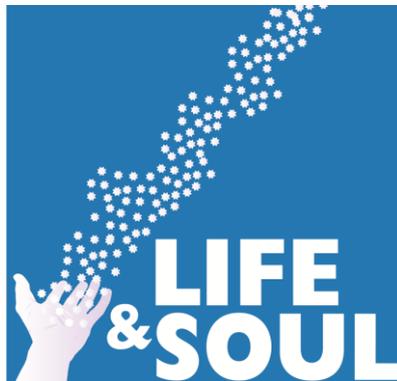




Fit as a Fiddle: 'Life and Soul'

Final programme report

September 2012





"I've walked with a stick for quite a while. I was walking to the corner shop the other day when I realised I had forgotten something. I had forgotten to pick up my stick."

"Since getting more fit and active I have felt better like I used to.... I still use my stick but I am not relying on it"

John- Life and Soul Volunteer at Pinetree, Peterborough.

Thanks to:

- The staff, co-ordinators and managers from participating residencies and organisations who took part in Life and Soul.
- The team of trainers who participated in the Life and Soul project.
- The volunteers who undertook the training and engaged with their peers to improve their health and well-being.

Thank you to all of the many residencies, trainers, volunteers and residents who have contributed to this report. Some names have been changed.

Photographs have been supplied by participating residencies.

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Overview

This Report provides an overview of the Life and Soul project; presenting its key findings, successes and lessons learnt.

This report was written by NAPA. Its purpose is to inform and advise future projects in the Sheltered Housing sector.

Background to Life and Soul, 'Fit as a Fiddle' Sheltered Housing Strand

The Big Lottery Fund's Wellbeing Programme

The Big Lottery Fund's Wellbeing Programme is a £16.5 million grant programme encouraging healthy lifestyles and wellbeing. Funding under this programme is available for voluntary and community sector organisations and statutory and private organisations through a series of national and regional portfolios of activity. The Wellbeing Programme comprises three main outcomes aimed at improving and developing:

- levels of physical activity
- mental wellbeing
- healthy eating habits

National Context

Amid rising life expectancy, growing levels of obesity and an increased focus on tackling mental health problems; the Wellbeing Programme reflects the Government's increasing emphasis put on healthier lifestyles, nutrition and preventative health services.

These multiple objectives are set out in the cross-government strategies *Healthy weight, healthy lives* (Department of Health, 2008) and *No health without mental health* (HM Government/Department of Health, 2011).

An independent inquiry revealed five main factors that have an impact on older people's mental health and wellbeing in later life;

- discrimination
- participation in meaningful activity
- relationships
- physical health
- poverty

(Age Concern and Mental Health Foundation, 2006)

'Fit as a Fiddle'

AgeConcern England was awarded £15.1 million by the Big Lottery Fund to deliver the 'Fit as a Fiddle' portfolio across the nine English regions from 2007 until 2012. From January 2010 Age Concern and Help the Aged came together as Age UK to deliver this portfolio. The main aims of 'Fit as a Fiddle' are consistent with the intended outcomes of the Big Lottery Wellbeing Fund by championing healthy eating, physical activity and mental wellbeing for older people.

The 'Fit as a Fiddle' portfolio comprises projects delivered by over 200 organisations; 99 of these are local Age UK/Age Concern organisations. Each of the nine English regions received £1.2 million to deliver a range of innovative projects in their area.

The portfolio builds on Age Concern's Ageing Well Programme developed in 1993 to improve older people's social and emotional wellbeing within a wider context.

Life and Soul, 'Fit as a Fiddle' Sheltered Housing Strand

Five nationwide 'Fit as a Fiddle' projects were set up specifically to target 'hard to reach' older people. This included 'Life and Soul' a project aimed at residents (over the age of 50) in sheltered and supported living settings, who often sit outside of social care and support networks.

With funding from the Big Lottery Fund of £229,546 the National Association for Providers of Activities for Older People (NAPA) developed and delivered the Life and Soul project between 2008 and 2012.

Life and Soul was designed to increase well-being amongst this difficult to reach group through the recruitment and training of residents as volunteers. Resident volunteers were trained to increase the opportunities for fellow residents to participate in physical activity and improve their nutrition, thereby contributing to an overall improvement in mental health.

Aims and objectives

'Fit as a Fiddle' aims to address inequalities and empower older people to live fulfilling lives with the support of their peers and communities by increasing the focus on expectations of good health in old age and encouraging older people to maintain, sustain and improve their health.

This report aims to bring together the experience and learning from Life and Soul projects in Sheltered housing to inform best practice. The objective is to assist sheltered housing organisations and schemes interested in increasing activity provision using volunteers.

Evaluation Methods

Life and Soul collected feedback from:

- the 29 training events
- 101 road shows
- Volunteer Activity logs
- Demographic data on 1694 participants
- Volunteer Evaluations
- Trainer and management Evaluations

The project also commissioned follow-up visits to 4 sheltered housing schemes as well as management, and telephone interviews. A sample of volunteers was also interviewed. The research company Ecorys conducted an external evaluation of all parts of the 'Fit as a Fiddle' project. (See appendix for sampling and methodology)

Reporting Limitations

Volunteers work both to plan activities as well as to create a culture of change and activity. Whilst the great strength of a cascade project is the individuality and independence that volunteering brings; it does provide substantial challenges to the tracking of project outcomes.

Due to the cascade nature of the project, activities go unreported as volunteer residents operate independently and respond to the challenges and demands of their individual schemes and neighbours.

Access to beneficiaries is also limited by the anonymous nature of the 'Activity logs' and feedback process.

Project Overview

Aims and intended outcomes of the Life and Soul

The Life and Soul project aimed to increase well-being and health literacy and to encourage activity within the sheltered housing sector. (BLF Well-being programme outcomes defined as increasing physical activity, eating well and feeling good). At a national level the programme focussed on training volunteers to encourage lifestyle and health improvements via a National Cascade Training Programme. Another aim of the Life and Soul project was to produce a pack of training materials to support both management and volunteers in a cascade project as well as to enable the dissemination of learning.

Background to Life and Soul

The target group for the Life and Soul programme were residents in sheltered and supported housing across England. Many sheltered schemes now accept residents at the age of 50 years so target beneficiaries were from 50 years old upwards- a wide age range as many residents in sheltered housing are approaching 100.

The project worked with partners in sheltered housing including extra care housing for individuals who require increased levels of care/support. This meant that the project was working with residents with a wide range of needs and abilities. Supported Housing schemes were not excluded from the target group of the project but as residents in these schemes tended to be younger, they did not all fit the criteria of the project.

Methods of working

The principal method of working was the development of a national volunteer training cascade, supporting resources and the well-being road shows.

- The training involved a two day training course, for volunteer residents. (See Delivery of training)
- Resources were designed to assist volunteer co-ordinators plan and support a well-being programme. The aim was that each scheme should develop into a self-sustaining project.
- The mini road shows were delivered as 2 hour standalone events. Some larger road shows varied in length but were typically a day long. They were designed to be fun and informative, to motivate and foster a culture of well-being. (See Delivery of road shows)

Needs analysis

The project was informed by a series of resident focus group discussions held in three sheltered housing schemes as well as one to one interviews with a small number of managers and professionals from the Centre for Sheltered Housing Studies.

The sheltered housing sector poses unique challenges. It is easy for older people to become isolated in sheltered accommodation as there is no regular daily contact with management.

Life and Soul helped sheltered housing organisations to look at ways of using

volunteering to improve their service and support residents stay in independent living.

Engagement of the sector

The volunteer training cascade was advertised widely in the sheltered and supported housing sector. This was achieved by 4 principal methods:

1. Articles about the project and its aims were published in the sector press (e.g., the May 2011 edition of the Sitra bulletin. EROSH also included an article on the project in its e-zine.
2. Attendance at meetings and events. The Project Co-ordinators attended a series of sector specific events to talk about and publicise the project. These included the Croydon Supporting People Providers Forum, the Lewisham Older Peoples Workshop and a variety of EROSH (Emerging Research on Sheltered Housing) regional meetings. The Project Co-ordinators and some of the trainers also contributed to the SHN (Sheltered Housing Network) road shows in March 2011. A presentation was given at each of the 7 road shows across the country. These road shows targeted professionals in the sheltered housing sector by focussing on current issues.
3. Engagement was also sought through individual meetings with sector organisations (e, Anchor Homes, Midland Heart, Housing 21) both as initial approaches and follow up to promotional activities.

While most organisational management were very positive about the project; in some

Delivery of Volunteer Training

organisations the project encountered a negative culture amongst front line staff who found it difficult to see the potential of residents as volunteers. Some organisations were concerned about the level of support that volunteers may need.

The road shows, similarly; were publicised widely within the sector through articles in the sector press and attendance at sector groups and meetings. Examples include articles in the Sitra bulletin and in SHN's Shine newsletter, both of which resulted in many enquiries.

An overwhelming response was received. Following the initial publicity; word of mouth was the single most successful source of demand for Wellbeing road shows.

Engagement of residents as volunteers

The project required a minimum of 10 volunteers for each training course. This typically meant that local schemes were grouped together and volunteers were recruited from this cluster.

Residents as potential volunteers were recruited by partner organisations who were asked to appoint a volunteer co-ordinator for each site/cluster. Individual residencies were provided with introductory resources to assist the co-ordinator to establish the local Life and Soul programme.

Volunteers came from a wide range of backgrounds with a variety of abilities and interests. Some were already volunteering in other capacities, for others this was a new and exciting role.

Delivery of Volunteer Training

The training was designed to encourage volunteers to rediscover their skills and interests and to look at what they could offer to their peers.

The training covered;

- the importance and benefits of staying active and healthy diet
- the links between activity, diet and mental well-being
- local opportunities for physical activity
- the role of the volunteer
- how to engage and motivate other residents
- behavioural change
- material on equality, diversity and confidentiality

Training also included a walk or other activity session, and many group tasks and brainstorming exercises.

The goal of the training was not merely to deliver information but also to help bond and inspire the volunteers and to begin to identify roles and interests within the group. By the end of the training, the first action points and meeting dates were agreed.

Each Life and Soul training course was run on 2 separate days, usually separated by a week to allow the volunteer to assimilate the information. The national Life and Soul programme provided the trainers and the training materials and the host organisation provided the venue, refreshments and any transport. The Sheltered Housing organisation appointed a volunteer coordinator who would motivate and support the group of volunteers

To assist clarity in the role of a Life and Soul volunteer, a sample role description was also provided. Training was designed to assist volunteers in fulfilling those roles. (see Appendix)

Volunteers were given a Volunteer Handbook, designed and produced by Life and Soul. This included a summary of the course content as well as useful forms, contacts, more ideas for activities to run and Activity log sheets.

A total of 29 scheme clusters were engaged in volunteer training.



Joseph Rowntree Foundation volunteers attending training in Manchester.



Volunteers sharing ideas and planning activities

A Wealth of Skills

One group of volunteers, when asked to identify the skills and experience they could transfer to volunteering, produced the following range of personal experiences.

- *Teaching and nursing - Joinery and wood turning*
- *Secretarial/administrative skills*
- *Fund raising and charity work - Accountancy and financial skills*
- *Author – Musician*
- *IT skills and graphic design Signing for hearing impaired people*
- *Arts and craft –Needlework*

When these skills were applied to volunteering activity, the group produced a range of activities for their scheme. These included;

- **Setting up a Welcome group for new residents moving into the village which would then evolve into a Friendship Group – ensuring no-one is ever left sitting on their own**
- **Setting up a walking/rambling group**
- **Forming a choir**
- **Wood turning class**
- **Tai Chi class**
- **Darts and Dominoes**
- **Musical evenings**
- **Volunteer days – when a volunteer would be “on call” to assist residents – whether to go for a coffee, a walk, accompanying to the doctor etc.**



Residents enjoying a healthy walk

Implementation of regional training cascade

To achieve a regional impact across England, following pilot training sessions, the original planned cascade model was to deliver a series of four training programmes across one region in the second year, followed by 4 training models across each of the 9 Age UK regions, achieving a total of 36 programmes each reaching at least 10 volunteers.

The irregular structure of the sheltered and supported housing sector made following this format a significant challenge. Some sector organisations cover a small geographic area and others have a national coverage. Therefore the cascade training evolved into a more natural set of schemes and was not organised into equal groups of 4 local residencies as originally envisaged.

Case study – Motivation and Inertia

During a training event, a short lunch-time walk was planned in a scheme with a very attractive and walkable garden, full of flowers on a lovely sunny day. This was included in the programme. When it came to the time for the walk, only 2 people were interested. The trainers had to work hard to encourage the others and eventually all but one took part. On the resumption of the training, the trainers were able to point out how challenging the role of the volunteer will be.

In cases where volunteers themselves (committed to Life and Soul) didn't want to walk and that reluctance was also felt by other residents.

With encouragement by volunteers residents did take up the walk option (motivating others and modelling the behaviour). Participants admitted that the walk, sunshine and seeing the flowers had been a very worthwhile experience (review, rewards and incentives)

Typical Life and Soul Volunteer Activity

One scheme evaluation reported residents organising and becoming engaged in 14 different activities within 4 months of the training, including; Zumba classes, model making club, starting two allotment schemes, coffee mornings and afternoon teas, designing and distributing newsletters, Bring and Buy sales, holiday and festival get together events, , buying garden furniture, purchase of a computer for residents' use.

Case study –Alliance Homes a whole team approach

Volunteers from 5 Alliance Homes schemes joined together to receive Life and Soul volunteer training.

*“We were thrilled to see the room was packed with 22 volunteers and staff. **Within no time at all it was great to see people making new friends, talking and joining in. At coffee break our volunteers worked side by side organising refreshments for everyone. By the afternoon everyone was fully participating, filling in their workbooks and swapping details.**”*



We have since had our first follow up get together meeting with volunteers attending from all five of our first cluster of retirement housing schemes and volunteers spoke about how they had helped 'move people from the red to amber (Pre-contemplation to contemplation)'! (Karen Bennett, Alliance Homes Activities Coordinator and Life and Soul Volunteer coordinator)

Activities coordinator, Karen Bennett explains how initially the project took almost 2 full days a week to manage (across the 5 schemes) but quickly the volunteers needed less support. Karen now joins them once every 3 months to keep in touch. “The volunteers call me if they have a question; it

takes up about an hour a week of my time, that’s all.”

Volunteer residents plan and organise the activities and staff plan a key role too. For the volunteer project to continue long term Karen says it has been essential that *“**staff stay motivated and encourage residents, for residents to train other residents and to share their ideas and achievements. For staff to help with funding ideas and pick up the pieces if ideas do not go to plan, but allow residents to try new ideas and give them a purpose, which has proved to be essential for our residents.**”*

Perseverance proves Electric

*“**We will not be disheartened if only one or two people turn up, as things get going, plus by word of mouth, we are sure that something will be a success**”* one volunteer in Anchor Manchester wrote in his first log in 2011.

Sure enough some trial events had few participants but the group persevered. The volunteers group, who come from five local schemes, continued to meet once a month. They planned a variety of activities; events, walks, computer classes, rookie golf, 10 pin bowling and games nights for their fellow residents.

Several months later, this is what one participant said, after one of their cross schemes event, *“**we accepted a challenge from Laureates’ 10 pin bowling team. Which we lost, but no regrets, they were superior to us. The atmosphere was electric, with a large following of spectators who gave both teams great support. Looking forward to many more days like today**”*

Another participant expressed, *“**Great satisfaction in being able to take part with so many people of my age.**”*



Delivery of Well Being road shows

An overwhelming demand was received for the mini road shows which were delivered to a standard format. Each road show included;

- a short introduction to Life and Soul.
- information on diet, activity and their effect of mental wellbeing.
- an activity session.
- a healthy living quiz.
- healthy tasters and snacks.
- a goody bag for each participant to take away.

The exercise taster varied dependant on the trainers' specialism and the ability of the participants. Some trainers led armchair aerobics; other ran line dancing, stress ball or role play exercises. Where a trainer did not possess the relevant exercise qualification, they worked with Extend (a national exercise training provider) to deliver the exercise taster.

Trainers were experienced at tailoring the activity session so everyone could take part, no matter what their ability.

The road shows included discussion on what activities residents enjoy. Tom Forster, (community engagement officer at Metropolitan Homes Nottingham,) explained how this proved really useful. ***“The road shows highlighted the residents’ interests to the scheme management. For example, at one road show, management discovered that many of their residents enjoy swimming. They are now looking into transport to the local pool.”***

Participants were encouraged to think of ways they could overcome the obstacles to doing the things they would enjoy. ***One participant London in London shared, “It (road show) reminded me of all the things I want to do. I had given up my photography because I don’t like walking alone. But I am going to find someone to walk with so I can do my photography again.”***

Sheltered organisations provided the venue, usually a scheme lounge, and the project provided the trainer and the resources. Host organisations were asked to evaluate the road shows. One member of staff called the road show ***‘great fun and very informative.’***

The larger road shows were partnership events and took more liaison work to set up. They were often part of a larger event - either an internal event that the host organisation was already planning or an event that the organisation asked to set up in partnership with Life and Soul. Examples include a Falls Prevention workshop in Stockport and a tenant’s fun day. Other local agencies also attended and demonstrated what they had to offer.



Project context

The project was operating in a time of major change and challenge for sheltered housing. It was also taking place against a variety of policy and regulatory initiatives to which it could make a contribution. These included:

Supporting People - The Supporting People programme was introduced in 2003 as a new funding and regulatory system for sheltered and supported housing. Its main regulatory tool is the Quality Assessment Framework (QAF), a self-assessment tool for providers which is then validated by Supporting People Teams. The QAF contains 5 Core Objectives for sheltered and supported providers to meet. One of these is 'Service User Involvement and Empowerment'. Life and Soul had the potential to contribute to this objective through its involvement and empowerment of residents as volunteers. The objective states: 'Clients can provide examples of specific initiatives that have expanded their skills, confidence and self-esteem.' And 'The service provides clients with appropriate confidence building and skills development to participate in the wider community.'

The main purpose or aim of the Supporting People programme is to enable residents to maintain independent living. Life and Soul aimed to encourage this through its emphasis on staying active which will prevent a variety of functional and health problems which can limit independence. The QAF expects sheltered providers to show how 'Independence is promoted through appropriate skills training'. The volunteer training had the potential to provide evidence of this.

Other key policy frameworks with potential synergy with Life and Soul included

- Resident Involvement Initiatives
- The Personalisation agenda
- The Older person's Housing Strategy
- Health and Social care reforms

In practice this meant that the volunteer training was implemented in different contexts with partner organisations. For some organisations it was seen as part of the Activity provision, for others it formed a strand of the resident involvement programme.

Project management and leadership

The project was staffed by a Project Coordinator and a Project Administrator. A data entry assistant was hired in April 2012. Life and Soul also worked with a number of consultants to develop the training pack and evaluate the outcomes. The project was also supported by the Director of NAPA. The project experienced several changes of staffing during its lifetime and these changes impacted upon Life and Soul's development work and outcomes.

The project recruited a team of 9 freelance trainers across the country. They underwent an induction of observation and co-training and were assessed using a standard quality assurance template. Key criteria to the selection of trainers was an understanding of

- wellbeing and health amongst older people
- volunteering
- the sheltered and supported living sector

Outcomes of the project

29 sheltered housing scheme cluster received Life and Soul volunteer training, over 300 volunteers were trained. These continue to operate independently from the Life and Soul administration with support from a key member of staff within their organisations

101 road shows were run promoting health literacy. These promoted and encouraged active lifestyle and healthy eating and mental well being.

Life and Soul has produces a robust set of training and support materials for use with organisations and local schemes looking to increase activity provision through volunteer projects.

Additionally;

- Staff who attended the training courses reported that they had gained more awareness and knowledge around the benefits of staying active and wellbeing amongst older people.
- Organisations reported an increase in a sense of community within schemes and across schemes
- Many volunteers and beneficiaries report increase in strength, flexibility and stamina due to becoming more active as part of the Life and Soul project.
- Beneficiaries increased their social contact through the work the volunteers undertook with them, thus reducing social isolation.
- Volunteers gained in confidence and self-esteem as a result of their volunteer role and reported a renewed sense of purpose.

Successes

Individual residencies demonstrated that given the right amount of support, volunteers were able to initiate a wide range of tailored activities and make a significant contribution towards the life of residents.

Volunteer training and support amongst residents in sheltered and supporting housing settings has provided people in later life with the opportunity to use their skills, experience, interests and energy to contribute towards the lives of others and their communities. It has also assisted them to find a new role in later life.

With strong leadership from within, housing schemes across a geographical location were able to initiate inter-scheme programmes involving the exchange of volunteers and residents to stimulate ideas, share practice and work collaboratively.

The road shows proved to be a very effective way of promoting healthy life styles and engaging residents with local organisations and opportunities.

“BPHA had four road shows in four different sheltered housing schemes, one of which was an extra care scheme. I was encouraged by how much a 2 hr. health and wellbeing sessions could change residents thinking about their lifestyle. At one of the schemes in Luton, an NHS Health

Trainer stopped by to sit in on the session and at the end she had 5 referrals from residents want help accessing physical activities in the community and to lose weight. At the Bedford road shows they requested contact details for chair based exercise specialists who could come into their schemes to deliver weekly sessions. These road shows highlighted the importance of knowing what's available to access in your local area and facilitating that process by inviting the community to sit in or give taster sessions.” (Suzy England, Life and Soul Trainer)

Lessons Learned

Staff contribution

In most cases, scheme staff attended training. Staff contribution was variable, mainly determined by role, job description and confidence. Training could be better delivered by scheme staff and this would add to the sustainability of each local programme.

Preparation

The resources provided to host schemes highlighted the need for preparation and planning in advance of the delivery of the training. It was clear that not all schemes had made the most of the resources and guidance to assist planning and consequently, there were different levels of awareness amongst residents attending training.

Scheduling

Training would have been better spread over a longer time, but both national and local resources would have made this problematic.

Activity costs

Some schemes wanted to use volunteers as organisers to be responsible for setting up a group, club or activity for which residents paid. Any profits (eg, from refreshments) would be put back into sustaining the group and its' activities. The criteria for funding support from the Big Lottery Fund meant that residents were not allowed to pay for any activities that were organised. This was problematic in that moving from free activities to full cost payment post project, is known to pose a barrier to participants. Moreover, very few schemes provide activities at no cost, residents expect to pay for the variety of activities they choose as they would in any community.

Resources

A key lesson from Life and Soul is that individual residential settings need to commit time and human resources to the development and support of individual programmes, volunteers and residents.

Resident Engagement and the Role of the Activities Coordinator

Following is a compilation of learning from interviews with Volunteers, Scheme managers, volunteer coordinators and project management

Resident Engagement

- There are a wide range of people coming into sheltered housing and residents need to be encouraged to work alongside each other, the young learning from the old and vice versa.
- New residents in the scheme need to be quickly engaged in activities, the longer they are in the scheme before they engage with others the harder it is to engage with them later.
- Personality clashes and culture are the main reasons for low participation in activities.
- Some residents don't like to feel pulled together, equally those who are more independent don't feel they need activities, it takes until they become ill to realise they need others.
- Activities that run best or are well attended are when a volunteer from another scheme attend and run an event with the idea to pass it onto someone in that scheme when it is running smoothly. Equally, events are well attended when the community come in to the scheme to run an event e.g. a coffee morning in the communal area, games night etc.
- Sometimes, those who have lived at the scheme for a long time believe things should be done for them rather than organising things themselves.
- The project is most successful when it works in partnership with other voluntary agencies in the community. Some residents don't feel comfortable talking with a peer but happily talk with a befriender who doesn't know them.
- The scheme manger needs to help resolve personal differences promptly before bullying/harassment occurs within the scheme. Quite often following a chat with the people involved separately and then together differences are resolved quickly. If not dealt with quickly volunteers discontinue their role.
- The scheme manager and/or activity coordinator need to remain involved for activities to be successful. They need to encourage new people to get involved, help them to change their perception on the activities being run and offer resources when required e.g. printing.

The Role of the Activity Coordinator

- Volunteers displayed great enthusiasm and commitment during the training. Good practice requires a key person with the role and function to support volunteers to grow (an activity or volunteer coordinator).
- The project works best when the activity coordinator listens to the residents and helps them to do things independently rather than running activities for them.
- Show faith in residents and allow them to try new things.
- Volunteer Training is a good start and people feel more skilled following the sessions, however the scheme manager/activity coordinator needs to offer lots of encouragement and show that they value the volunteers e.g. award ceremonies, events for volunteers, vouchers etc otherwise they get easily de-motivated.
- It can be labour intensive working with volunteers.

- Support meetings were arranged on a monthly basis. After a few months however, the group was up and running and the meetings became once every two and then three months, generating less work for the Activity coordinator.
- For an activity coordinator's role to be successful, it needs to be flexible (more intensive at the beginning when encouraging schemes to start setting up activities – it can be more hands off when set up and volunteers become more confident and have built up their own resources)
- The activity coordinator often initially acts as a person who keeps the momentum going and eventually it starts to run itself and there is a ripple effect across the scheme with new people getting involved.
- The most requested help is resources/advice predominantly searching on the internet for local opportunities e.g. leisure, funding, learning opportunities.
- The Activity coordinator acts as a link to the community and all the schemes in the organisation.
- Information can be easily shared across all schemes. The activity coordinator is also a point of contact for people who need help problem solving.
- The Activity coordinator needs to remain external to the scheme and needs to be skilled at working in situations where there is a conflict of opinions and personality clashes.
- The activity coordinator needs to have a good relationship with the scheme managers and have a good method of communicating with them all frequently.
- Schemes that are new to running activities need a cash injection to get them going otherwise they rarely have the resources to start.
- Schemes where residents are frequently engaging with activities are often schemes that have a manager who has been there a long time and is familiar with the importance of activity for wellbeing.

Key findings - Impact on residents as participants

Training was shown to improve the knowledge of physical activity and nutrition. Volunteers gained confidence to engage residents in well-being activities. Following training, volunteers have demonstrated their skills in motivating and mentoring their peers to become engaged in well-being activities and make an impact on scheme life.

Volunteers have also demonstrated their organisational and interpersonal skills in working with their peers. Good practice in volunteering seeks to build on skills and experience of participants' previous lives.

Volunteer training feedback

Volunteer training was evaluated by pre and post training questionnaires. These included questions of volunteer perceptions of increases in knowledge, skills and confidence to undertake the volunteer role. Volunteers report a large increase in confidence. Less confident volunteers were given additional support.

When asked 'What do you know, or have been reminded of through the Life and Soul volunteer training?' volunteers answered;
"Refreshed with knowledge from others and skills."

"Confident in discussing and listening to others and their concerns and worries of new ideas, activities."

"Old age can be frustrating"

"How to deal with people, learning to listen"

"Exercise and good eating is essential"

'What can you now do because of the Life and Soul project?'

"Find out what people are able to do"

"More confident about myself"

"Everyone was very helpful and informative"

"Understand others points of view better"

"I enjoyed meeting people and exchanging ideas".

"Try to have a cooked meal everyday and be myself"

"I would like to see us all move forward with what we have learnt and set up ideas"

Although not quantified, there is ample and rigorous evidence to indicate that residents have improved their own well-being and health as a result of their becoming involved as volunteers.



Improved levels of Activity and Physical Strength

Moving More Often

The Life and Soul project has not produced data to document long term behaviour change amongst residents (longer than 6 months), (1) however Life and Soul has indicated that the volunteer approach has been successful in initiating physical activity amongst participants and encouraging them to move more often. Physical activity Guidelines (2) indicate the importance of older people

- Breaking sedentary patterns of behaviour
- Accumulating bouts of 10 minutes of physical activity towards a weekly total of 150 minutes

Life and Soul has produced evidence that residents engaged in the programme have been breaking their patterns of sedentary behaviour and accumulating bouts of 10 minutes of physical activity. This evidence is consistent with previous documents that indicate that the greatest health gains are to be gained from encouraging the least active to undertake some physical activity. (3).

Getting out and about

Life and Soul has also demonstrated that residents have been frequently engaged in organising and participating in accompanied and independent trips out to local activities and attractions (eg, a day out at a country park). Whilst not quantifiable, these activities are certainly proxy measures for physical activity, involve walking and promote independence. The 2005 Older People Health survey indicated that 50% of people in residential settings never (or hardly ever) left the residence (4).

Impact of volunteering on physical and mental health

Although the principal focus of Life and Soul was to increase well-being amongst residents of sheltered and supported living settings, a significant outcome from Life and will have been the impact of the programme upon volunteers. There is ample evidence of the impact of volunteering upon older participants' physical and mental health (7).



"I've walked with a stick for quite a while. I was walking to the corner shop the other day when I realised I had forgotten something. I had forgotten to pick up my stick."

"Since getting more fit and active I have felt better like I used to.... I still use my stick but I am not relying on it." John –Volunteer at Pinetree, Peterborough.

Improved Diet

Life and Soul sought to promote healthy eating. To raise awareness of dietary issues with an overall message that older people tend to eat too much saturated fat, sugar and salt and not enough dietary fibre or fruit and vegetables each day. A key aim was to raise awareness of natural ingredients, preparation techniques and portion control.

It is known that people's sense of taste weakens as they age. This often leads to older people compensating by adding excessive amounts of salt to their food. Trainers discussed ways of adding flavour through spices and herbs to avoid having to use too much salt.

Road shows also included fruit and smoothie tasters and looked at trying new ways of eating fruit and vegetables. Recipe booklets were also included in the goodie bags subject to availability.



“We have started cooking lessons. We have learned 3 new dishes so far”

Volunteer, Alliance homes.

“We have improved our Lunch club menu to make it healthier. Doesn't it look delicious?”

Volunteer, Cross Keys.



“It was lovely to hear everyone sharing their cooking ideas. Everyone enjoyed talking about what worked and what didn't. One resident said that one of the recipes from a high street Healthy eating Cookbook tasted like cardboard but said she'd been able to remedy the sauce by adding some extra mature cheddar. she explained that using extra mature cheddar meant she could get a good flavour but use less cheese, therefore adding less fat to her diet Everyone thought this was genius.”

Weight Loss

An added bonus of becoming more physically active and improved diet is often losing weight. This is very important for some older people's health. One volunteer shared, ***“Since doing the training, I've realised that many of us have an interest in diet and fitness, since getting involved in the exercise group I've lost weight and started to eat healthier, I now eat Wholemeal bread”.*** - Volunteer

Improved mental well being

The link between physical activity and mental health is well-established, both from a physiological and psychological perspective. All feedback from residents reported “feeling good” or “feeling much better” as result of their involvement in Life and Soul. Clearly, this would be the result of a number of mechanisms and activities, but at a simplistic level, Life and Soul has given residents the chance to interact with each other, enhance existing relationships and provide residents with the opportunity to further connect with their local community.

One moving feedback form included only the words, ***“I thought I was alone but I’m not”***. Sheltered housing residents can become isolated and feel alone. Life and Soul volunteering and volunteer led activities provide the opportunity for resident to reconnect and take part in a meaningful exchange.

One Life and Soul volunteer, who had suffered with depression for many years, told us how the social side of being involved with volunteering has helped to lift him out of depression. He particularly enjoys using his creative skill in decorating the hall for events and getting involved in fancy dress.

Participants attribute feeling happier to the following causes;

- Enjoying activities and social events
- Meeting new friends and people of their age
- Being involved in a group
- Reconnecting with hobbies and interests
- Sharing knowledge and skills
- Contributing to their community in a useful and meaningful way
- Losing weight, being able to move more
- The social side of volunteering
- Being creative, decorating for events



Residents benefit from the wealth of experience within their scheme (or cluster of schemes) and volunteers benefit for being able to share their expertise which enhances feelings of self worth and efficacy.

According to an Activities Coordinator who works in 27 schemes, ***“The schemes that have a happier atmosphere are those that offer a wide range of different activities that focus on different aspects of health and wellbeing.***

“When only a few activities occur, residents spend a lot of time stewing on problems and relationships and personality clashes and problems occur. When residents are spending their time in purposeful activity they tend to spend less time worrying about individual differences.”

Case Study – Pinetree, Cross Keys- Gym created in 3 weeks

“It became evident on the training course that many of the volunteers struggled with getting enough exercise and eating the right foods. When health promotion materials were handed out during the course, volunteers realised that they had a lot in common with each other regardless of age and ability. On a site visit 3 weeks after the training, I was impressed to see that the more proactive volunteers had set up a weekly exercise group and were encouraging those less confident.” (Suzy England, Life and Soul Coordination and Trainer)



“We all have health problems; strokes, heart conditions and pulmonary disease.” explained Stuart, the volunteer who runs the weekly gym session at Pinetree, Peterborough.

“We just do what we can. Everyone is free to use Penny’s treadmill and I bring down my exercise equipment. There are now 12 residents that come down on Tuesday afternoons. I stay with people while they’re on the treadmill to help them stay safe and keep an eye on their heart rate.”

The organisations activity coordinator had assisted volunteers with setting up the group by drawing up a brief safety disclaimer, highlighting that those taking part in the activity sessions take responsibility for their own health. Each person who attended the group filled in a health questionnaire and signed the disclaimer. The health questionnaire informed others of their health complaints and what the required actions should be if they fall ill during a session. This sensible approach has tackled barriers around risk assessment and empowered individuals to take control of their own health.



One beneficiary says, *“I’ve never exercised in my life, the scheme manager encouraged me to go down to the communal lounge for a coffee while the residents exercise session was taking place. I now come every week because a volunteer started to encourage me and I’ve started to lose weight”* Her neighbours told us that this resident used to just sit and do nothing.

She added, *“I didn’t want to stay at this scheme before getting involved, I’m much happier now I’ve met some friends”.*



Key Findings – Impact of volunteering

Life and Soul has made a significant contribution towards residents' lives as both volunteers and participants. Residents have become engaged in a range of well-being activities as a result of encouragement and support from volunteers. This has been achieved by taking up a range of new activities as well as returning to previous interests.

Staff awareness

The Dialog opened through volunteer training and road shows highlighted the residents' interests to the scheme management.

Memories Shared/ Bonds created

Residents were able to share previous interests and life stories with others leading to the formation of new groups and activities. Many of these interests laid dormant within memories and residents were able to enjoy spontaneous conversations about lives lived and experiences.

Connection to their scheme

Residents reported a greater involvement in and connection to their schemes as a result of Life and Soul offering an enabling, active approach.

Choice

They felt that instead of things being “done to them”, they had more control over their lives and a greater stake in the life of the residency.

Improvement to physical environment

The most accessible and beneficial activity for most residents would be regular walking. Both the design of residencies/schemes and their immediate physical environment (proximity of gardens, parks, safe streets determine motivation and access to enjoyable and purposeful walking. Regardless of functional ability and condition, it is not always the easy choice.

Added Value



In addition to the improvements to moral and mental and physical health improvements that have been documented volunteering has brought added value to sheltered housing schemes; through assistance and activity provision volunteers provide, as well as gardening, renovation work etc. that they have undertaken.

The Travel Agent

Increasing opportunities to get out and about was identified as a priority by residents following volunteer training. One volunteer took the responsibility for organising a series of regular visits to attractions and venues identified by residents. Also responsible for bookings, transport, promotion and communications, he has identified himself as the resident travel agent

Reduced Isolation /Increased Inclusion

As the scarce resources (and staffing levels) within the sheltered and supported living sector are re-allocated, it is possible for residents to feel abandoned and isolated. Life and Soul volunteer approaches will therefore become even more important in the future. For the residents, the most significant benefit of the project was the opportunity for

residents to have meaningful conversations with each other and volunteers.

“many of the volunteers who attended the training said they didn’t realise that their peers felt the same as them. As a result of the training, the residents are all much happier to talk to different people in the scheme, sit in different seats in the communal lounge.” From Mel – Activity Coordinator

Computer Club

Many volunteers have run computer classes for other residents. In addition to learning a new skill; this has enabled people to keep in contact with family, to have access a wide range of information and local opportunities that they were previously unaware of. This has also saved the Scheme manager/volunteer coordinator time.

Awareness of Local opportunities and resources

Residents have shown increased knowledge and understanding of local physical activity opportunities in their local communities. This was achieved by using the compiling of an A-Z of local physical activity opportunities in the training, supported by locally available materials and compiled into a directory for residents.

Residents are well placed to notice need

Volunteers also helped residents with small maintenance tasks, changing light bulbs, batteries etc.

One volunteer’s activity log entry reads, *“I assisted a lady to check her (hearing aid) batteries using a battery meter. This improved the ladies mood as she was able to hear if anyone was using her door.”*

This illustrated how a small thing like a hearing aid not working can isolate a resident from their social network and support

structure. Through this volunteer’s initiative not only was the resident’s mood improved, but their involvement in their community restored.

Building Cross-scheme friendships relationships

In addition to relationships with their neighbours, residents formed inter-scheme friendships, events and competitions, where several schemes were clustered together for a Life and Soul project. These relationships have led to increased activity and travel between the schemes. *“We have organized other social events with the scheme that we shared the road show with.”* Scheme Manager

Sharing skills with neighbouring schemes- Gardening and Allotments

A resident volunteer with a strong passion for gardening had previously undertaken to develop a garden within the residential setting. This including flowers as well as a large vegetable patch and sitting spaces. This interest had encouraged others to become involved and in particular increase demand for fresh vegetables for residents to cook.

Engaged as a volunteer in cross-scheme Life and Soul training, this gardener was invited to a corresponding scheme to give talks and demonstrate to residents in other settings how they could initiate their own yearlong gardening project.

Activities turn into team sports

“We had a large circular target which had a Velcro surface. And was divided into about 12 sections, small Velcro balls had to be hit with a golf club to obtain points.

The people involved were quite impressed and decided to form into teams. When proficient we could offer challenges to other communities.” Volunteer, Anchor, Manchester

Key findings - Impact on partnerships and sustainability

Life and Soul Partners

Partners included sector umbrella organisations such as EROSH, Sheltered Housing Network and Sitra who played a role in awareness raising and dissemination.

The main partners that the project worked with were the sheltered housing providers that implemented the project in their schemes. Local partnerships were most successful when Life and Soul principles of resident engagement were seen to be consistent with organisational policies of resident involvement.

Local Partnerships –the key to Sustainability

Partnerships were also formed between residencies and volunteers were able to share their skills. This often came about as a result of co-running Life and Soul events. These partnerships proved to be key to resident participation.

One Activities Coordinator explained, *“Activities that run best or are well attended, are when a volunteer from another scheme attend and run an event with the idea to pass it onto someone in that scheme when it is running smoothly. It seems that personality clashes and culture are the main reasons for low participation in activities. Equally, events are well attended when the community come in to the scheme to run an event e.g. a coffee morning in the communal area etc.*

Partnerships also formed between residencies and other local organisations and many volunteer activities led to fundraising for local causes.

Sustainability

Life and Soul volunteer led activities continue to provide a wide range of opportunities and benefits to residents within their schemes. The sustainability of volunteer led activities depends in part on the organisation's commitment and ability to maintain the human resources required to support volunteers and residents.

The sustainability of Life and Soul requires a whole team approach involving leadership and management from the top, ownership and buy-in by support staff and activity coordinators as well as front line staff.

The diversity of the sheltered and supported living sector was a challenge to Life and Soul in that there was no obvious single national umbrella partner, with who Life and Soul could work. The sustainability and further development of Life and Soul will need to take into account the disparate nature of the sheltered housing sector and look at the potential of working with an existing sector umbrella organisation or a network of provider organisations.

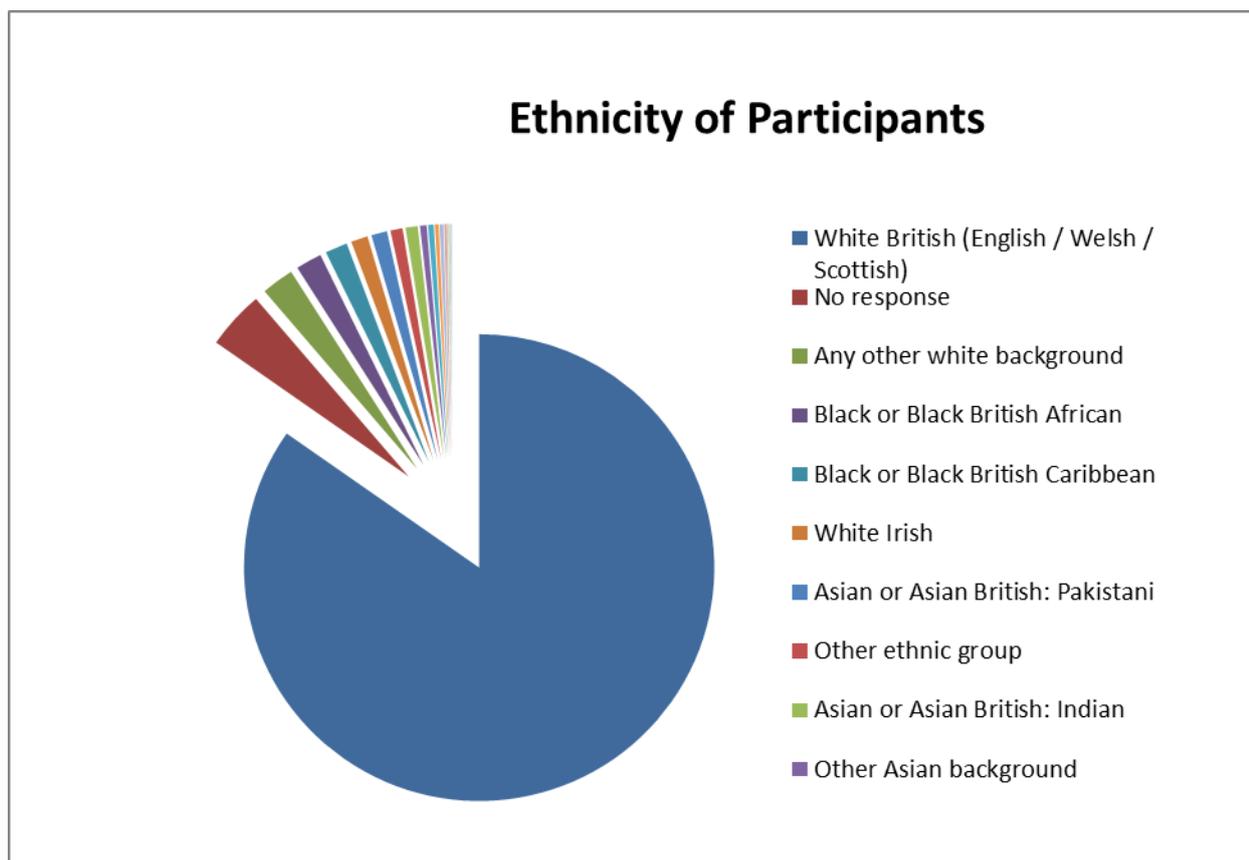
Key Findings – Impact on equality and diversity

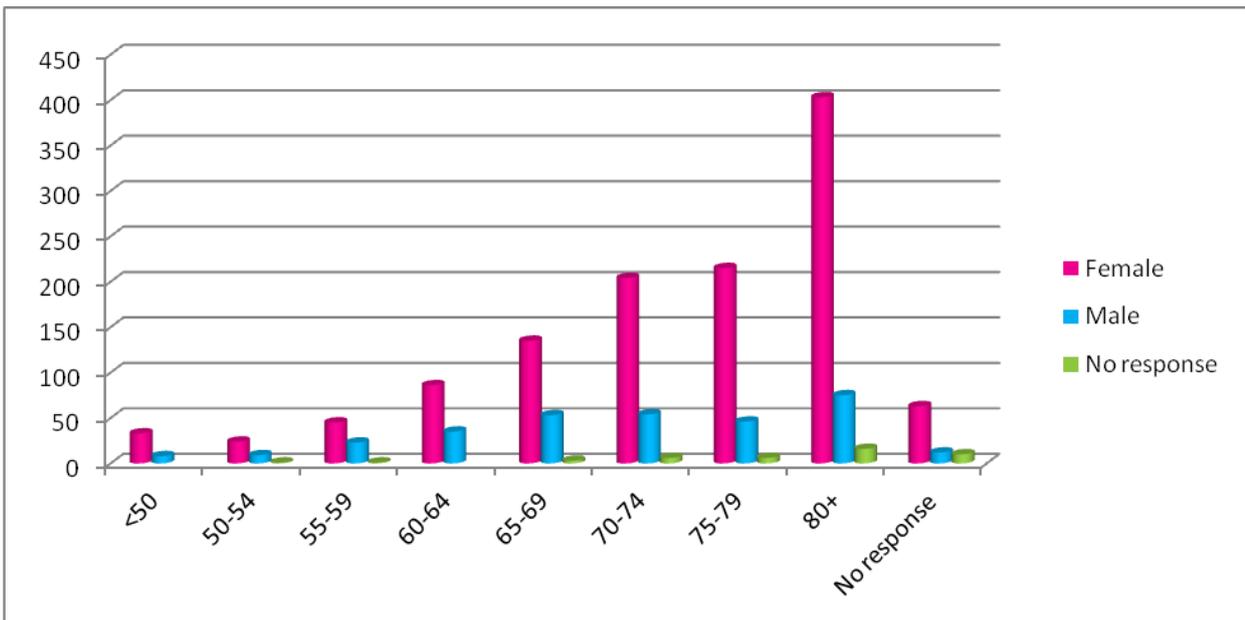
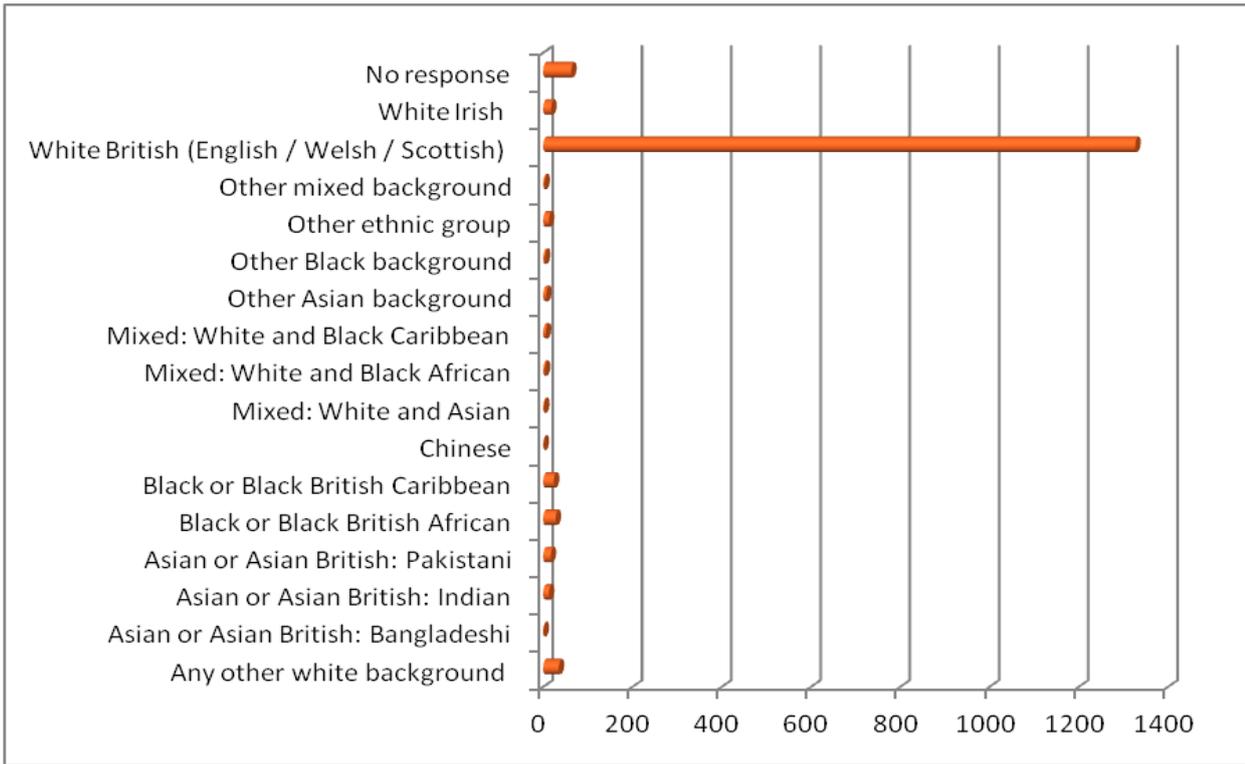
'Fit as a Fiddle' projects promote healthy ageing, based around the needs and ideas of local people. Projects aimed to include black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, older people with specific health risks, across genders and faiths and those living in deprived urban or rural areas. The flexibility of the project gave individual residencies the scope to develop their individual programme of activities in a way that best reflected the needs and diversity of their community.

Trainers reported making adjustments to the delivery of training content and tasks to accommodate the needs of older learners and the wide range of learning abilities amongst volunteers.

Equality and diversity issues were included and highlighted within volunteer training. Trainers found that there were preconceptions to be challenged. Training materials promoted an inclusive attitude towards all fellow residents and their ability to engage in a healthy lifestyle. Both the training and road shows

Translators aided Life and Soul trainers during three road shows arranged for ASRA Housing Group (housing schemes that house primarily Asian residents, many of whom did not speak English) these road shows were very well received. Several changes were made to the road show format to accommodate the lack of translated materials.





Key Findings- Impact on health literacy

Resident health literacy was integral to volunteer training including recommended amounts and types of physical activity, healthy diet and hydration.

The Life and Soul road shows promoted health literacy across the sheltered and supported living sector. Materials produced for these events covered a wide range of healthy living topics including nutrition and physical activity, falls prevention. The wellbeing quiz proved to be a fun and effective way of engaging residents with key health messages.

Volunteers were supplied with a handbook which included health information to re-enforce learning from the training and signposted of additional information via health websites.

Engaging volunteers and staff in joint training and discussions was a powerful way to promote a shared vision of healthy living, active engagement and the attitudes and beliefs of residents.

Health Literacy improvements needed

Although the training sought to break down myths and perceptions of what it is to be active, many residents still saw physical activity as taking part in structured activities and taught/led classes or “a day out”. Health literacy amongst residents has further to go in translating the key message about building physical activity into everyday life.

Physical activity is seen as an “all or nothing” behaviour and the current guidelines and messages remain challenging to most residents. Improvements in both health literacy and behaviour might benefit from new approaches and messaging that encourages and promotes the accumulation of smaller bouts of activity.

In spite of guidance offered by Life and Soul, refreshments and food provided for residents during training and did not always meet the aspiration of healthy eating.

Other setting based health promotion models (eg, healthy schools) are based upon the key messages and actions (being physically active and adopting healthy eating choices) being adopted by all those within the setting. In these settings all members of staff are responsible to re-enforce and support messages and behaviours. The Sheltered housing sector and individual organisations will need to see themselves as “health promoting” to all those who work in and are part of the organisation; management domestics staff, friends and family, not just residents.

Conclusion and recommendations

Engaging sector organisations and recruiting volunteers was the main barrier encountered by this project.

The experience of this project shows that it takes time and a bit of focus to build up relationships with the community around sheltered housing schemes, but that once those links are developed they can continue with ease and to enrich the lives of residents in the scheme for years to come. Through the training element of Life and Soul Sheltered housing management gained confidence in the abilities and skills of the volunteers.

Volunteers have been shown to be a great asset to schemes. Training the volunteers *alongside* staff enables a shared vision of engaging residents with physical activity, eating and drinking well and feeling good. Management valued volunteers for their energy and the extra 'life' they brought to scheme, and residents valued them for the individual attention they received.

Sheltered housing organisations need should recognise the vital role that volunteers can play in;

- promoting active lifestyles, allowing residents to remain in good health and independent living for longer
- reduce isolation through meaningful relationships
- improve quality of life and wellbeing for fellow residents

The Life and Soul training pack helps resident volunteers and activity co-ordinations to hone the sensitivity, motivational and interpersonal skills as well as practical and planning skills needed to organise and provide meaningful and personalized activities. It also includes guidelines for confidentiality, safety, and useful forms, ideas and best practice.

Volunteer coordinators and scheme managers should be a part of training events alongside the volunteers to develop a team approach and a shared vision of meaningful and active engagement with residents and build a good working relationship.

The sheltered housing sector, including volunteers, should be encouraged to support residents to take appropriate risks and develop physical activity across a whole spectrum of daily living and physical activities.

Recommendations for future practice

Based on its experience of the Life and Soul project, NAPA makes the following recommendations:

For Age UK and other funding bodies

- To look at working to sustain Life and Soul through a coordinated and sustained relationship with the sheltered and supported living sector to ensure the dissemination of the

principles of health promotion and well-being.

- to undertake further work with well-being boards, County Sports and Physical Activity Partnerships to initiate local Life and Soul strategies to reach

the sheltered and supported living sector. (Most sheltered supported living organisations are private sector providers and do not fall easily within (are distanced from) local health and social care networks).

- To consider how the Life and Soul training resources (including managers tool kit and training resources) are best integrated into the broader health and well-being training curriculum process for sector providers as well as health and social care professionals.
- To maximise the potential of the new UK Chief Medical Officer Guidelines on physical activity and older adults 65+ to initiate further work with the sector to promote independence in later life.

For the sheltered and supported housing sector

- To map the requirements of national organisational policies and frameworks (eg, Supporting People) against the principles and intended outcomes of Life and Soul and recognise the synchronicity of these as a starting point to offering sustained well-being programmes to residents.
- To invest human and other resources, to enable Life and Soul and well-being programmes using volunteers to be integrated into current programmes to support residents.
- To develop partnerships with major national well-being, health promotion and volunteering organisations.
- To recognise the importance of getting commitment at each level of an organisation and to see well-being promotion as a whole organisation/setting approach and ethos where everyone in an organisation has a role to play and a

need to take steps to improve their own well-being.

- To recognise the role of a (well-being/activity) coordinator as a necessary key human resource within schemes with the role, function and sufficient resources and training to support volunteer led and other well-being programmes.

Local schemes

- To recognise that well-being is the responsibility of all those who come into contact with their local scheme, not just for residents.
- To develop lasting partnerships with other local well-being, physical activity and volunteering organisations who can assist in building capacity and skills of schemes and add value to local programmes.
- To build on the principles of volunteer training in physical activity and exercise leadership and provide access to local training opportunities to avoid reliance on external instructors, leaders and further develop the skills of residents.
- To recognise the importance of sustained well-being programmes and ensure that programmes support residents in achieving individual behaviour change for a period of at least 12 months.

Local health and well-being boards

- To maximise local health and well-being networks of expertise, including physical activity and health promotion to build practical and sustained partnerships to increase capacity within the sheltered and supported living sector.

To those planning and developing services

- Get new residents involved and introduced as soon as possible to avoid isolation
- Follow the interests of your residents
- Take time to get to know your volunteers
- Meet with volunteers often initially.
- Don't be afraid to let Volunteers try something new

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Appendix - Roles and functions of volunteers

For the purposes of the implementation of the Life and Soul programme a natural (but at times overlapping) division/distinction can be drawn within these various roles between those volunteers who will **engage and motivate** participants and those who will **provide and support activities**.

Engaging and motivating participants	Providing (physical) activity opportunities
Befriending	Activity organisers
Mentoring	Well-being Activity Leaders
Buddying	Activity Assistants
Champions/Ambassadors	Well-being workshop leader
	Exercise Leaders
An Active Role Model	

Matching programmes and roles

National and local programme leaders will need to match these roles and the skills and experiences required to their local programmes to ensure clarity for volunteers in contributing to Life and Soul. These descriptors are not meant to be exclusive and through appropriate training, volunteers may acquire a range of skills and experiences in a number of these areas of activity.

Additional training may be required from external sources, eg, sports development, Walking for Health, exercise training providers to enhance leadership roles in physical activity.

Getting started

Not a one-size fits all, significant variation in size of organisations, design and support for residents (Local authority services, private sector, National or regional housing associations)

Appendix - Data Sources

The findings presented in this report were compiled from the following data sources;

- 1566 SNAP monitoring forms were collected from volunteers and beneficiaries by trainers; during events over the course of the entire project. These were analysed by Ecorys and provide data on the age, gender, health and ethnicity of beneficiaries. This data is limited by residents' reluctance to provide personal details.
- While this data provides a snapshot of the residents attending Life and Soul events, it is not representative of the total numbers of beneficiaries of the project.
- SNAP data of additional beneficiaries has been difficult to gather. Scheme management report having, "Not enough resources to keep chasing this up and prompting mentors." And "Volunteers found it difficult to ask fellow residents to fill out SNAP forms."
- Trainer Evaluations were completed after the training sessions. These provided helpful information to feed into the Training pack and brought to light some of the key challenges in training volunteers. These were assessed on an ongoing basis.
- Over 80 Scheme managers' Evaluations were completed after training sessions and road shows. These assessed the quality and value of each event and were analysed on an ongoing basis.
- Feedback was given to trainers to improve both format and content.
- Volunteer Activity logs. Volunteers were asked to complete a log of activities planned and completed. These provided us with information on the huge variety of activities run over the course of the project and the added value of volunteering. These also provide helpful insights into the effect of volunteering on the beneficiaries as well as the volunteer themselves. Being reliant on self-reporting by volunteers; the quality of feedback received depended on evaluation skills and levels of literacy.
- A wealth of anecdotal and photographic evidence was gathered, during communications with organisational and scheme management, trainers, volunteers and beneficiaries.
- Interviews with management were carried out by NAPA staff and consultants, via email, telephone and face to face. The sample group was limited due to the high levels of turnover in this sector. Organisations who had received several events were interviewed as they were well placed to compare and contrast different approaches and their relative effect.
- Case studies and interviews with volunteers and beneficiaries were compiled. Interviewees were selected by proximity and availability due to restricted funding. Access to beneficiaries is limited by the

anonymous nature of 'Activity logs' and feedback process.

Reporting Limitations

Due to the cascade nature of the project, beneficiaries are difficult to track and activities go unreported as volunteer residents operate independently and respond to the challenges and demands of their individual schemes and neighbours.

Volunteers work both to plan activities as well as to create a culture of change and activity. Whilst the great strength of a cascade project is the and individuality that independence volunteering brings; it does provide substantial challenges to the tracking of project outcomes.

Becoming a Fit as a Fiddle Volunteer

Do you have fun and enjoy life?

Do you want to help others enjoy the same things?

Then.....

Become a Fit as a Fiddle volunteer

***and help others to
have fun and enjoy life***

Why we need you !

Fit as a Fiddle is recruiting volunteers who want to make a difference and help other people. If you have the motivation and time to help others, we want to hear from you. You could make a big difference.

What is the Fit as a Fiddle programme ?

Fit as a Fiddle is a programme designed to help people make a change, feel better by providing opportunities for physical and social activity, healthy eating.

How Fit as a Fiddle will help you

Being a volunteer on the Fit as a Fiddle programme will get you involved in an exciting new programme. You will have the opportunity to help other older people in your community, have fun meeting and talking to new people and meeting other volunteers with similar interests.

What do I have to do ?

Becoming involved means that you will be given training as a volunteer to help you get started. How much involvement you have is up to you. You will also be offered support as you get involved.

Do I need qualifications ?

No previous experience or qualifications are necessary. Being physically active yourself is helpful but not essential. Enthusiasm, energy and an interest in other people are what we are looking for !

Signing up to the Fit as a Fiddle Programme means that you can make a difference !

For more information about becoming a Fit as a Fiddle volunteer in your area, contact :

Fit as a Fiddle –

Making a difference to our older people's health and well-being

A major new programme funded by the Big Lottery Fund

and delivered by Age Concern and its coalition of partners.



Appendix: Fit as a Fiddle - Role description

Sample job/role description for a Fit as a Fiddle Volunteer

What is your role as a Fit as a Fiddle Volunteer ?

Your role as a Fit as a Fiddle Volunteer is to help people make a change in their lives and become involved in Active Ageing.

Fit as a Fiddle is a programme designed to help people make a change in their lives and feel better.

The aim of the programme is to provide encouragement and support to individuals or small groups of older people to improve their health and well-being by training volunteers working with older people in sheltered and supported living settings.

Volunteers role

The Fit as a Fiddle programme will provide you with training designed to prepare you for your role as a volunteer. According to your interests, this could include

- Sharing information about the benefits of physical activity and healthy eating
- Pointing people in the right direction
- Sharing information about local opportunities
- Organising new opportunities and events
- Being someone to talk to and share experiences with
- Being an active and positive role model.
- Recording information about your volunteering activities

Being involved would not involve:

- Teaching or leading exercise activities or classes
- Counselling people
- Providing medical advice.

Hours of involvement

These will be flexible and appropriate to you own circumstances. Some volunteers may offer small amounts of time e.g. part of a morning, other people may want a greater degree of involvement. All that is requested is that you are able to offer a regular commitment to ensure continuity and support over a period of time. It is anticipated that most, if not all volunteering activities will take place during the day time and at a location convenient to you.

How we will help you

- You will be eligible for any out of pocket expenses incurred during your volunteering activities.
- You will be provided with regular support activities.
- You will be provided with an information pack
- You may be working as part of a team
- Should the needs arise, we will provide you with additional appropriate training.

Criminal Records Bureau Checks

The Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) enables organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors to make safer recruitment decisions by identifying people who for some reason, might not be suitable for certain work, especially that involving younger or vulnerable adults.

It is the policy of the Fit as a Fiddle Programme and its partners to undertake CRB checks on all volunteers. Any costs incurred will be met by the Fit as a Fiddle programme.

What will you be doing ?

This is not an exhaustive list and you will be guided, but these are a few ideas as to some of the things you could be doing

Engaging and talking to residents to see what interests them
Offering advice on healthy eating
Going shopping with a fellow resident
Taking a trip to a garden centre to buy tools seeds and plants
Going for a swim with a group of buddies
Setting up and gardening club or bird watching group
Planning a cookery class or demonstration
Organising a trip to a museum or art gallery
Planning a walking route in a local park