



BRIGHTLIFE LEGACY REPORT  
16. BRIGHTLIFE EVALUATION:  
SECOND PARTICIPANT  
REPORT  
Executive Summary

The University of Chester Evaluation Team

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## 16. Second Participant Report

### Executive summary

This document reports on the findings of the second round of interviews with Brightlife participants. It includes information from thirteen interviews with participants who accessed services directly through Brightlife, and those who utilised the social prescribing service conducted between August 2017 and May 2018. Key findings from the interviews are as follows:

#### Engaging the intended target group

Participants heard about Brightlife through a range of channels, most commonly where Brightlife visited another activity that participants were already attending, or through a friend already attending a Brightlife activity. The participants in this round of interviews were in the Brightlife target group in terms of age. However, whilst it was not as clear whether they were in the target group for loneliness and social isolation, participants were considered by social prescribers and/or providers to potentially be at risk loneliness and social isolation.

#### Participant engagement with Brightlife

The factors which encouraged participants to take part in Brightlife or the social prescribing service, included: nearby location of the service making it easier to attend, interest in the specific activity being offered, and having something to pass the time. However, some participants identified challenges impacting on participation including:

- Lack and cost of suitable transport
- Adjustment after bereavement, although it should be noted for some people bereavement afforded them the freedom to participate in Brightlife.
- Ill health making it difficult to attend specific activities, e.g. being able to hear well enough to join in conversations, and also managing ill health leaving little time for other activities.
- Apprehension at joining new groups and activities
- Moving to a new area and taking time to build new relationships with others
- Other commitments which clashed with Brightlife activities
- Some participants had joined and left Brightlife as they didn't feel it suited them

### Type of activity provided and experience of taking part

Interviewees had taken part in a wide variety of activities, including taster sessions and other activities including photography, bee keeping, drawing classes and lunch clubs. Most activities were well received, and participants appreciated the range and diversity on offer, particularly at the taster sessions. The gardening club, local wildlife talks and beekeeping were well received.

Some participants felt the activities on offer had become less diverse and interesting as time had progressed, and one activity caused division. For example, the creative writing course was set up as a separate fee-paying activity, after being introduced as a taster session, but took place at the same time and in the same facilities as the other Brightlife activities, this caused division and resentment among some participants.

### Impact on participants

The main impacts for participants included:

- Increased social contact and 'getting out of the house' to meet people. This had also encouraged some to make other social connections outside Brightlife.
- Health benefits, specifically for those who had taken part in the exercise sessions and group walks.
- Some participants reported feeling empowered through their involvement in Brightlife, and had increased involvement in the planning of new activities, and maintenance of venues.
- Although the majority of participants in this round of interviews had attended activities which were more social in nature there were some who had joined activities and reportedly gained new skills and knowledge, e.g. painting and bee-keeping.

### Sustainability

Sustainability emerged as a theme throughout the interviews. Not all participants were aware which specific activities were offered under the Brightlife banner, and the branding was not always significant to them. In terms of sustainability of the activities and the need for a leader; most participants expressed the desire for a 'leader' to head activities on offer. A small number of participants had been asked if they would like to

take on all or part of the leadership role, but some felt unable to do so due to other commitments, ill health or perceived lack of support in taking on the role. One group of participants had progressed without a designated leader, employing a team of participants to decide the future direction of their group. On the issue of 'providers' the majority of participants interviewed were aware Brightlife funding was time limited. Consequently, the need to introduce other sources of funding was recognised e.g. charging to attend an activity.

### **Recommendations**

- Brightlife and potential commissioners to ensure sustainability planning is built into future activities from the beginning, since processes are less disruptive if implemented at the outset e.g. charging. Changing the offering part way through, when people may have become accustomed a pattern can lead to frustration and disenchantment. However, it should also be recognised not all activities can, will or should be sustained, and nor would participants want them to be.
- Brightlife and future commissioners to encourage providers undertake planning activities in co-production with participants, to ensure the activities meet the expectations and needs of participants.
- Support providers to encourage participants to undertake volunteer roles, in line with individual capabilities and wishes. Additionally, highlight the importance of ensuring participants feel fully supported if they do take on a role.
- Consider the issue of transport, both costs and coverage, when setting up activities, and explore if and how barriers to participation can be cost-effectively overcome.