



## **Reshaping Care for Older People Community Capacity Building / Coproduction Case Study**

### **Aberdeen City Befriending Partnership**

- **Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations (ACVO)**
- **Bethany Christian Trust**
- **British Red Cross**
- **Living Well Befriending Project**
- **Parish Nursing Network**
- **Sue Ryder**

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The recent establishment of the Aberdeen City Befriending Partnership (ACBP) - a process which was facilitated by ACVO - is intended to maximise the contribution that the local third sector can make to supporting older people. It is also a way of getting relevant third sector activity embedded in local strategic planning, including Community Planning and the process of creating the new local 'joint commissioning strategies' for older people's health and well-being.

ACVO has been positively involved in the strategic planning aspect of the Reshaping Care for Older People Change Fund in Aberdeen. The proposed partnership approach proved critical to the decision to support the ACBP with Change Fund monies and much time and care was taken in setting it up.

The ACBP has a year one budget of circa £150,000. Year two funding will be determined with reference to the need to build up a base of referrals and initial progress towards the achievement of outcomes.

The service aims to support people over 65 who have become or are at risk of becoming isolated and disconnected from their community and have lost or may lose their independence. The potential ill effects of isolation, loneliness and reduced independence are well documented and can be acute, with compromised physical health due to inactivity and poor mental health being two very particular risks. The Aberdeen City Reshaping Care for Older People partners are very aware of this. 'Reducing isolation and loneliness' and 'optimis(ing) independence' remain key priorities in their Change Plans, hence their unequivocal backing for the ACBP. Through its support, the ACBP will seek to directly address these priorities and help prevent the poor health and can otherwise result. The ACBP wants to help ensure that older people's lives are about 'living well not just living'.

The service plans to assess its success on the basis of both 'personal' outcomes as expressed by those befriended and by 'system' or 'service' outcomes. Information about both can be gleaned straight from the older people themselves and specifically at the point of referral.

One of the partners, Sue Ryder, is supporting the ACBP to gather and share relevant information using 'cloud-based' internet technology.

Further work with the local authority and the NHS will enable the ACBP to make changes and improvements to its service related to the pattern of an older person's use of other services. It will also enable the ACBP to better understand the impact it is having on that pattern and how it may have changed as a result of ACBP intervention. Ongoing discussion with NHS and local authority partners is seeking to identify what information can usefully be used and shared. Using statistical information to confirm first hand testimony immeasurably strengthens that testimony.

To make the best and most coordinated use of resources, each of the five service-delivery partners covers a geographic fifth of the city. The ACBP has already made links with the four GP clusters in Aberdeen, although referrals can come from any source. Referrals are taken via a single point of contact which then connects the referral to the right partner for the older person's area.

Referral criteria have been drawn up to ensure that the service can support those people whom will benefit from it most. The service is targeted at those who are deemed 'hard to reach,' isolated individuals that are not connected to any services and might not even be registered with a doctor. An important element of the service will be a focus on getting older people properly connected (or reconnected) with the range of activities, services and social opportunities locally so that, as far as is possible, they can regain their independence and to prevent the befriending relationship from becoming one of inappropriate and unsustainable dependency, if that is a risk in any given case. In that sense, whenever possible, the service seeks to build the capacity of people within communities to improve their circumstances without the need for support in perpetuity. In this way, the hope is to anchor people more firmly in their own communities. The idea is not that anyone will be 'abandoned' but that they will become sufficiently re-engaged with their community for the befriender to legitimately withdraw at a suitable point.

Each partner already engages volunteers and the intention is to expand the numbers to around two hundred and fifty this year across the five partners in order to ultimately be able to work with up to three hundred older people. In the longer term, a small befriending 'army' is envisaged for the City of Aberdeen that a wide range of individuals and public and private bodies that have regular contact with older people in the community can link into (e.g. community wardens, funeral directors). ACVO has been resourced to assist the ACBP's programme board to properly support the engagement of volunteers, to grow referrals and to ensure smooth integration with other initiatives designed to reshape care.

Each ACBP partner has a small staff team comprised of two full time equivalent posts will help recruit more volunteers as well as taking care of the various administrative and support aspects of volunteering such as PVG checks, supervision, training and expenses payments. This support is vital to building and then maintaining the capacity of enthusiastic people in the community to help others.

Volunteers will be carefully matched with older people, taking into account such things as people's interests and personalities. Once matched, the substance of the befriending activity itself will be shaped by the volunteer and the older person together and the older person will be encouraged to be actively involved in their own good health and well being. This co-design and co-delivery make this a good example of a coproduced service.

Sheila McLaughlin, 77, is already supported by ACBP partner Living Well Befriending Project and befriender Christine Coutts. She says the weekly visits have made 'a huge difference' to her life. 'Just having the chance to talk, to set the world to rights or to actually get out and do something, a lunch club or even just shopping, has added a whole new side to my life. It's about fellowship. The company is great and it makes you feel so much better in yourself.'

Christine, a retired nurse, talks about the 'precious time' she spends with Sheila saying 'I'm just happy to be making a difference.'



### **Sheila and Iris**

Linda Holdworth, enjoys the support of the local Parish Nursing Network, an ACBP partner, and befriender and qualified nurse Iris Pirie, who is attached to Sheddocksley Baptist Church.

Says Linda, 'I've been through a lot, I have lost some family members and had some real health problems. People don't really know how you feel inside and I had stopped going out. This is about companionship. There's help when you need it, you can express yourself. I've been to bereavement counselling and the Clan House (a local cancer support service) but it's also about simple things like just going for a drive in the car or going to a café.'

Iris looks forward to her weekly visit to Linda saying of befriending; 'It's a simple thing but it changes people's lives.'