



BRIGHTLIFE LEGACY REPORT
9. BRIGHTLIFE
COMMISSIONED PROVIDERS
SURVEY

*Feedback from
the July 2017
Online Survey,
Evaluation
Status Report*

The University of Chester Evaluation Team

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PART 1 Background

1.1 Aim

The aim of this report is to formally update the Brightlife Partnership Board regarding the progress and experience of commissioned providers (CPs) in the second wave of commissioning, and evaluate the ongoing development of commissioning processes and contract implementation.

1.2 Background

In the first wave of commissioning, interviews with providers were conducted to evaluate development and implementation. Using the same questions from the first CP interviews, an online survey was developed using the Bristol Online Survey (BOS), which allowed CPs to complete the survey at a convenient time.

The survey questions were a mix of multiple choice and text box answer styles. As per the first wave interview questions, the questions covered aspects of method(s) of participant recruitment, design and delivery of commissioning services, support mechanisms, and sustainability.

Seven CPs were invited to complete the survey, six of which responded. For the purpose of this document, results are reported as a percentage of those who responded ($n=6$, 100%). Each participant was issued a unique number to protect anonymity.

In keeping with the test and learn ethos, findings and recommendations have been reported to the Partnership Board and Brightlife Management Team verbally on an intermittent basis, with this report providing the formal feedback mechanism

PART 2 Results

The report reflects on the questionnaire results and list the key points within each of the three sections:

- Participant information (target group, recruitment)
- Brightlife service provided (design and delivery, including considerations towards support and sustainability)
- Further information (opportunity for providers to add comments or further information not covered in survey questions)

2.1. Participant Information

This section focussed on how commissioned providers planned to recruit participants and determine if they meet the Brightlife target group requirements.

2.1.1 How are the target group recruited

Commissioned providers used a range of avenues to advertise and target potential participants for recruitment. Four out of six (67%) CPs stated they mostly use existing support groups within local businesses that are typically targeted towards older people, such as funeral homes¹, vets, and opticians. Other methods included:

- Presentations and leaflet distribution at facilities or services generally targeted towards older people such as nursing homes, sheltered housing schemes, Brightlife social prescribers, Women's Institute groups, mental health teams, AGM of Older Persons Network.
- Posters, newsletters and flyers.
- Social media, a range of websites.
- Radio.
- Word of mouth.

¹ It should be noted that one commissioned provider provides support to those experiencing loss, including the recently bereaved, and it is therefore expected they will have a presence at businesses such as funeral homes.

2.1.2 Most effective method of recruitment

In a 'yes/no' question, half (50%) the CPPs 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, CPs listed resident association meetings, resident association newsletters, sheltered housing scheme managers and holding taster sessions:

'Currently, the most effective method involves contacting sheltered housing schemes and nursing homes and holding an initial taster session advertised using leaflets and word of mouth to gauge interest' (CP2).

The social work team at Cheshire West and Chester (CWaC) were also specifically mentioned as being effective at identifying and referring individuals:

'CWaC Social work team have been fantastic at identifying individuals from within the target group and referring them on to us' (CP4).

Half (50%) the CPs answered 'no', they did not find any one method of recruitment more effective in successfully recruiting participants.

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

Two (33%) CPs answered they did not require support at this stage to help recruit participants. Four CPs (67%) answered they would like some support or information to help recruit from the Brightlife target group. They offered a range of suggestions that could assist with recruitment:

- Request for sharing of good practice with Brightlife to better understand successful recruitment of target group.
- Reaching isolated people through a trusted source such as those requiring help for refuse collection (council) or through links to the fire service.
- Information on ceased programmes to help identify inactive volunteers.

One CP mentioned they had been successful at recruiting volunteers but would welcome any support or information to recruit more participants:

'Any support or information would be welcome, we have been very successful finding volunteers, but would welcome more participants'
(CP4).

2.1.4 Do you plan to, or how do you establish that potential participants are members of the Brightlife target group

All (100%) CPs answered 'yes', they currently do establish whether potential participants are members of the Brightlife target group prior to enrolling them on an activity.

CPs described the current methods of establishing if potential participants were members of the Brightlife target group. The responses ranged in depth of process, from questions regarding the amount of contact the individual has with friends and family, to a one-on-one full induction to check for eligibility. Others included application forms or questions in person/phone/social media/taster sessions with the individual or their family. Only one CP stated that it was a prerequisite that any new member attending an event must be a member of the target group, and if the individual did not meet the requirements, they were signposted to other services:

'Being a member of the target group is a prerequisite to attending the events. Each individual completes a Brightlife participant survey prior to participating. If [they are] not part of the target group, we signpost to other services' (CP4).

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

CPs were asked to indicate if they were aware of sources of information and support that would help establish whether potential participants are a member of the Brightlife target group.

The following table details the number of CPs who knew of these existing information or support mechanisms/source:

Source of information or support	Number of CPPs aware of existing source
Brightlife commissioning workshops	5 (83%)
Brightlife contract management meetings	5 (83%)
Chester Voluntary Action	6 (100%)
University of Chester workshops	3 (50%)
University of Chester Co-researchers	2 (33%)

None of the CPs listed any additional sources that they would like information or support from to help establish if people are member of the Brightlife target group.

2.2 The Design and Delivery of the Brightlife service that has been commissioned

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

CPs listed a range of suggestions that could assist in delivering the Brightlife commissioned service. Some were quite satisfied with the current standings:

- No assistance required although do have some Brightlife contact
- Contracts meeting very useful to determine effectiveness in contacting the target group. Information used in planning.

One CP was very positive about volunteers and local businesses, however would like more time to dedicate towards planning and paperwork:

‘Having a fantastic team of volunteers and the support of local businesses has had a huge positive impact on the service we deliver. More time to commit to the service would be helpful in terms of the planning and paperwork elements’ (CP4).

Others noted a range of suggestions that would assist in delivering their commissioned service:

- More volunteers are required in the area.
- Links to other commissioned services who may have a gap in provision around specific needs such as LGBT delivery.
- Freedom to try new approaches with reporting updated to reflect findings.
- Prompt payment each quarter.
- Flexible approach of staff to work evenings and weekends.

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

Two (33.3%) CPs answered they felt they could deliver a more effective commissioned service with additional information or support which is not currently available.

Requests included:

- Copies of amended questionnaires
- Details from volunteer programmes that are no longer funded

Four (66.6%) CPs answered 'no', when asked if there was any support or information which was not currently available that could assist in delivery of a more effective service.

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

All (100%) CPs responded they are involving or planning to involve older people in the design and delivery of the Brightlife commissioned service. There were no requests for further support or information to help involve older people in the design and delivery of the service. Older people have been involved in commissioned provider service design and delivery by:

- Recruiting those with computer skills to be "champions", enabling them to teach other residents in the community.
- Using older volunteers to support service delivery.

Four (67%) CPs answered they regularly used feedback from volunteers and service users to shape future delivery:

'All participants are asked for feedback and suggestions after each event which allows us to ensure that we constantly deliver a service which is relevant to users' (CP4).

And,

'We seek feedback from the people we are supporting each time we meet with them. That is how we move forwards together. We make no assumptions and rely heavily on the individuals' requirements to create a plan of action' (CP6).

Two (33%) CPs referred to forming focus groups to inform both planning and provisions, and two mentioned holding regular meetings / steering group with potential service users and volunteers:

'We hold steering group meeting which participants and volunteers are invited to on a quarterly basis' (CP4).

2.2.4 Ensuring the service is sustainable without Brightlife funding

All (100%) respondents answered they are planning or have a strategy for sustainability and none requested further support or information at this stage.

Sustainability strategies included a range of approaches:

- Intention to recruit larger numbers of volunteers
- Links created with business and other agencies to support the service long term
- Using raffles and other events to raise funds and raise awareness
- WiFi provision supplied at housing group to encourage residents to purchase their own tablets.

One CP reported they had gradually overcome a challenge related to recruitment of volunteers, and noted new staff would require some leadership and guidance going forward:

'We have made inroads into recruiting volunteers but this has been a slow process. Even if we recruit many, they will still need some leadership and guidance' (CP6).

Four (67%) CPs referred to the requirement of sourcing funding to support the sustainability of services. The use of volunteers and free venue use being key to one CPP, whilst others were hoping to absorb the service into existing delivery where possible, seek alternative funding sources from local government, or seek funding through fundraising or a variety of other sources:

'Seeking alternative funding from local government CVA, etc' (CP3).

And,

'We intend to recruit a higher number of volunteers and continue to use venues free of charge' (CP2).

One CP reported they hoped to develop the service as an independent organisation run by the members:

'We are seeking funding from a variety of sources and the long-term plan is to run as an independent voluntary organisation run by the members' (CP5).

None of the CPs requested any information or support to assist them in developing sustainability strategies.

3.3 Additional Feedback

Additional feedback was provided by three (50%) CPs. Two (33%) CPs reported challenges faced. One of these related to the CMF, reporting it was a useful tool for the organisation to measure success and inform future planning and delivery, however many service users found some questions intrusive:

'We have found that a number of service users find some of the elements of the [CMF] form to be intrusive and are not comfortable in completing some or all of the questions' (CP2).

The second CP reporting a challenge described difficulties related to staffing and recruitment:

'Recruitment of staff has been the biggest hurdle so far but it is hoped that those in place now will remain for the duration of the contract' (CP6).

Other CPs described positive experiences in the additional feedback section. One CP gave positive additional feedback, related to their working relationship with Brightlife:

'It has been great working with Brightlife because they understand how things change and have adapted with us to take on board the information gathered' (CP6).

Another CP used the additional feedback section to describe a successful achievement which involved recently connecting an isolated older person with family via Skype. The importance of 'digital champions' spreading the benefits through the 'learn my way' programme was also explained in this example:

'One resident Skypes her daughter in Spain on a regular basis so her communication is far better and it has reduced her isolation, as a result she is actively encouraging others to have a go!' (CP1).

PART 3 Discussion and Conclusion

Many people in the Brightlife target group are at risk of social isolation for a variety of reasons; no longer being involved in paid work, bereavement, decreased physical or mental health, inadequate transport, or geographical isolation. It is important for CPs to recognise the potential challenges of reaching socially isolated people, and offer activities relevant and interesting to the participants' skills and abilities, assess the design and delivery of activities, and consider long-term sustainability.

This pre-phase survey was used to gain feedback from CPs about participant information and target group recruitment, design and delivery of service, information and support needed, and sustainability of activities. The results from this survey will form a baseline from which to evaluate progress during the next six months.

3.1 Participant information

CPs used a range of media to advertise and target participants for recruitment. Four (67%) CPs stated they mostly use existing support groups within local businesses that were typically targeted towards older people (funeral homes, vets, opticians). Although these were mentioned as the most effective method of recruitment, this does suggest an ageing stereotype attitude remains in many CPs². Recruitment was also achieved through presentations and leaflet distribution at facilities or services predominantly used by people within the Brightlife target group (nursing homes, sheltered housing schemes, Brightlife social prescribers, WI groups, mental health teams, AGM of Older Persons Network); one CP specifically mentioned the assistance received from CWaC's social work team in recruiting participants from the target group. Participant recruitment was also gained by public distribution of posters, newsletters and flyers, and by initial activity taster sessions. Radio and social media were also used.

² Noted that one CP mentioned previously in Section 3.1.1 provides support to the recently bereaved and will have a presence at funeral homes.

Four (67%) CPs requested support or information to help recruit from the Brightlife target group. Areas they would like assistance with included gaining a better understanding of recruitment methods, collaboration with trusted sources (council, fire service) to access socially isolated people, and methods to identify and engage inactive volunteers. One CP requested to share methods of good practice with Brightlife to improve recruitment. Information on ceased programmes to help identify inactive volunteers was requested by one CP, whilst another had been very successful recruiting volunteers, but not participants.

CPs shared current methods on establishing whether potential participants were members of the Brightlife target group before enrolment on the activity. All (100%) CPs who responded to the survey answered they utilised some form of assessment, with some more thorough than others. These ranged from a simple conversation to judge the level of social isolation, through to a full on-on-one induction. All (100%) CPs stated they undertook this assessment prior to any potential participant starting an activity.

All (100%) CPs who responded to the survey were aware of at least one of the listed sources of information or support currently available to them to help identify if potential participants were members of the Brightlife target group. Specifically, all CPs were aware of Cheshire West Voluntary Action (CVA), 5 out of the 6 (83%) CPs were aware of Brightlife Commissioning workshops and Brightlife contract management meetings, whilst only half (50%) the CPs were aware of workshops such as those held by the University of Chester, and only 2 out of the 6 (33%) were aware of the Co-researchers working with the University of Chester. Despite these apparent gaps in awareness, none of the CPs requested further information or support from these sources to help establish if potential participants would be within the Brightlife target group. It could be considered therefore, that support mechanisms should be mandatory to ensure CPs fully understand their target group.

A central aim of Brightlife is to encourage provider organisations to tackle negative stereotypes and adopt an age positive approach to engaging older people. However, there is a tendency among the general population to view older people in ways that stereotype their characteristics and overlook their diversity (Abrams, Swift, Lamont, & Drury, 2015). Overlooking diversity in older adults may contribute to the provision of

activities that target a particular type of older person leaving a large proportion underrepresented. To minimise ageing stereotyping of potential participants in the target group and the planned activities, it could be beneficial for CPs to be more aware of information and support including training and workshops.

3.2 Design and Delivery

CPs offered a range of suggestions that could assist with the delivery of the Brightlife commissioned service. Whilst some were very happy with the current delivery and stated they did not require assistance, others felt they would benefit from more volunteers, links to other commissioned services who may have a gap in the provision for participants with specific needs (for example, LGBT), more flexibility in terms of trying new approaches with reporting and staffing shifts, and more efficient payment each quarter. One CP was very happy with the current delivery, however would like more time to dedicate towards planning and paperwork. It is our understanding time for administrative duties is included in CP activity delivery, and it is possible some providers may not be aware time should be allocated for this work.

Despite the suggestions above, four (66%) CPs did not request any information to aid service delivery. Two (33.3%) CPs suggested a more effective commissioned service could be delivered with more information or support, and suggested copies of amended questionnaires and details from volunteer programmes that are no longer funded as sources would enable them to improve the service provision, however due to confidentiality, CPs will not be given access to Common Measurement Framework (CMF) questionnaires completed by participants. Examination of the CMF data at a later stage will help determine if the aim to include older people in design is being achieved, and if there is evidence of the target group being reached in practice.

All (100%) CPs currently involved or are planning to involve older people in the design and delivery of the Brightlife commissioned service; many stressed the importance of including older people in this process. Several stated it was essential to collect feedback from service users to ensure they can deliver relevant activities that fulfil the requirements of the target group. CPs reported they collected regular feedback via meetings, focus groups, and steering groups. There were no requests for further

support or information to help involve older people in the design and delivery of the service. Plans for inclusion of older people in the design of activities would be highly recommended, and should assist providers to develop suitable activities in which the Brightlife target group wish to engage.

A recent Evidence Review commissioned to inform the Foresight Report Future of an Ageing Population (Government Office for Science, 2016) describes a new generation of older people for whom the experience of post-paid work differs from the traditional stereotype, aided by improved economic circumstances and greater choice with respect to spending time and money. The Evidence Review suggests this new generation of older people are “resetting many of the assumptions about what matters to people in retirement and what new cohorts of retired people may expect in the future” (Higgs & Gilleard, 2015, p. 17). While more traditional activities may be appropriate for some, those responsible for providing activities targeted at older people must ensure they provide activities cater for older people with a broad range of interests. It is also important for providers to consider the needs and challenges associated with people who are currently socially isolated in addition to those who are at risk.

3.3 Sustainability

All (100%) CPs state they are currently planning, or have a strategy for sustainability, and none requested further support or information at this stage. CPs believe they can achieve sustainability by recruitment of larger numbers of volunteers, establishing effective long-term collaborations with business and other agencies, event fundraising, and provision of upgraded technology services. One CP suggested they are seeking funding from a variety of sources with a long-term plan of an independently operated organisation run by members, but did not give further details on how this could be achieved. The majority (83%) of CPs described current sustainability ideas that are heavily reliant on goodwill related to funding, with many subject to free venue use, availability of adequate volunteers, cost absorption into existing delivery where possible, and alternative funding sources (local government, fundraising) as current coping mechanisms.

Alarming, none of the CPs requested any information or support to assist them in developing sustainability strategies. Four (67%) CPs referred to the need for sourcing funding to support the sustainability of services and this should have been built into any activity planning. Concerns about sustainability have previously been raised by participants who have taken part in a number of funded activities, and subsequently have been asked to self-fund activities beyond the funded period.

3.4 Additional Feedback

Given the opportunity to leave additional feedback, CPs shared a range of challenges and successes. Two (33%) CPs reported challenges faced; one related to previously reported issues about the CMF and the other related to recruitment. Although one CP stated they found the CMF as a very useful method to measure success and inform future planning and delivery, many service users have reported they find some elements of the questions very personal. This has been acknowledged previously by Brightlife and the Evaluation Teams as an issue, however due to the CMF being a national survey, the questions cannot be altered. One other CP referred to challenges around recruitment, however indicated changes have been implemented that should improve the situation going forward.

Two (33%) other CPs reported additional feedback related to successful collaboration and improving the life of a socially isolated individual; one expressed gratitude for the assistance from the Brightlife team, the other recalling a recent achievement of teaching an isolated person the use of Skype to enable regular family contact.

3.5 Limitations

3.5.1 Completion of Survey

We had a small but persistent challenge to encourage all CPs to complete the online survey, and a perceived reluctance by some to partake. The survey was 'opened' on 25th May 2017 for 1 month, then subsequently 're-opened' for 3 weeks on 23rd June 2017, after which 4 CPs had completed. A further 2 CPs completed the survey following a 3rd re-opening for 12 days on 19th July, however multiple email reminders and assistance from staff at Brightlife was required. Despite these efforts, one CP still did not complete the survey. The next survey is due for completion in December 2017; feedback from all invited Commissioned Service Providers is essential for a thorough evaluation and is in the best interest of providers. We anticipate all CPs will respond in the second phase evaluation, and in subsequent waves of CPs.

3.5.2 Response variation

Although there was no limit to the space available for written responses, there was quite a variation in level of detail provided. For example, some were consistently very brief, yet others provided lengthier descriptions. It is difficult to ascertain if shorter answers could be due to a lack of time to complete the survey, or possibly an unwillingness to disclose information in writing, and we may consider modifying the survey to suggest a word limit.

We acknowledge only one participant was represented for each commissioned provider and it is possible that responses may vary between staff members within a CP due to the length of experience or variation in role.

3.5.3 Alternative Data Collection

The evaluation team may revise the questionnaire for the post-phase evaluation of commissioned providers, or consider alternative methods of data collection such as Focus groups. The first survey questions may also be iteratively revised following feedback on this report from Brightlife.

4.6 Recommendations

- All commissioned providers to complete the online pre-phase survey within the first request period.
- New commissioned providers to be issued a list of sources of information and services (for example, Brightlife commissioning workshops, contract management meetings, CVA, University of Chester, University of Chester Co-researchers)
- Commissioned providers to attend training or information sessions to discourage ageing stereotype attitudes. For example, the University of Chester Ageing: Myths and Misconceptions Workshop.
- Commissioned providers to be reminded activities should include allocated time for administrative duties and consideration for sustainability.
- Sustainability of activities to be thoroughly considered by all commissioned providers as part of initial planning. Potential sustainability mechanisms should be transparent.

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