UNIVERSITY of Chester

BRIGHTLIFE LEGACY REPORT 6. BRIGHTLIFE EVALUATION: OLDER PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Evaluation status report

The University of Chester Evaluation Team

Originally August 2017

6. Brightlife Older People's Alliance

Executive Summary

This summary reports on findings relating to the experiences of the Older People's Alliance (OPA) in the implementation of the Brightlife project. When interviews were conducted in September and October 2016, the OPA had eight members all over the age of 50. Four OPA members were interviewed to identify and understand challenges and enablers faced in executing the role and ascertain views on how the Brightlife project was evolving. Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and thematically analysed to identify and report emerging patterns.

Five main themes emerged from the analysis:

Establishment of the OPA
The OPA was established to inform the development of the Brightlife project from the perspective of older people. In the early stages, there was confusion about the role and purpose of the OPA but this was reported to have improved over time. Training workshops covering skills, commissioning and clarity of role had been provided to OPA members with mixed reviews. However, OPA members who were interviewed found volunteering rewarding and considered they were making a real difference for older people.

Commissioning process
Concerns were raised on the role of the OPA in commissioning decisions and sustainability of projects, although changes had been implemented to improve concerns raised by the OPA. All OPA members expressed a positive view of Bright Ideas as an innovative approach to establishing new projects that address social isolation.

Social Prescribing
The OPA highlighted concerns around the effectiveness of the social prescribing service, especially relying on referrals from GPs, although it should be noted the early stages of development for Social Prescribing and solutions are being developed to improve referrals.

Reaching the socially isolated
The OPA felt the Brightlife project was not reaching the most isolated people, one of the reasons being the complexity of defining or measuring social isolation and concerned some older people who were participating in commissioned projects were not socially isolated. Furthermore, the OPA considered a lack of transport as a major barrier to involvement in Brightlife projects for socially isolated individuals.

<u>The Brightlife programme</u>

OPA members interviewed were positive about the 'test and learn' process adopted by Brightlife as it gave opportunity to review progress and make improvements in 'real time'. Equally, issues relating to perceived bureaucracy of the lottery requirements were identified, in particular the completion of the Ecorys Common Measurement Framework as part of the national evaluation aspect of the project. Concern was expressed regarding the sustainability of projects after funding ends and recognised as a key challenge.

Based on interviews with the Older People's Alliance, the following recommendations were made:

- To review membership of the OPA and the governance structure.
- Careful management and monitoring of funding allocation is required.
- The effectiveness of Brightlife commissioned activities reaching socially isolated people should be considered.
- Barriers to participation in Brightlife activities for socially isolated individuals, including the lack of transport, need to be addressed.
- The concerns of the OPA regarding sustainability of Brightlife commissioned projects should be considered.

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