



BRIGHTLIFE LEGACY REPORT

7. BRIGHTLIFE EVALUATION: COMMISSIONED PROVIDERS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Evaluation
status report*

The University of Chester Evaluation Team

Originally August 2017

7. Brightlife Commissioned Providers Evaluation

Executive Summary

This summary reports on the experiences of organisations commissioned by Brightlife to provide activities for socially isolated older people. The aim is to identify and understand challenges and enablers faced by employees during organisations' involvement with Brightlife. Interviews were conducted in October 2016 with five employees from three organisations, audio-recorded and transcribed. Thematic analysis of the transcripts was undertaken to identify and report the patterns that emerged.

Five main themes were identified from the analysis:

Participant recruitment

Due to minimal referrals from Social Prescribing initially, Commissioned Providers (CPs) had to rely on canvassing and self-referral to recruit more participants. Linked to a slow start for some projects CPs did not necessarily screen for social isolation meaning anyone over 50 years of age could engage in commissioned activities.

Activity provision

Approaches suggested to attract and retain participants included; flexible activity provision, purposeful activities, variety, and the use of buddy schemes.

Common Measurement Framework (Questionnaire)

Early difficulties with Brightlife participants questionnaire completion such as timing, sensitivity of questions and completion support requirements had been addressed. For example, a compromise had been reached whereby Brightlife participants could fill in an entry questionnaire in week two as CPs were reluctant to introduce the questionnaire during the first week, although this has the potential to compromise baseline data. Research participants highlighted exit questionnaires reflected participants' general experience of CPs rather than the experience of a specific activity.

Sustainability

CPs made early efforts to develop sustainable activities and one provider had secured additional funding from an alternative source to extend the project to other areas. It was suggested charging activities after the funding period, or requesting contributions from the start of projects to help sustainability. Equally, some CPs considered transferring ownership to Brightlife participants and volunteers to ensure projects could continue beyond Brightlife funding.

The tendering process

CPs raised issues with the tendering process including complex procedures, short contracts and unanticipated work. However, it was acknowledged, through 'test and learn', improvements had been made for subsequent rounds of commissioning.

Recommendations

Following interviews with Commissioned Providers, a number of recommendations were made to include the following:

- Brightlife should clarify the aims of commissioned activities in relation to addressing and preventing social isolation.
- Brightlife should encourage innovative approaches to participant recruitment and activity provision.
- For length of contracts to be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- CPs need to develop activities more relevant to contemporary older people.
- CPs should consider introducing a small charge at the outset, towards attending an activity course.
- There is a need to balance the practicalities of robust data collection alongside the reality of implementing a social intervention, for example, by CPs developing effective processes for questionnaire completion.
- Commissioning a service to deliver a buddying scheme.