

Leading the Agenda

Leicester Ageing Together:

**A snap shot of comparisons between
group and one to one interventions**

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Leicester
Ageing
Together



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Overview

This is the second report from Vista's "Leading the Agenda" publication series. In this instalment we are again covering the topic of isolation and wellbeing, this time from the Leicester Ageing Together programme.

Vista leads a partnership that has received £5 million of Big Lottery Funding to reduce social isolation among people over the age of 50 in Leicester.

Our aspiration for the programme is that older people are less isolated; are actively involved in their communities with their views and participation valued more highly; are more engaged in the design and delivery of services that help reduce their isolation; that services are better planned, coordinated and delivered; and that better evidence is available to influence the services that help reduce isolation for older people in the future.

Working in conjunction with older people, the City Council and Health partners, our local programme, called Leicester Ageing Together, consists of 23 projects that will be delivered by 16 delivery partners.

These projects include Singing for the Brain, Befriending & Mentoring, Men in Sheds, Social Prescribing and Inter-generational projects, among others. They present opportunities for people to come together, to design their own services and to reengage with their communities.

Projects focus on five wards across the city; Belgrave, Evington, Thurncourt, Spinney Hills and Wycliffe selected through the prevalence of risk factors associated with social isolation in older people.

There is also city wide delivery to older people with hearing loss, African Caribbean older people, and those returning home from hospital.

This report details outcomes of the project so far using data collected from a cohort who have been involved in the project.

1.0 Introduction

Social isolation and loneliness are risk factors for poor mental and physical health. This is problematic in older age due to the reduction in social networks, reduced economic capability, and changes in family structures ¹. These risk factors have been likened to those of smoking and obesity ².

Current research shows that the concept of loneliness is more researched than social isolation and that depression, cardio-vascular disease and wellbeing are the most common outcome measures of these ¹.

Associations between social isolation, loneliness and health have received relatively little attention in the intervention literature, and the results of studies were quite modest ¹. Therefore, it is for us to look at what interventions have been researched, the outcome of these, and how the Leicester Ageing together programme is contributing to this knowledge base.

Befriending activities have shown mixed benefits reported in the literature review, some have shown benefits in attracting lonely people to the service but limited improvement in wellbeing. Within a defined context there were different results with a club targeting men in a care home, as participants reported a significant reduction in their depression and anxiety levels ³.

Longitudinal studies are important for designing appropriate interventions to tackle loneliness and social isolation ¹. Therefore, programmes like Leicester Ageing Together provide a route to evidence the effectiveness of different intervention models. Although the link with physical health outcomes cannot be made, self-reported outcomes of wellbeing can be used as a guide as to the benefit or not that a programme of work like this may have.

2.0 Aim

The aim of this paper is to take a snap shot of the Leicester Ageing Together programme and understand the effectiveness of group and one to one interventions on self-reported wellbeing.

3.0 Method

3.1 Data Set

A sample of data was selected at random from n=151 beneficiaries who had been through either a one to one intervention (n=85) or a group intervention (n=66). All beneficiaries had completed a baseline questionnaire when first signed on to the programme with a follow up completed 6 months later. It should be noted that there is a degree of variation around the follow up period.

3.2 Measures

Analysis concentrated on the self-reported completion of three themes of loneliness, isolation and wellbeing (see table 1).

Table 1 – Questions used for analysis.

Theme	Sub Question	Scale
Loneliness	a)I experience a great sense of emptiness	1 = yes 2 = more or less 3 = no
	b)There are plenty of people I can rely on when I have problems	
	c)There are many people I can trust completely	
	d)There are enough people I feel close to	
	e)I miss having people around	
	f)I often feel rejected	
Isolation	a)How often do you feel that you lack companionship?	1 = hardly ever 2 = sometimes 3 = often
	b)How often do you feel left out?	
	c)How often do you feel isolated from others?	
	d)How often do you feel in tune with the people around you?	
Wellbeing	a)I've been feeling optimistic about the future	1. None of the time 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Often 5. All of the time
	b)I've been feeling useful	
	c)I've been feeling relaxed	
	d)I've been dealing with problems well	
	e)I've been thinking clearly	
	f)I've been feeling close to other people	
	g)I've been able to make up my own mind about things	

3.3 Analysis

A non-parametric Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to test if there was a significant difference between each question recorded from baseline and then 6 month follow up. As the data set contained missing values and the degree of control of the intervention was not uniform this provided a conservative indication as to the effect of the programme. Missing data was excluded case wise. The statistical analysis was carried out using free to access online software^a.

4.0 Results

4.1 One to One intervention

The results from the analysis are shown in table 2. The one to one intervention showed that there has yet to be a significant effect on items related to the concept of loneliness, although there was up to a 15% positive change in response to item e) *I miss having people around*. All items recorded a slight positive differences in the follow up of 1% and 10%.

Three out of four items related to isolation showed a significant effect ($p < .05$), in a positive direction with the effect ranging from 10-16%. The specific items associated to this were: *How often do you feel that you lack companionship?*; *How often do you feel left out?*; *How often do you feel isolated from others?* The fourth item d) *How often do you feel in tune with people around you?* showed a negative difference of 11%.

Encouragingly, items related to wellbeing showed a significant effect ($p < .05$) on four out of seven scales. All items related to this theme

^a software used accessed from <http://www.socscistatistics.com/>

recorded a positive trend in response in the 6 month follow up with the change ranging from 6%-22%.

Table 2 – Results of one to one intervention type. *Note*, significance is recorded as $p < .05$ one-tailed.

Theme	Sub Question	Mean at Baseline	Mean at Follow up	Percentage change (%)	Direction of change	Significance level
Loneliness	a)I experience a great sense of emptiness	1.67	1.81	8.05	positive	
	b)There are plenty of people I can rely on when I have problems	1.94	1.96	0.97	positive	
	c)There are many people I can trust completely	2.06	1.88	8.41	positive	
	d)There are enough people I feel close to	1.98	1.79	9.71	positive	
	e)I miss having people around	1.35	1.56	15.07	positive	
	f)I often feel rejected	1.98	2.08	4.85	positive	
Isolation	a)How often do you feel that you lack companionship?	2.26	2.03	10.47	positive	$p < .05^*$
	b)How often do you feel left out?	2.49	2.08	16.30	positive	$p < .05^*$

	c)How often do you feel isolated from others?	2.41	2.03	15.73	positive	p=<.05*
	d)How often do you feel in tune with the people around you?	2.28	2.03	10.98	negative	
Wellbeing	a)I've been feeling optimistic about the future	2.29	2.79	21.82	positive	p=<.05*
	b)I've been feeling useful	2.45	2.76	12.50	positive	p=<.05*
	c)I've been feeling relaxed	2.55	2.71	6.28	positive	
	d)I've been dealing with problems well	2.60	3.17	22.05	positive	p=<.05*
	e)I've been thinking clearly	3.09	3.36	8.62	positive	p=<.05*
	f)I've been feeling close to other people	2.74	2.84	3.50	positive	
	g)I've been able to make up my own mind about things	3.53	3.71	5.22	positive	

4.2 Group intervention

Group intervention results are shown in table 3. A significant difference was seen on the loneliness scale item c) *There are many people I can trust completely*, with this recording a 16% positive change ($p < .05$). Item f) *I often feel rejected* showed a slight negative difference (9%). All other items showed a positive difference.

All items relating to isolation showed a positive movement with item b) *how often do you feel left out* showing a 10% change which was significant ($p < .05$). The difference of other items were between 4-7% as detailed in table 3.

Wellbeing recorded a significant difference on four of the seven items. All items recorded a more positive response in the 6 month follow up with the difference showing of between 7%-21% change. The largest difference was seen for responses to item a) *I've feeling optimistic about the future* (21% change, $p < .05$).

Table 3 – Results of group intervention type. *Note*, significance is recorded as $p < .05$ one-tailed.

Theme	Sub Question	Mean at Baseline	Mean at Follow up	Percentage change (%)	Direction of change	Significance level
Loneliness	a) I experience a great sense of emptiness	2.34	2.38	1.47	positive	
	b) There are plenty of people I can rely on when I have problems	1.78	1.56	12.28	positive	
	c) There are many people I can trust completely	2.00	1.67	16.67	positive	$p < .05^*$
	d) There are enough people I feel close to	1.67	1.56	6.67	positive	
	e) I miss having people around	1.64	1.79	8.70	positive	
	f) I often feel rejected	2.64	2.39	9.46	negative	
Isolation	a) How often do you feel that you lack companionship?	2.17	1.97	9.23	positive	
	b) How often do you feel left out?	2.12	1.90	10.40	positive	$p < .05^*$

	c)How often do you feel isolated from others?	2.15	1.98	7.87	positive	
	d)How often do you feel in tune with the people around you?	2.10	2.19	4.10	positive	
Wellbeing	a)I've been feeling optimistic about the future	2.56	3.10	21.15	positive	p=<.05*
	b)I've been feeling useful	2.90	3.11	7.22	positive	
	c)I've been feeling relaxed	2.97	3.32	11.96	positive	p=<.05*
	d)I've been dealing with problems well	2.60	3.11	19.51	positive	p=<.05*
	e)I've been thinking clearly	2.69	3.19	18.24	positive	p=<.05*
	f)I've been feeling close to other people	3.22	3.44	6.90	positive	
	g)I've been able to make up my own mind about things	2.86	3.13	9.44	positive	

5.0 Final thoughts

What do these statistics tell us about the intervention effectiveness on the Leicester Ageing Together programme?

The results show that both the one to one and group intervention are having an effect on the individuals participating on the programme. Although not all differences were significant, most items used to understand how beneficiaries are feeling in relation to loneliness, isolation and wellbeing do show a positive difference in the 6 month follow up.

It is interesting to note that that the biggest differences were seen on the scales relating to wellbeing. This is encouraging as this suggests that the programme is helping to improve people's holistic sense of wellbeing.

The one to one intervention show more significant differences on items related to isolation than the group intervention indicating that the programme may be helping improve a sense of inclusion for these people. A negative difference was recorded on one loneliness item for the group intervention. Similarly, in the one to one intervention a non-significant negative difference was seen relating to feeling in tune with people. This may suggest people need to be around people who share interests and activities. Both these results are unexpected and a follow up to understand this in more detail may be needed.

It should be noted that though we can see that there are differences, all people using the services provided by the programme may have other

factors contributing to these results. The reasonably large sample of data helps counter this and mitigates against inferring too much.

Further analysis with a larger data set of Leicester Ageing Together users can explore the trends found here further. More detailed analysis can be carried out to look at differences in demographics, along with the specific nature of each intervention, and the trend that emerge relating to group vs. one to one intervention effectiveness. This will help inform the programme as it continues to deliver.

This snap shot of the results of the programme so far have proved positive. It shows that on the whole there is a positive difference being made by involvement in the programme. We hope that by carrying out analysis in this way, not only will it allow us to evaluate what is going well and not so well with the programme, it will also start to contribute to the body of evidence needed to address loneliness, isolation and wellbeing more broadly.

References

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