# Sparkle Cafe

Overview

The Sparkle Cafe project was funded as part of Brightlife’s ‘Bright Ideas’ strand. This fund encouraged local groups, voluntary organisations and businesses to come forward with ideas to reduce isolation and loneliness for older people within areas or communities of interest.

Sparkle Cafe was delivered by Deafness Support Network, a local charity supporting the D/deaf community in Cheshire West, with an award of £19,876.

Development and delivery

The idea for a monthly cafe for older people within the local D/deaf community was developed by existing members of the Deafness Support Network. Monthly events were hosted in a local cafe, away from the central DNS offices to offer a more accessible venue for those who may not immediately identify as D/deaf.

Activities for participants included social events and quizzes, talks about local art and history, and one-off celebration events.

Challenges were reported in engaging participants with the formal evaluation, particularly the CMF questionnaire.

Impact and legacy

Many participants developed new friendships, which continued outside the project, and reported improved wellbeing as a result of accessing new support networks and communication tools.

The delivery partner secured further National Lottery funding to extend delivery of a similar scheme across the wider Cheshire area. Volunteers who have been involved in Sparkle Cafe are going to continue supporting the project.

Staff at community venues showed an interest in learning sign language, and participants learned/improved digital skills.

Key learning

* Sustainability is driven by the support and dedication of volunteers.
* Participants were eager to learn from each other’s experience, particularly around IT and digital skills.
* Participants can be extremely reluctant to engage with formal evaluation.

Quotes

*“Thank you for enabling this great opportunity to ‘test new ground’ and offer something different to D/deaf people in Cheshire.”*

*Deafness Support Network*