contacted CVA for help and support with ongoing sustainability strategies^{xiii}.
- Ensure B.I. providers are informed regarding sources of assistance to help 'scale up' where appropriate, and develop sustainability plans if not in place^{xiv}.
- Brightlife may wish consider whether it is willing to accept the risks and consequences of non-eligible people being able to access its funded services^{xv}.
- One B.I. service provider highlighted a screening questionnaire for social isolation would be useful; the University team supports provision of such a tool^{xvi}.

Appendix A - Responses from the Brightlife Team

The Brightlife team have added the following comments and clarifications to this report

ⁱ We tell providers that this is not a problem, as long as these people are not included in the target numbers and do not prevent SI people from taking part (i.e. are not taking a place that could be filled by an SI/lonely person).

ⁱⁱ Confusion is likely because we do not always advocate screening

ⁱⁱⁱ It should be noted that the Contracts and Commissioning Coordinator plays a significant role in supporting providers with this and many other aspects of their delivery.

^{iv} This is the role of service providers. We support them to achieve it, e.g. by putting organisations in contact with each other/through CVA's Brightlife Provider Network.

^v At the time this survey was done, none of the providers would have had a plan in place. They all have a target to complete this by the end of their first funding quarter.

^{vi} Not relevant for this cohort, as no coherent plans would have been developed at this time.

^{vii} Would be useful for the evaluation team to meet with the Contracts and Commissioning team before this takes place in order to understand more about the processes we use to support/manage contracts.

^{viii} It should also be noted that organisations are not always willing to accept help and advice with marketing. This can be a challenge.

^{ix} There is the potential that some providers misunderstood this question, from the answers given. There are also nuances in the agreements we have with providers about access, funding and reporting.

^x We make it clear this must not happen, whilst also recognizing the evidence from test and learn that mixed groups bring benefits.

^{xi} We require a plan to be in place by the end of Q1, not at the very beginning. This gives time for the service to bed in and for us to assess what is potentially worth sustaining.

^{xii} The Contracts and Commissioning Coordinator is also responsible for doing this (for Bright Ideas projects). However, we need to know when a survey is going out in order to be able to encourage participation.

^{xiii} We work closely with providers and CVA to ensure this.

^{xiv} They are receiving this from CVA.

^{xv} See previous comments. This is an acceptable and managed risk in many cases.

^{xvi} Brightlife does not support the use of a screening tool for all projects (see previous comments).