Enhancing Resilience in East Lindsey Communities

T.E.D.
Ageing Better in East Lindsey

Preface:

The focus of this Learning Report is how TED in East Lindsey promotes resilience in communities and how lessons from the Covid-19 context can be drawn on to support communities and individuals. The report brings together information from a variety of sources, including published documents, case studies from delivery partners, and interviews and focus groups with stakeholders and beneficiaries. This learning is grounded in the characteristics of the district but has wider implications for other areas.

About TED

Talk, Eat, Drink (TED) Ageing Better in East Lindsey is part of Ageing Better, a programme set up by The National Lottery Community Fund, the largest funder of community activity in the UK. Ageing Better aims to develop creative ways for people aged 50 and over to combat social isolation and loneliness. It is one of five major programmes set up by The National Lottery Community Fund to test and learn from new approaches to designing services which aim to make people's lives healthier and happier.

COMMUNITY FUND

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National Ageing Better Learning has captured the fast moving and unprecedented nature of the Covid-19 pandemic. Like its Ageing Better counterparts, the TED in East Lindsey Programme have been reviewing and adapting their service offer to ensure it continues to pursue and fulfil its original aims and objectives. These are:

- More over 50's will be better connected with volunteering, social, leisure and health improving activities leading to an enhanced quality of life

- More over 50's in East Lindsey will report that they feel less lonely or isolated

- More over 50's in East Lindsey will feel positive about the opportunities that getting older presents

- Over 50's in East Lindsey will have more opportunities to influence the design, delivery and evaluation of services and businesses available to them

East Lindsey is a rural area that contains a number of towns, but also has a significantly sparse population made up of smaller towns, villages, hamlets and individual dwellings. A significant part of the district comprises of coastal communities and coastline and has as an ageing population disproportionately higher than the national average. Challenges for the population include:

- Areas of deprivation

- Access to and use of (affordable) transport

- Access to other public services, leisure and town 'hubs'

- Issues with internet connectivity and mobile phone signal in a number of areas

- An inward migration of people that move into the district to retire (including a substantial number who present with and/or develop health issues – see for example Lincolnshire's (2018) Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Joint Strategic Need Assessment)

The Centre for Towns (2020) has highlighted East Lindsey – particularly the coastal towns of Skegness and Mablethorpe – as containing some of the most vulnerable places to the impact of Covid-19, partly attributed to their demographic make-up, health needs and a reliance on income from the hardest-hit sectors affected by the pandemic. The report also identifies that communities in the district have pre-existing issues, such as those mentioned above, in addition to their abilities to recover from Covid-19 going forward.

The report from the Centre for Towns found *"coastal towns are the most isolated of all place types. We know residents of such communities find access to healthcare problematic, face a declining bus network and experience poor broadband performance relative to the major cities"* (Centre for Towns, 2020: pg4).

TED in East Lindsey provides beneficial learning about resilience given the complexities of our communities, their pre-existing challenges and the impact of Covid-19.

Thinking about 'resilience' – theory, policy and practice:

A useful working definition is provided by Chappell and Welsh (2020):

"An overarching definition of resilience can be summarised as the capacity of people to respond appropriately to difficult situations, be proactive about how to improve one's situation and anticipate future adversity …often referred to as positive adaptation in the face of negative experiences or 'bouncing back'" (Chappell and Welsh, 2020: 1)

There are different conceptualisations of 'resilience' from it being an individualised attribute to a relational process between people, groups and communities. It has been added, for example, that the role of 'resilience' in professional roles such as social work can include both aspects. Grant and Kinman (2020) note that:

"emotional resilience is not simply a quality of the individual, but a dynamic interplay between personal characteristics and supportive external factors … and is self-sustaining: for example, flexibility and self-compassion will help you develop other skills" (Grant and Kinman, 2020: 5).

Although the term has wide-ranging application, associations of its popularity have been made with reference to 'Big Society' and localism during the 2010-2015 Coalition Government, led by David Cameron. Here, critiques have set resilience against national resource challenges brought about by reduced central governmental funding for public services during austerity measures and a retreating of public services. As a consequence, 'resilience' can also be understood with references to a 'diminishing' or at least 'plural' state where responsibility for supporting individuals, communities and local organisations rest within those requiring such support. Alongside these developments has been the focus on an ageing population and the role of 'wellbeing', 'healthy ageing', 'ageing better' and 'active ageing':

"the concept of 'active ageing' has a broad meaning that encompasses physical activity through exercise and movement, but also to the objective that older people should have the opportunity to engage in activities in the neighbourhood who support 'participation in the political process and other aspects of community life" (Chappell and Welsh: 11)

These include district, county, national and international policy and strategic developments which feature (healthy) ageing. Some examples are given below:

- East Lindsey District Council (ELDC) corporate strategy – ELDC (2020) 'East Lindsey – a place where everybody has a chance to thrive: Looking to the future'

- Lincolnshire County Council (2018) 'Joint health and well-being strategy for Lincolnshire'

- The Centre for Ageing Better https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/publications

- NHS (2017) 'Lincolnshire Sustainability and Transformation Plan (2017) [Public Summary Version]'

- NHS (2019) 'The NHS Long Term Plan'

- Mental Health Taskforce (2016) 'The Five Year Forward View for Mental Health'

- NHS (2019) 'NHS Long Term Plan Implementation Framework'

- NHS England; NHS Improvement and the National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health (2019) (September) 'The Community Mental Health Framework for Adults and Older Adults

- WHO (2017) '10 Priorities towards a Decade of Healthy Ageing'

- WHO's Eight Domains of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities (https://www.who.int/ageing/projects/age-friendly-cities-communities/en/)

- WHO (2018) 'The Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities: Looking back over the last decade, looking forward to the next'

As part of 'ageing better' and 'healthy ageing', Chappell and Welsh (2020) report relationships within generations (intragenerational) and between generations (intergenerational) involving 'younger' and 'older' people are crucial to understanding, developing and enhancing resilience in 'older' people. Families, friends and community have a core role in these, recognising:

1. The importance of narratives from the past to sustain resilience in the present and the future. For instance, through drawing on memories of childhood affection and guidance as a resource when faced by new situations or challenges
2. The importance of intergenerational exchange – including the role of negotiation and reciprocity. An example of this is where adult children provide care and support, mirroring how older people cared for their own children in the past
3. The importance of intergenerational connections in the community – engagement in society as "the cornerstone of active ageing"

In-keeping with relational understandings of resilience, TED in East Lindsey has local 'grassroots' insight from communities and individuals. Growing evidence underlines the importance of group activities in social prescribing – reducing social isolation and loneliness as part of a 'social cure' approach. The voluntary and community sector have a central role in multi-agency methods to social prescribing/social cure methodologies:

"Loneliness has been linked to reductions in perceived physical health and cognitive health, and increased risk of multi-morbidity, difficulties performing daily tasks, depression and mortality [and] has also been linked to increased contact with primary care services especially among the elderly, with loneliness and associated mental health concerns being increasingly common reasons for general practitioner (GP) visits" (Kellezi, Wakefield, Stevenson, McNamara, Mair, Bowe, Wilson and Halder (2019: 1)).

This recent study surveyed a sample of patients at point of referral into social prescribing and during a later follow-up. They found patients used primary care services less at follow-up than on entry, with a 25% reduction in appointments. TED in East Lindsey activities are reflective of wider health policy and strategy which highlight social cure approaches and multi-agency provision alongside 'traditional' 'mainstream' health providers in the development of Integrated Care Systems.

Work on conceptual frameworks for mental health recovery, such as the CHIME framework, can also provide further empirical groundings for 'social cure' and social prescribing approaches (Leamy M, Bird V, Le Boutillier C, Williams J, Slade M. (2011)).

The **CHIME** framework components are:

- **C** – Connectness

- **H** – Hope and optimism about the future

- **I** – Identity

- **M** – Meaning in life

- **E** – Empowerment

'Reaching out' not 'hard to reach': Flexible, person-centred work in building relationships

Case study and focus group data from TED in East Lindsey delivery partners emphasise the role of person-centred and flexible service innovation in engaging with people both before, during and after COVID 19. Like a range of providers and the TED in East Lindsey staff team, Magna Vitae's CHAPS project (Community Health Activity Project) draws on online and telephone forms of contact involving one to one and group activities. Their flexible, person-centred approach, is key to engagement, and is mirrored across TED projects and other delivery partners approaches:

> "We had to contact everyone on the CHAPS list to say that sessions were being cancelled. We gained permission to continue to contact those participants to gauge their requirements and to build on their rapport... some have been able to give an email address which we have used to send resources, but some do not have their own phone so contact has been made through another participant"

Lincs Digital's approach reflects the diverse needs of communities, informs how they work and builds relationships with learners that in-turn support resilience. Prior to, and also during, the outbreak of COVID 19 Lincs Digital promoted inclusion through a variety of 'tailored' solutions:

> "Our group of learners all had very different needs, we were finding from talking to them those without devices wanted friendship and had very different needs to those with devices who were keen to try and connect with their families and friends, and wanted to try and be self-sufficient"

TED stakeholders and providers also collaborate to reach and maintain contact with individuals. Lincs Digital provide a key example of an approach that was found across delivery partners:

> "[For] those learners with no provision of device or Wi-Fi, we turned our services into help, support and wellbeing. We connected with one of our volunteers near the coast and she identified a group of learners she would connect with on a weekly basis and... she would refer on to us for support. We would support her with calls three times a week. We quickly had to put together resource information on where foodbanks were in different areas, what services were running so we could direct our learners these services or get in touch with the service for them. This has and continues to have been a lifeline to many"

Flexible, person-centred work is underpinned by activities that draw beneficiaries to engage with services. Our focus group discussions during Carer's First Men Do breakfast clubs also identified innovations that were specifically helpful in creating dialogue with men and sustaining their engagement and enjoyment. The Men Do project has highlighted that diverse activities have an instrumental role in maintaining the interest of men aged 50 and over. During social isolation and distancing Carer's First continues to support men in activities by creating a 'contact/chat directory' of the members and the delivery of packs to their home addresses, providing innovative activities, such as learning to play a ukulele.

Focus groups, case studies and interviews revealed activities attract people to projects which has a 'snowball' or 'knock on' effect. They are important in both creating and sustaining relationships, 'enabling' both participation and providing ongoing 'togetherness'. This serves to engage people aged 50 and over who feel they have specific support needs in addition to building-on and celebrating existing individual and community strengths. As one interview with a friendship group chair highlighted:

"People in [our market town] are very special, they know other people, have brought other people with them to the group"

Exploring the role of activity in creating collaborative community resource

The activities of TED Friendship groups provide examples where communities have continuing momentum despite social distancing. Through its 'test and learn' approach TED in East Lindsey identifies activities are important mechanisms for collaborating with different parts of the community aged 50 and above. We have also found that friendship groups have self-sustained through reciprocity. Our interviews with friendship group members have highlighted people keeping in touch, even when there is not a particular support need, and this reflected the work that the TED team and the Friendship Officer had done prior to Covid-19:

"we do try and get different people to entertain and inform the group... activities are definitely core" (Friendship group member, inland market town)

"We do get up to bits and pieces…some just want to chat and find out the different things that go on in the area" (Friendship group committee member, coastal town)

"Ro (Friendship Officer) is brilliant, she's there, she phones me, comes along… they (the group members) relate to her she tells us things and we tell her things, can phone her if you've got a problem"

"we're not losing touch and two ladies phone me on their own for a chat – mutual support, each other can ring each other, supportive" (Friendship group committee member, coastal town)

Early in programme inception TED identified particular under-engagement from men and both the CHAPS and Men Do projects demonstrate the benefits of a targeted approach. For instance, before Covid-19 Men Do activities ranged from breakfast clubs to a snooker masterclass and brewery trips, indicating that people will engage readily with services and build relationships. Men Do – as with other providers – had to change the way they reach their people during Covid-19, but men remain 'owners' of the group and its activities. CHAPS has generated interest in sporting memories and quizzes which engage their service users with a personal approach from project staff.

Magna Vitae have developed their online service offer in line with a platform that not only includes advice on getting prescriptions and essential shopping, but also support on keeping safe, domestic abuse, health, nutrition and wellbeing and promoting TED in East Lindsey. The site also has features on entertainment, suggestions for activities and socialising during distancing. TED in East Lindsey and delivery partners have worked collaboratively with people being signposted to activities of interest, that is part of a wider pattern of engagement through activities and developing ongoing relationships. As is shown in the extract from Magna Vitae's Fitness, Food and Friends project:

"Arthritis Action contacted us to let us know they were doing a zoom meeting for people who are looking for support with regards managing their arthritis. This sounded a good opportunity and we were able to signpost six participants from the Fitness, Food and Friends groups. Nearly all of them had never used zoom before but they were keen to give it a go so they could access the meeting. I mentioned this to Lincs Digital who kindly put together a detailed guide on how to download and use zoom. Although the meeting occurred before we could get the zoom guide to the participants, they all 'gave it a go' and some surprised themselves that they got it working. Most of them missed the initial Arthritis Action meeting either because they hadn't got it working correctly or because they weren't confident to take part in a meeting using it. So, when I spoke to them the following week many of them felt they had missed their chance and felt a bit guilty for letting down Ruth from Arthritis Action. I was able to encourage them [and Arthritis Action] that there would be more meetings from Arthritis Action"

Collaborative, inter-agency work has a core role in reaching and continuing to engage people over 50 from diverse backgrounds. The theme or area of activity is one factor that helps motivate people to attend, participate and keep participating, but this is grounded in knowledge of the needs, interests and preferences of service users. The resilience of both service provision and the people who provide (and use) services is interdependent, highlighting the crucial role of relationships within and between these groups.

Local awareness, credibility and social networks

Across TED in East Lindsey all existing learning reports, case studies, interviews and focus groups emphasise the role of building relationships and understanding the needs and preferences of populations. For instance interviews with friendship groups highlighted the role this had in building trust, including viewing the Friendship Officer as part of this relationship/friendship network. The pre-existing one to one and group work that TED friendship groups and delivery partners have undertaken has been essential to ensuring adaptable and sustainable services. The 'community spirit' of Age-friendly Businesses is a major feature of those businesses who have received the Award.

In the transition to social distancing these existing characteristics have given strong foundations on which to adapt and offer alternative forms of support, togetherness and entertainment. Service offers are situated in the local knowledge that providers, volunteers and the TED team have developed about their 'local' communities. Our focus groups with Men Do breakfast clubs and Lincoln and Lindsey Blind Society revealed a substantial proportion of participants who have moved into East Lindsey, considering it a peaceful, friendly place to live. The importance of local knowledge and familiarity – not just with a geographical area (i.e. town, village), but in the sense of interpersonal face to face relationships and familiarity with communities of interest are essential mechanisms for building and maintaining resilience in both communities and services.

"you need to know your people, we know them quite intimately, if they are not very well we keep an eye on them... more friends than people... just get to know your people" (Friendship group chair, inland market town)

"we do signpost if there are people we are not able to support" (Friendship group chair, inland market town)

Case studies from Citizen's Advice show even during social distancing and isolation when people have contacted a central Citizen's Advice number they have been signposted to their local office for advice on finance, benefit and debt issues which in-turn engages individuals and provides a mechanism for enhancing resilience in individuals:

"We have found our biggest asset to ending social isolation and loneliness is by empowering people to know their rights and helping them to maximise their income either by claiming additional benefits, sorting out affordable debt repayment plans or just helping them to manage their budgeting"

Local awareness and familiarity are instrumental in developing trust and social networks, including motivating people to develop digital skills and make contact in a 'virtual capacity'. The role of peer-to-peer support, volunteers and champions are examples of best practice. As Lincs Digital reported:

"With the support of one of our volunteers we have connected a group who are supporting each other and looking after each other's needs. E.g. shopping for each other, sharing known resources, wellbeing support. This small group has proved to be a huge success and continue weekly support to each other and share their friendships. Small groups of people are seeing the benefits of helping each other to achieve an outcome … With help and support these community groups that have delivered such an amazing service to each other, could themselves continue and thrive with even greater outcomes. Our learning community looks forward to calls, and will phone us with problems and issues not related to digital as they trust us and know that we will help them"

Case studies highlight how these links can have another snowball effect, capturing instances where people would 'have a go' at an activity if one of their friends or group were already involved or 'signed-up'. The snowball effect also applies to services engaging more people as a result of gaining credibility through personal approaches and reputation amongst peer groups and local community. This can be achieved through signposting from different members of the community, 'good word of mouth' and work between providers, groups and services. Importantly this includes people who do not have a specific support need, but view their contact as part of a 'normal' relationship:

"Good to see that some of the CHAPS are now phoning me during the week and not always waiting for my weekly call. It indicates that they feel relaxed enough to do this and that they don't have to phone me for anything but just to have a chat. One of the CHAPS had completed the Grand National quiz we posted on the website and then rang me to reminisce about the event"

Local knowledge, growing credibility and close-knit networks also have a snowball effect by engaging people who might stereotypically be regarded as 'hard to reach', acting as a gateway through which people access wider social and virtual networks. Here, digital inclusion provides a core means of building resilience through accessing information, advice, guidance and entertainment.

Resilience through Digital Inclusion:

Learning from the other themes in this report can be applied to people moving from offline to online. The role of digital inclusion is core to developing and facilitating relationships and resilience. A number of delivery providers highlight general literacy as an issue and the role of computer literacy specifically as being an issue in East Lindsey populations, internet connectivity and digital skills during Covid-19 have increasing significance where face to face and place-based meetings are not viable.

> "the best thing is to go and see them, it's difficult not to see them" (Friendship group Chair, Inland market town)

The Covid-19 pandemic has been perceived as motivating people over 50 in the district to gain digital skills where traditionally they would not have shown an interest in this. The role of these in maintaining contact with family, friends and wider communities presents opportunities for future long-term sustainability in how people interact. As Magna Vitae's Fitness, Food and Friends report:

> "There is the benefit of upskilling people to use IT solutions for their daily activities, for example, finding recipes and using online exercise activities when needed but we feel that this isn't always a replacement for face-to-face delivery. The virtual way of delivery with the Tasty Tuesday and, Nutrition Bites on Facebook have had good feedback and people will still look out for these once face-to-face sessions continue"

Even where people are unable to use online services, delivery partners have reported that through having close-knit local community relationships, friends and family are able to access services and print off 'hard copies' to distribute to those who are 'offline'.

Being online provides a source of entertainment as well as a means to access support for basic needs (shopping, prescriptions, health advice, online banking) and the learning from this report echoes Chappell and Welsh's (2020) observation that the use of internet/video calls are increasingly a crucial means of keeping families, friends and community groups connected. These connections provide the cornerstone of resilience in individuals and communities.

"learners without devices were experiencing a sense of loss and deep unsureness of the current situation and how they would cope without being able to go out. We were able to connect them with partner services that we already work with, or we looked into what services were available within their area" (Lincs Digital case study)

As part of a wider project funded by the Good Things Foundation, Lincs Digital have been able to provide tablet devices to TED members who are not online. Even where some beneficiaries are not online or possess I.T. skills, the use of conference calls has provided a means to connect and take part in quizzes facilitated by Magna Vitae, providing a remote access point to members. Partnership approaches to digital and telephone service offers have been evidenced and include examples like Carer's First putting together a 'chat directory' where men can get in touch with each other. Services have joined-up their offer through cross-referral, shared resources and a community approach between different providers, the TED team and other stakeholders. Lincs Digital, for instance, have produced 'how to guides' which enable learners from other projects to access their resources and vice versa.

Digital skills are a vehicle for sustaining and developing both individual and group resilience and are influential in maintaining feedback between service developments and beneficiaries, as well as celebrate 'good news stories', community strengths and capture individual resourcefulness. As Lincs Digital reported, through connecting digitally beneficiaries and providers are able to sustain reciprocity, a key feature of resilience in local networks and relationships:

"As the weeks have gone on, resources online have been put together by our working partners Magna Vitae and East Lindsey District Council which not only are an excellent resource for ourselves, but we are able to direct our learners to them and advertise them on our website and all our social media sites... Social media has proved to be invaluable during Covid-19, both for finding information to share with others and to share our own information with others. Each week has seen different challenges adapting the service as needed"

Bouncing Back or keep moving forward? Key Learning Points in fostering resilience in people and communities

Four thematic learning areas have been outlined. They are in-keeping with existing published research which focuses on relationships as being at the crux of generating and sustaining resilience in individuals and their communities. They interrelate with each other in the day-to-day (changing) landscape of service delivery and community life for people aged 50 and over in East Lindsey and inform ongoing practice, both in a 'COVID 19 society' and the (potential) de-escalation of social isolation and distancing measures. TED in East Lindsey has found services are particularly effective in developing and sustaining resilience in people and communities aged 50 and over when they:

- **Provide flexible, person-centred work in building relationships** – this can include work that is flexible to individual needs and in design and delivery (for example through one-to-one and group settings) in addition to planning and responding to fast-changing national contexts of delivery.

- **Test, design and engage individuals and communities in service design and service activities** – promoting activities that engage people from different social groups in addition to those who share particular demographics to engage and develop ties and peer-to-peer relationships and belonging.

- **Build relationships based on interest-in, knowledge about and familiarity with their beneficiaries** – TED in East Lindsey has demonstrated the importance of service 'buy in' –through showing that services and stakeholders have existing knowledge of a community and its members, supporting a positive reputation that has snowball effects. Familiarity and personal contact with people aged 50 and over remain important enablers, even while social distancing takes place and has a strong role in the design and sustainability of future services. Reciprocity is a key factor in these relationships.

- **Enhance digital inclusion and skills within individuals and existing groups as a means to communicate and engage** – case studies report that COVID 19 has motivated people aged over 50, and particularly people aged over 70 to move to becoming more digitally engaged. This too has a snowball effect, reaching people and connecting them with their families, friends and wider local community, as well as communities of interest on a global scale. Local relationships are key gatekeepers to this process. When acquired, digital skills enable independence in individuals. Where people are not able to use digital devices, existing social networks can be a means of 'bridging the gap'.

About East Lindsey

East Lindsey is a large, sparsely populated district within the county of Lincolnshire, which includes the popular coastal seaside towns of Skegness and Mablethorpe.

East Lindsey has a higher than average ageing population with 29% of people aged 65 and over. High numbers of older people move to East Lindsey in their retirement years and many have multiple chronic health conditions and few social and familial connections in the region. Public transport across East Lindsey is poor and therefore accessing services can be challenging, especially for older adults.

The overarching aims of the TED Programme are to:

- Reduce social isolation and loneliness

- Help older people to become better connected with volunteering, social, leisure and health improving activities

- Provide opportunities for older people to influence the design, delivery and evaluation of both the services and businesses available to them

We currently have 1700 registered TED members, over 100 businesses across East Lindsey hold an Age-friendly Business Award, and 516 volunteers have contributed 8,156 hours to the TED programme between April 2018 and December 2019 .

Further information...
To find out more about TED or to get involved visit our website www.tedineastlindsey.co.uk or start a conversation and share your views online: Twitter: @ted_EastLindsey