

BAB Partnership Meeting: Age-friendly Plans and Successes So Far 25 November 2019

Earlier in 2019 BAB launched the Age-friendly Challenge Fund, challenging organisations across the city to make their services better for older people.

Five projects were funded and began work in the summer. At the BAB Partnership Meeting on 25th November 2019, three of these projects gave an update of their work and the learning from their first few months:

- Age-friendly Domain: Transport.
A Transport Action Project delivered by Bristol Older People's Forum.
- Age-friendly Domain: Housing
A Housing Options service delivered by We Care Home Improvements.
- Age-friendly Domain: Respect & Social Inclusion
A diverse communication project delivered by Ujima Radio.

Bristol Older People's Forum (BOPF) Transport Action Project

Overview

In surveys of BOPF members (all aged 55+) over the past few years, transport has consistently emerged as a significant barrier to community engagement. This is a broad barrier which includes buses, shared spaces such as pavements, walking, cycling, clean air, and many other factors.

BOPF's Transport Action Project aims to address this in three ways:

1. Specific newsletters (both printed and online) for BOPF members, focused on transport.
2. An online transport information hub on the BOPF website containing information, news, research findings and debates about transport.
3. A Transport Action Group, which will influence the One City strategic work undertaken by Bristol City Council. The Transport Action Group will develop a 10-point manifesto of key transport issues for the city to focus on. This will be followed by Task & Finish Groups working on 2-3 of these issues as priorities for the remainder of the funding.

Challenges and learning from the first few months

- Transport is a very broad barrier with lots of different elements. It can be a challenge to keep the work focused and to develop clear aims and priorities, focusing on the most important aspects to change about transport.
- It is important to use a community development approach in order for the Transport Action Group to be led by its members, ensuring older people have a say in how the group runs and which transport issues are focused on.
- BOPF will be gathering learning about the process of setting up and running this group, with the aim of coming up with a 'blueprint' for future interventions.

We Care Home Improvements' Housing Options service

Overview

This service supports people to explore their housing options and helps with the process of moving house. This includes finding out their preferences (e.g. if they have a friend they would like to live near), discussing their options, accompanying them to viewings, helping with home surveys, and many other forms of support.

Challenges and learning from the first few months

Barriers (or perceived barriers) that people experience about moving home...

- Not wanting to think about it in advance, before it is needed. Many people have a mindset that "it won't happen to them", preferring to assume they will not need any form of different accommodation or adaptations as they grow older.
- When someone has lived in the same home for a long time, they may be daunted by the prospect of sorting out all of the possessions that they have accumulated over the course of many years. They may worry that an external company will come in and throw away lots of their possessions.
- Some forms of housing do not accept pets, which may limit the choice for some individuals. However pets are allowed in certain housing options but individuals may assume that this is not the case before properly exploring their options.

Other challenges and learning...

- Housing can be a sensitive issue and it can sometimes be difficult for families to discuss it, as they may be seen as trying to influence their relative and persuade them to do something they do not want to do.
- To encourage someone to think about their housing options, it works well to frame it as 'future-proofing yourself'.
- As a short-term funded project, it is difficult to find the balance between making people aware that the service exists and yet also being able to meet demand within the funded period.
- We Care Home Improvements want the service to continue beyond the BAB funding and are exploring ways that this could happen. One possibility might be to charge people a small fee for the service (it is currently free).



Ujima Radio's Diverse Communication Project

Overview

The Babbers show is broadcast on Ujima every Monday. It is produced and presented by and for older people with the aim of challenging stereotypes and presenting positive images of ageing.

Ujima's Age-friendly Challenge project aims to improve the engagement of older BAME people with the Babbers show, as well as with other shows broadcast on Ujima.

It has also created a series of shows showcasing the stories of older BAME generations. By using audio, it enables people to be involved regardless of literacy.

Challenges and learning from the first few months

- Ujima began this project by holding a series of workshops, aimed at BAME elders. However at the first few workshops there were either no BAME attendees, or those who came did not speak English.
- From this experience Ujima learnt that they needed to be very clear about who the workshops are aimed at in their promotion. It also works well to work alongside existing BAME community groups – for this project Ujima worked with the Malcolm X Elders.
- They also noticed that the Malcolm X Elders group were not downloading the completed shows from the Ujima website. They asked them why this was the case and learnt that they would prefer it on a CD instead, which Ujima produced.
- A common challenge for radio shows is that some people feel nervous about speaking on the radio. The project overcame this challenge by identifying a specific talking point for people to focus on at first – in this case it was experiences of Windrush. They also held workshops with the Malcolm X Elders group and have observed an increase in radio confidence during this time.
- Another challenge is the need for longer-term volunteers who want to undertake the roles of research and booking guests, or who can commit to presenting on a weekly basis at the time to show is broadcast. This is a challenge which other Ujima roles also face.
- Ujima are committed to keeping the Babbers show going for as long as Ujima exists.



What are some ideas for becoming more age-friendly as an organisation?

Attendees at the partnership meeting discussed how their organisations could become more age-friendly. Here are all of these ideas. For more ideas, take a look at our [Business Toolkit](#) or [Neighbourhoods Toolkit](#).

Tackle stereotypes which portray older people as a burden. Celebrate their skills and individual lives.

Improve signage within your premises, including to make it dementia-friendly.

Have large noticeboards with large print information.

Look for relevant training opportunities and regularly assess whether previous training needs to be recapped.

Reflect on how to broaden the diversity of the older people you engage with, including around social class.

Have a community outreach officer who can build links with different groups and individuals.

Involve younger people through intergenerational work or by going into schools.

Recognise the different experiences between generations of older people.

Dementia friends training.

Be aware of transport options, and if possible offer to provide transport for those who need it.

Audit and refurbish premises to improve accessibility for a variety of disabilities.

Encourage design teams to consider age-friendly material.

Challenge poor customer service towards older people

Reflect on your language used – many people do not think of themselves as an 'old person'.

Offer activities at the weekend, as this can be a lonely time for people of all ages.

Create links with other organisations and work in partnership.