



**BRISTOL
AGEING
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LOTTERY FUNDED

Life Cycle UK Group Work Peer Support Pilot

September 2016 - August 2017

Life Cycle UK – Group Work Peer Support Pilot

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September 2016 – August 2017 Bristol Ageing Better (BAB) is a partnership of organisations working to reduce social isolation and loneliness among older people and help them to live fulfilling lives. In Autumn 2015, BAB began to commission sixteen pilot projects as part of the Group Work Peer Support Service. These pilots tested different methods of group work and peer support in tackling loneliness and isolation.



Group work and peer support use peers to help people focus on their assets, abilities and potential routes to recovery and general wellbeing. It mobilises the insights and empathy of people who share similar problems or experiences to support their peers, in this case regarding loneliness and social isolation.

This report provides an overview of the pilot project delivered by Life Cycle UK, including their outcomes for participants, their successes and challenges. In line with BAB's 'test and learn' approach, this report will highlight key points of learning and advice which may be useful for other projects within Bristol Ageing Better or the other thirteen Ageing Better areas funded by the Big Lottery Fund through the Fulfilling Lives: Ageing Better Programme.

Project overview

This pilot project involved creating a peer-led cycling group in South Bristol, run by older volunteers.

Prior to this pilot project, Life Cycle UK delivered a Silver Cyclists scheme, organising bike rides for older people across Bristol. However they had reached capacity to organise these rides themselves and therefore used this pilot project to trial a peer-led volunteer delivery model. If successful, the aim was to scale up this delivery model in the future in order to develop sustainable user-led cycling groups.

Older volunteers who were confident cyclists were recruited and trained as Ride Leaders. These volunteers supported Life Cycle to engage other older people in the local community who were less confident at cycling. The volunteers and participants worked together to plan local peer-led cycle rides and to support each other to make local journeys by bike. This included planning where to go, how to get there and where to stop on route, so that the cycling met each person's interests and needs.

The aim was for older people to gain a new support network that encouraged them to be active, gaining the confidence to use their bikes for local journeys in order to help them get out and about and thereby reduce loneliness and social isolation. Throughout the pilot project the volunteers and participants provided feedback to Life Cycle UK about what worked and didn't work in order to provide learning and help Life Cycle UK to set up other peer-led groups in

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other parts of the city in the future.

Participants

In total, 10 participants provided information about their characteristics. Of these 9 (90%) were female and 1 (10%) was male. All reported that their gender identity was the same as that registered at birth. Ages ranged from 55 to 77, with an average age of 62.

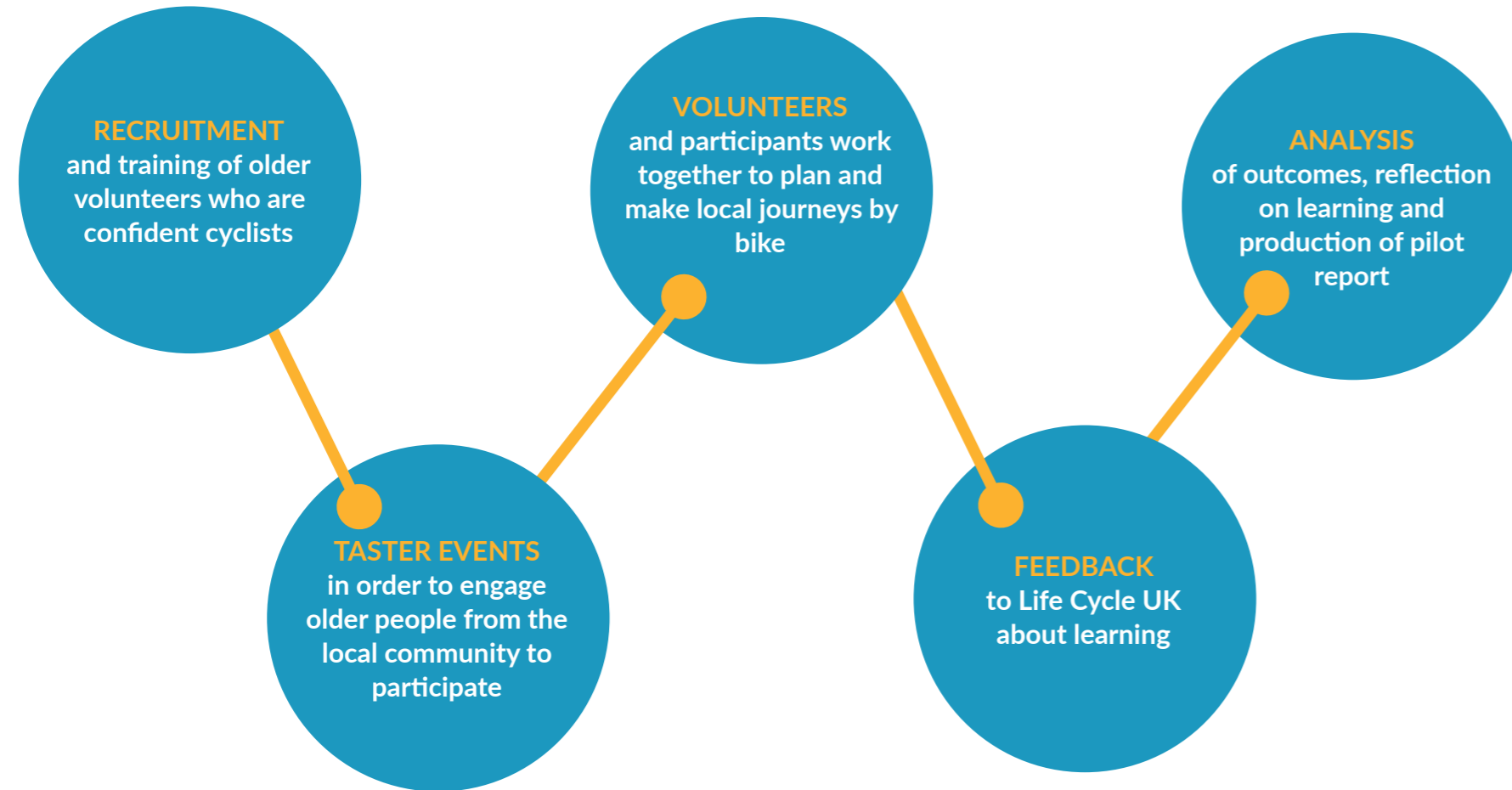
9 (90%) reported their ethnic background as White British, English, Welsh, Scottish or Northern Irish, while 1 (10%) reported their ethnic background as 'White Other'.

2 reported being Christian (20%), 1 reported being Buddhist (10%), 6 reported having no religion (60%) and 1 chose not to provide this information (10%). 9 reported their sexual orientation as heterosexual (90%), and 1 reported being bisexual (10%).

In terms of living arrangements, 5 lived alone (50%), 4 lived with their spouse or partner (40%) and 1 lived with another family member (10%).

5 reported having a long-standing physical or mental illness or disability (50%). Furthermore, 3 reported providing unpaid help or care to someone who is sick, disabled or elderly (30%).

Project process



Outcomes for participants

Participants answered a set of questions at the start of their involvement with the pilot project, and then again at the end of their involvement. These were standardised questions in the form of BAB's Common Measurement Framework (CMF) – a series of questions completed by participants across the BAB programme as well as within the thirteen other Ageing Better areas funded by The Big Lottery Fund through the Fulfilling Lives: Ageing Better Programme.

6 participants answered the CMF questions at both the beginning and end of the project. The following outcomes are therefore based on the information provided by these 6 individuals:

At the end of the pilot project:

- 33% of participants reported an improvement in *at least one* aspect of social isolation and loneliness.
- 67% of participants reported an improvement in *at least one* aspect of wellbeing.

¹ Based on the 6 participants who answered the CMF questions at both the beginning and end of the pilot project

The scales overleaf show the average scores relating to loneliness, isolation and wellbeing for these 6 individuals before and after participating in this pilot project.

More detailed outcomes information can be found in the appendices at the end of this report.

33%

reported
loneliness improved at the
end of the pilot project ¹



67%

reported
wellbeing improved at the
end of the pilot project ¹



Social isolation and loneliness ²

AFTER pilot
2.66

BEFORE pilot
2.50

Wellbeing ²

BEFORE pilot
3.42

AFTER pilot
3.50



² Based on the 6 participants who answered the CMF questions at the beginning and end of the pilot project.

“

How fantastic to be shown around my local area by someone with so much knowledge...he was so supportive and kind. I will now look forward to more rides with likeminded cyclists from my area and cannot thank you enough for the introduction.

”

“

Thanks for organising this, it's been great for me and has given me a new lease of life! I have felt very much better both physically and mentally and it's been wonderful to see the city I have lived in for 60 years from a different perspective.

”

“

I very much enjoyed the cycle rides with David and learnt some really helpful routes around Bristol. He also sent me the routes which is great. We have not arranged any more as we both think I probably know the routes I need. Thanks for organizing this.

”



Participants and volunteers worked together to make decisions about the cycle journeys

Project successes

Coproduction:

- Older people have been at the heart of all decisions in this peer-led project.
- Older volunteers decided on the timeframes for the project, identified where to advertise, delivered promotional leaflets and explored good short cycle routes in their local area.
- Participants and volunteers worked together to plan local cycle rides according to their needs and interests, including where to go, how to get there and where to stop onroute.

Wider engagement:

- Several participants from this pilot project have gone on to join Life Cycle UK's regular over 55s cycling group.

Challenging stereotypes:

- This pilot project challenged stereotypes of older people as inactive and unconnected to their local area.
- This was reflected in how they promoted the project.

Learning, recommendations and advice for similar projects

Participants' confidence:

- Several participants wished to have one-to-one cycling support first, before engaging in the peer-led group cycle rides. This was not initially expected at the beginning of the project but was incorporated into the project in response to feedback.
- The model was amended slightly so that all participants were encouraged to have a free one-to-one lesson first with a qualified Life Cycle instructor. This was valuable in building confidence and reaching those who otherwise might not have participated.

Engagement in other Life Cycle UK groups:

- The older volunteers accompanied some new riders to the meet points for Life Cycle UK's regular over 55s cycling group, in order to support those who felt nervous about turning up on their own.
- This volunteer support was a successful way of integrating these participants into the wider cycling group.



Following feedback the model was amended slightly to offer free one-to-one support first before peer support

Appendix 1

Outcomes for Participants: Social Isolation & Loneliness

The Big Lottery Fund identifies 10 intersecting dimensions of social isolation and loneliness³. At the end of the pilot project, 33% of the 6 participants who provided both entry and exit outcomes data reported an improvement in at least one of these dimensions.

The combined answers from these 6 participants can be seen in the table below:

	Before participating in the pilot	After participating in the pilot
I experience a general sense of emptiness	17% yes	0% yes
There are plenty of people I can rely on when I have problems	67% yes	50% yes
There are many people I can trust completely	67% yes	67% yes
There are enough people I feel close to	50% yes	50% yes
I miss having people around	50% yes	50% yes
I often feel rejected	17% yes	0% yes
How often do you lack companionship?	17% often	17% often
How often do you feel left out?	17% often	0% often
How often do you feel isolated from others?	17% often	0% often
How often do you feel in tune with people around you?	83% often	50% often

³ From the De Jong Gierveld 6-Item Loneliness Scale

Appendix 2

Outcomes for Participants: Wellbeing

Similarly, the Big Lottery Fund identifies 7 intersecting dimensions of wellbeing⁴. At the end of the pilot project, 67% of the 6 participants who provided both entry and exit outcomes data reported an improvement in at least one of these dimensions of wellbeing.

The combined answers from these 6 participants can be seen in the table below:

	1 None of the time	2 Rarely	3 Some of the time	4 Often	5 All of the time
	Before participating in the pilot (average)		After participating in the pilot (average)		
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	3.67		3.50		
I've been feeling useful	3.17		3.50		
I've been feeling relaxed	3.50		3.34		
I've been dealing with problems well	3.34		3.50		
I've been thinking clearly	3.34		3.17		
I've been feeling close to other people	3.34		3.50		
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	3.67		3.40		

⁴ From the Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (SWEMWBS)



Bristol Ageing Better (BAB) is a partnership working to reduce social isolation and loneliness among older people and help them live fulfilling lives.

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