



Lychee Red: supporting Chinese elders in cultural activities.

Time to Shine end of project report
2017



Summary

Health for All is a charity created to meet the needs of people in south Leeds and continues to respond to the changing needs of individuals and communities in Leeds and beyond. They planned to set up a group to support Chinese Elders, Happy Chinese families. Chinese elders came together to share a meal and stay on for social activities, games, exercise and entertainment, supported by a team of bilingual volunteers from local Chinese communities.

Lychee Red in numbers

- There were 140 activity sessions including a Monday brunch club, singing, trips out, celebrations, chair-based exercise, dancing and other physical activity, games, movies.
- 131 Chinese elders took part in weekly activities
- 24 volunteers under the age of 50 got involved, and there were 29 volunteers aged 50 and over
- Between them they contributed 1936 volunteer hours



What happened during the project?

Lychee Red aimed to create a thriving network of Chinese Elders, supported by a wide range of activities and often centred around eating. It did! It didn't take long for 30 – 40 people to be attending the weekly lunch and activities; so popular is it that that one Chinese man, on his return to Leeds after a year away in Hong Kong, dropped in on the day he flew back!

An indication of success for the Project Manager was when chop sticks started to be stored in the cutlery drawer at the Centre.

Chinese elders are involved at all levels – as volunteers, on the Steering Group and as consultees on what activities should take place. The Steering Group also successfully applied for funding to enable the project to continue beyond the two years of Time to Shine funding.



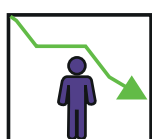
What difference did it make for older people?

'I am a single man; I am mostly alone. Only Sudoku and TV along with me, but since I came to club, I feel like home, everyone care each other, I feel so moved.'

70% of elders reported a reduction in social isolation.

50% reported an increase in social contact with family or friends

38.7% reported an increase in participation in social activities compared to other people their age.



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A new group, Happy Panda, was set up to support older Chinese men

Contact was made with Chinese residents at Mary Sunley House which is home to a small number of Chinese Elders who are particularly socially isolated and often frail and unable to join in group activities outside of the home, and a monthly lunch as well as games and social activities were provided for those too frail to leave.

Lychee Red members took part in a float at Beeston festival - a mark of their increased self-confidence and of their capacity to integrate into the local community. The group has also gained confidence in singing at public events.



Learning

Chinese Elders experience multiple social isolation through language barriers, class, lack of status and consequent lack of income (this is reflected in statistics nationally that show that 25% of Chinese people over the age of 65 identify as lonely, the highest of all ethnic groups).

There are class issues and language barriers between earlier migrants who came from Hong Kong and were generally higher class and later migrants who came from the Chinese mainland and tended to be poorer; there is a reluctance to mix and Health for All do not have the resources to run two separate groups

Leeds City Council Adult Social Care have been unable to support Chinese Elders with higher needs due to lack of workers with appropriate language skills as well as understanding of cultural needs. Getting the right staff in post and dedicated volunteers is key to the success of the Lychee Red project.

In contrast to some groups Chinese Elders tend to be more confident about travelling by bus once shown, using a buddying scheme, due to previous settlement patterns – they are dispersed across the city rather than congregating in specific areas, unlike some other BAME communities.

The Happy Chinese Families members supported the project with numerous family activities and celebrations. Lychee Red is a good example of a targeted approach that meets the needs of a specific BAME community. This confirms it is possible to work with groups considered 'most at risk' on a project by project basis rather than trying to work just at an organisational level.

Legacy

Up to £15,000 was secured to sustain the group as well as meet the needs of Chinese Elders by providing extra activities, for example an Awards for All grant paid for trips and celebrations. Health for All have purchased a range of items that support the involvement of Chinese Elders including a ping pong table, bowls and chopsticks.

Singing is hugely popular with Lychee Red, and they have sung at a variety of public events including Leeds Older People's Forum AGM. Lychee Red featured on BBC1's The One Show in October 2017. This was a very exciting moment for members of the group, and Health for All learnt a lot about working with the media through the experience.

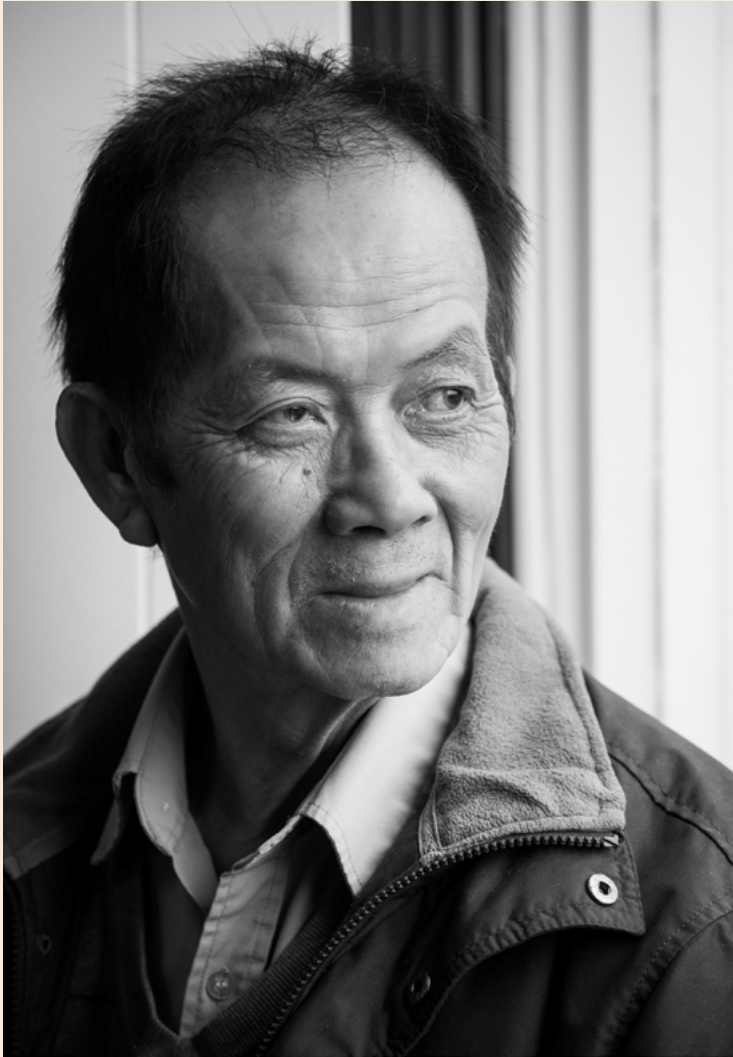
Lychee Red were also one of the groups photographed as part of an exhibition 'Loneliness through a Lens', at Leeds City Museum from October 2017 – January 2018. It featured a series of close-up head shots of older people along with a pen portrait about their life, highlighting individual stories of social isolation and loneliness

Health for All developed partnerships with local organisations like their local Neighbourhood Network, South Leeds Live at Home, where they celebrated Chinese New Year with local older people. They continued to work with staff at Mary Sunley House.

Further strong relationships developed with York Chinese School and the University of Leeds Chinese Students to help as volunteers.

A highlight of the project has been the strong relationships built with other small older people's groups in the area who have started joining in weekly activities along with Chinese Elders.

Case Study



L was a 70-year-old single man living on his own in Leeds. Following the Vietnam War when he lost his mother, he came to the UK as a refugee. The impact of the war cast a shadow over him, and, coupled with a later divorce, he found himself alone for a long time. He tried to deal with his loneliness by walking and taking part in Chinese activities but still found he struggled to sleep at night because of the anxiety. He felt he had no friends or relatives, and this was particularly so when he was unwell.

L joined a taster session at Health for All; once Lychee Red started he began to volunteer, undertaking outreach at supermarkets, churches and the Chinese Community Association to promote the new project. As he took part in more activities, his confidence grew. Initially he was a bit shy and quiet, he gradually participated in the activities. He is now a regular member who comes every week unless ill health prevents him. He says the enthusiasm of the staff and volunteers makes him feel part of a family at Beeston Village Community Centre. He absolutely loves the range of new activities offered by the

project for Chinese older people. He now enjoys singing the classic old songs which remind him of his childhood, and a hot tasty Chinese traditional lunch makes him feel refreshed. He also started writing calligraphy with another old man; sometimes he plays chess, participates in dancing and enjoys the company and chat with others. Occasionally children join in and when they have referred to him as 'grandpa' he has been moved to tears!

When Lychee Red had a day trip to the Manchester Chinese Centre - Wai Yin café he was touched to meet an old friend whom he had not seen for years. He expresses his gratitude for the meals.

Resources

[Connecting with culture: an insight from Time to Shine](#)

[Time to Shine: a short summary of beneficiary outcomes](#)

To find out more about Health for All go to healthforall.org.uk

To find out more about Time to Shine go to www.timetoshineleeds.org



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