

Thank you for your contribution to Brightlife Cheshire

Dear Brightlife Colleague/Partner,

With Brightlife delivery concluding in March 2022 I would like to take the opportunity to personally thank you for your contribution over the past 7 years. I will be continuing as Head of Brightlife with a focus on promoting Brightlife and Ageing Better best practice and providing support and mentoring to individuals and organisations within Cheshire West and Chester and beyond. I will be delighted to hear from anyone who would like to discuss this opportunity. I can be contacted by email: chris.mcclelland@brightlifecheshire.org.uk or by telephone: 07736 168347.

Brightlife Cheshire launched in 2015 with Lottery funding, through the governance of a multi-agency partnership lead by Age UK Cheshire and featuring significant representation of older people. Most Brightlife activity, including commissioned projects and direct delivery of Social Prescribing, commenced in 2016. Initially established as a five-year project, a further two years of funding was secured to provide social prescribing in rural communities and to promote Brightlife learning and legacy. **Brightlife has supported 3754 participants and volunteers, aged from 50 to a 103.**

With your support Brightlife has achieved a great deal over the life of the project:

- **Genuine involvement of older people** in the strategic development, decision making, and operational delivery of the projects, influencing our Social Prescribing, evaluation, volunteering, and engagement and most significantly in their role as volunteer commissioners assessing, making recommendations, and voting on all proposals for Brightlife funding. We estimate 1845 older people have been involved in co-production activities. This includes 682 Social Prescribing participants each co-producing their individual person-centred plan.
- **Strengthened capability of voluntary and community sector organisations across Cheshire West and Chester** to understand and address loneliness and isolation in people over fifty through co-production. Forty-one commissioned providers delivering fifty-five innovative projects. Many of the providers have adapted their design, delivery, evidencing the impact and presentation of activities and services for older people leading to a better overall offer and responsiveness. CWVA provided expertise and support to providers throughout and we continue to collaborate in support of the sector.
- **Innovative Social Prescribing delivered in rural, village, town, and city communities.** Our Social prescribing reached some of the most isolated older people, achieving great outcomes, and providing a genuinely person centred, co-produced and community-based model of best practice. Implemented before the advent of NHS link workers it has had considerable influence, and our learning shared extensively locally, regionally, and nationally. Additionally, our Social Prescribers supported the development of ten informal 'drop-in' community based social groups of which six are sustained on a volunteer led basis.
- **Promoting volunteering and developing new volunteering opportunities:** Brightlife designed bespoke volunteering roles and supported many providers in developing approaches to volunteer recruitment, training, and management. Brightlife volunteer roles

included: Older Peoples Alliance (Partnership Board members/commissioners) Community Connectors (supporting Social Prescribers) and Co-researchers (trained, supported and engaged by the University of Chester). 709 volunteers were linked to Brightlife including 625 supporting Brightlife commissioned projects/providers.

- **In establishing the 'Brightlife' brand' a positive approach to marketing and communications was an essential ingredient of the project success.** Without explicitly referencing age in the title, age is implicit within the Brightlife brand through messaging and imagery but with a positive focus on connectedness and being valued. Brightlife offered providers consultancy helping them to establish their own strong brands and messaging across a range of platforms to effectively target potential participants. Brightlife also facilitated the bringing together of many organisations to support numerous local and national campaigns, to celebrate local opportunities for older people and to promote Age-friendly Cheshire.
- **The national (ECORYS) and local (University of Chester) academic evaluation proved a significant strength of Brightlife** enabling the project and its providers, working with our data coordinator, to develop confidence and expertise in capturing robust impact evidence. This combined, with a flexible 'test and learn' philosophy enabled Brightlife to adapt and develop progressively. The University of Chester Centre for Ageing and Mental Health brought considerable added value to the project.

Without the support of our strategic partners, the leadership of Age UK Cheshire, and the National Lottery Community Fund (who selected and funded Cheshire West and Chester to be part of their prestigious Ageing Better programme) Brightlife's achievements would not have been possible. Our partners include representatives of Cheshire West and Chester Council, Health partners, Older Peoples Alliance, Older Peoples Network, numerous local charities, interfaith organisation, social enterprise/voluntary sector support organisations and housing organisations.

Over the past two years Brightlife has actively engaged with influential partners to advocate on behalf of older people and to promote the values of co-production and person-centred practice. The story of Brightlife, including legacy reports, podcasts, YouTube, imagery, case studies, local evaluation reports and resources can be found on the Brightlife website:

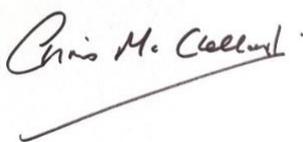
<http://www.brightlifecheshire.org.uk/>

The National Lottery Community Fund website features a series of detailed learning reports covering all aspects of their national Ageing Better programme:

<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/strategic-investments/ageing-better#section-1>

Finally, I would like to acknowledge all those individuals who have joined the Brightlife team along the way. Their skills, creativity and determination brought the Brightlife concept to life, they forged an amazing team and made a difference to the lives of older people. As they progress into new roles, they carry the Brightlife legacy and torch with them.

Thank you.



Chris McClelland. Head of Brightlife