

## **First phase stakeholder interviews: summary of main findings**

**January 2016**

### **Introduction**

A total of 10 stakeholders with involvement in the Time to Shine project (TTS hereafter) were interviewed to explore their experiences around developing and setting up the overall programme and specific delivery strands. This included three members of the programme team and seven representatives of project delivery organisations (either staff overseeing the project in a managerial role or staff involved in delivering the project). Some of the views discussed are shared by all stakeholders, but where particular points were made by either the programme team or delivery partners, this is made explicit. The following sections provide a brief summary of the main feedback, based on the interviews carried out. These are broken down into four broad themes, including: the commissioning process; connections and capacity building; monitoring and evaluation; and achieving aims and objectives. As only half of the delivery organisations were interviewed, the information provided does not necessarily reflect the views of all TTS partners. It also needs to be borne in mind that project delivery organisations were at the inception stages of their respective projects. It is hoped that the discussion below can help to inform future commissioning and running of projects, alongside providing a guide to the experiences of current TTS projects.

### **Summary: Commissioning**

- Whilst there are identified challenges of working with smaller organisations, overall, stakeholders felt this was the best way to commission services, particularly in terms of engaging hard to reach groups.
- The next commissioning round would benefit from more clarity around how the funding is allocated, and more thought around potential contingency plans in the event of unexpected outcomes.
- The lack of involvement from smaller organisations and underrepresentation by particular groups, such as carers and people with dementia was assessed as disappointing, but it was felt that the small funds project may have more success at targeting these organisations and groups, alongside potentially shedding light on why applications from these groups were lower than expected.

### **Summary: Connections and Capacity Building**

- Members of the core partnership board (project team and delivery partners) valued the relationships built, skills utilised, and the time and commitment given, both at individual and sector level, when developing TTS, with one partner stating that they were driven by a wish to see an investment in Leeds as a city, rather than their own individual projects.
- For all delivery partners, TTS is being run as part of a wider portfolio of activities delivered by the organisation for which they are employed, meaning projects will benefit from learning through delivering other projects, having access to a range of facilities, and through being included in

organisational led promotions. A few TTS projects involve coordinating and developing partnerships 'within' as well as 'between' projects, thus requiring the development of successful collaborations at both levels.

- All delivery partners are looking to develop partnerships with a wide range of organisations outside of TTS, coming up with ideas around how they will achieve this (such as through doing 'walkabouts' and applying for additional funding). A number of partners are in the process of linking with GPs, but most agreed that doing so would take time/resources, and two had applied for additional funding to support this.
- Some delivery partners mentioned that they have experienced challenges due to particular local organisations being protective over their services and funding streams, with some expressing concern around the potential barriers this may cause. However, it was suggested that these initial barriers to access may improve over time, as organisations gain a better understanding of TTS, and how it may benefit the communities in which they work.
- Though still at formative stages, some promising partnerships are developing, both internally and in local communities. Most delivery partners had some idea about how they might link in with each other, particularly working together or sharing learning with those running similar projects, or as potential referral routes where provision is different (i.e. befrienders signposting to activities being run).
- Whilst some delivery partners recognised that had a broad shared interest with each other through the overarching aim of reducing social isolation, the main identified challenges were around having sufficient time to develop partnerships, and issues around competition/protectiveness, between organisations.
- Though time was frequently cited as an important factor, interviewees provided suggestions as to how partnerships between delivery organisations could be developed, including online communication tools, or opportunities for partners to meet 'informally' to have more unstructured meetings. LOPF are currently looking at various ways to help support partners to work together.
- A member of the project team felt it would be beneficial to develop a closer relationship with the other areas involved in the main Fulfilling Lives, Ageing Better project.

### **Summary: Monitoring and Evaluation**

- All partners found LOPF to be both approachable and supportive, feeling able to discuss any emerging issues. Whilst some felt the evaluation and monitoring requirements were confusing, all felt supported by the Evaluation Officer, with a few reporting that their confidence had increased due to help and guidance offered by LOPF. Comments were also made around the skills and commitment of the project team working on TTS, with all feeling that they were doing a very good job of running such a complex and multilayered project.

- Interviewees expressed concern around the level of monitoring and evaluation required, with a few suggesting it was 'out of proportion' to the funding allocated, and that smaller organisations, in particular, may struggle to satisfy its requirements. Overall, interviewees had an understanding that, the evaluation requirements were set at a higher level. Furthermore, all delivery partners felt able to satisfy the monitoring and evaluation criteria.
- It was suggested that alongside assessing value for money in terms of delivery, it would also be valuable to measure the costs associated with evaluating and monitoring the project, particularly as there are so many tiers involved.
- Most concerns around the evaluation process related to the design of the survey, particularly its length, inclusivity and appropriateness of questions asked (particularly in specific project settings, such as a pub, for example). It was suggested that these issues may potentially impact on both the quality and quantity of data obtained, with a programme worker iterating the importance of qualitative, local level data to provide a contextual understanding of TTS outcomes. As all interviewees had some reservations around the national evaluation, it will be important to monitor this.
- The 'test and learn' approach was viewed as an important mechanism for which to record and feedback on ongoing problems, particularly if there are concerns around data quality. Overall, interviewees felt optimistic about how test and learn would work in practice, with a few stating they felt confident that they could adapt their project in the event of unintended outcomes.

#### **Summary: Achieving aims and objectives**

- The chief aims of individual projects include bringing communities together to reduce social isolation, improving wellbeing, accessing hard to reach groups and increasing capacity within the wider organisation for which the TTS project is embedded. Some partners had ambitious aims and objectives that they hoped to achieve through TTS, such as achieving greater cohesion within their own communities, or rolling local level projects out so they lead to citywide impact. A few were already considering ways to sustain projects after the funding period ends (such as applying for additional resources).
- Alongside specific target groups, partners were hoping to engage men, the bereaved, those who are housebound due to a lack of confidence/a fall, and younger volunteers, to foster intergenerational engagement. It was iterated that ensuring a range of voices are heard (i.e. BAME, LGBT) should not just refer to service users, but also core partnership and LOPF board members, and delivery partners themselves.
- Some delivery partners felt the targets they had set for reaching new older people and volunteers was going to be challenging, but most felt it could feasibly be achieved. The part time nature of the role of workers was identified as a potential barrier to the type of volunteers accessed. Another concern for a few was ensuring the ratio of volunteers to older people was right, thus avoiding the use of a waiting list. However, all agreed that it was early days, and they would have a better feel for these issues once projects are underway.

- All delivery partners were able to report at least a few early examples of how they had positively impacted on someone's life, both volunteers and older beneficiaries.
- The active and 'real' engagement of older people throughout the running of TTS is assessed as important by the project team. All partners interviewed were involving older people in their respective projects in some way, with most reporting that older people had inputted into the initial bid. It is yet to be seen whether this momentum will continue as projects are rolled out, as whilst partners aimed to ensure the views of older beneficiaries are sought, it was not always clear how this might happen, with some suggesting they will adopt more 'informal' mechanisms of seeking the views of older service users. Therefore, it will be important to assess the extent to which co-production is embedded within individual projects.
- Most interviewees recognised that reaching the very isolated will be challenging, with the need to build in time to ensure development of trust frequently referred to when thinking about how to engage beneficiaries once they are reached. This was particularly so for housebound older people, or those who work with beneficiaries where English is not their first language.
- Some partners identified challenges due to a lack of events available at weekends, and also evenings. A few projects are specifically aiming to provide events 'outside of office hours', so it will be interesting to assess how these develop over time.
- Some interviewees referred to how beneficiaries should be labelled, with a few feeling that some will not identify with the term 'older' or 'old' and may not participate in activities if it is marketed as being for 'old people'.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, the main positives at this early stage related to the overall aims and objectives of TTS in giving Leeds as a city the opportunity to work with a broad range of groups at risk of, or experiencing, social isolation. Delivery partners have a range of ideas around how they might do this, and most are forming partnerships with each other, and a broad range of stakeholders in the wider community, to help achieve their aims. Each partner reported early successes, with innovative and ambitious plans being put forward to ensure the sustainability of individual projects. However, there are some assessed challenges, particularly around achieving ambitious targets, carrying out the monitoring and evaluation requirements effectively, and having the time to form potentially fruitful partnerships with particular organisations, such as GPS. There were also concerns around competitiveness both between and within community led organisations. However, all agreed that it was early days.