



BRIGHTLIFE LEGACY REPORT
3. EVALUATION OF
CO-RESEARCHER TRAINING
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The University of Chester Evaluation Team

Originally February 2017

3. Co-Researcher Training in the Brightlife Project

The University of Chester developed a bespoke training course for volunteers interested in becoming co-researchers in the Brightlife project. Upon successful completion of the training, volunteers were granted an Honorary Research Associate contract with the University. This summary reports on the views and experiences of eight Brightlife co-researchers from the first cohort of volunteers to evaluate and improve future training courses. The following key themes and findings emerged from the analysis:

Finding out about Brightlife

Volunteer co-researchers had not heard of Brightlife before applying for the role. In terms of the recruitment of co-researchers it appears local printed publications proved to be more effective in comparison to the internet and social media, although two volunteers searched the Age UK website for general volunteering opportunities.

Motivation for joining

Six of the eight co-researchers were interested in carrying out research activities for example, interviewing, data collection, analysis and report writing. Other reasons included; connection with the University, role clarity in the advertisement and the fact that this was more intellectually stimulating and different from the typical volunteer jobs for 'older people'. However, there was some initial misunderstanding the co-researcher role was exclusively for volunteers over the age of fifty, which was incorrect and the training was adapted to reflect this.

Successes in training

At the conclusion of co-researcher training, participants found the sessions informative, valuable and felt adequately equipped to undertake research activities. It appears that training duration, delivered in two-hour blocks, was suitable and sessions followed a logical sequence. Participants preferred tutor-led sessions to open group discussions and considered the sharing of 'practical tips' helpful. Equally, it was felt the training was an enriching experience intellectually and in terms of the contribution co-researchers could make to Brightlife and beyond.

Concerns

On completing the training, co-researchers felt generally confident of being able to undertake research, although still questioned their capabilities. Concerns included

work allocations and how the workload will be adequately managed. Furthermore, given the relatively early stage of the Brightlife project, co-researchers expressed disappointment in having to wait longer to interview Brightlife participants after training. It was felt this could be improved with better co-ordination between Brightlife and the University. However, it was recognised as this was the first cohort of co-researchers there would be learning to inform the future recruitment and training strategies.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were identified to improve future training courses for co-researchers:

- A Brightlife induction covering the aims and direction of the project should be conducted prior to the training in order to establish the context
- Clarify co-researchers' position in the project to avoid any confusion regarding age requirements
- Greater direction and sharper focus in the first training session
- More structured sessions and less open group discussions
- Additional sessions on data analysis using software packages
- First cohort to share personal experiences with future trainees
- Clarity around administration processes, for example signing equipment in and out
- Continuing to maintain volunteer enthusiasm by assigning tasks on a regular basis.

February 2017