



# Walking with Confidence: Increasing older people's independence by walking together

Time to Shine end of project report  
2017



## Summary

Trained volunteers offered support and a reassuring presence for up to 12 weeks to help older people get out and about on foot, mobility scooter or public transport. A goal was agreed – such as to visit a shop, pub or a friend's house – and volunteers and older people worked towards achieving this together

## Walking with Confidence in Numbers

- 53 older people were supported
- The majority of participants were women, white, had a long standing illness or disability and lived alone.
- 85+ was the biggest age group
- 25 volunteers were recruited which included, 50% older people, contributed 709 hours in total.





## What was planned and what happened?

The project set a target of 100 older people being supported by a part-time worker and made assumptions about how much time would be spent with each participant. The Project found that working with a client group who had significant long-standing health or disability issues and who often needed significant volunteer support, meant they needed to spend more time with individuals. A full-time worker would have been more effective.





## What difference did it make for older people?

Of those who completed an evaluation form 36% reported decrease in social isolation and loneliness 40% reported an increase in social contact 50% reported an increase in overall wellbeing

- One man can now visit the post office to his collect pension.
- a woman can make it to the Arch Café at Age UK Leeds to meet her daughter for lunch.
- a woman managed to visit M&S in town for the first time in years.
- a woman is using her new walker and walking in the neighbourhood to visit friends again.
- a woman has restarted social activities with groups she used to attend.
- a man is seeing neighbours and acquaintances in cafes/bars.
- a man has been able to enjoy his garden and new pond.

Several placements ended with volunteer and participant wanting to stay in touch on a friendship basis, outside of Age UK Leeds.

One participant has used her outings as a means of finding out as much about her local area as possible. After living in London for most of her life, she made the decision to move to Kippax to be closer to her son after a bout of ill health resulted in a long hospital admission. She found trips to the local library with her volunteer invaluable as a means of getting familiar with the local history of the place but also getting to know what's available in her new area

Ellen and volunteer Janet got on really well and had some great times together.

Janet says "Ellen was good fun and told me lots of stories about her family and working life. She also told me lots about the local area. I felt that I had made a positive contribution to the quality of Ellen's life "

Ellen said "It was a very positive experience and I would like to thank everyone for their help."



## Legacy

An ongoing partnership with Feel Good Factor was created. Feel Good Factor had a Time to Shine funded project, Walk with Me. They had challenges recruiting volunteers for their project; Walking with Confidence, managed by Age UK Leeds, had a good track record in recruiting volunteers but welcomed the opportunity to share that expertise in return for working with a more diverse range of clients.

With the support of the Time to Shine Team, a partnership approach was agreed including some additional funding to enable this to happen so that the two could work together more closely. Age UK Leeds and Feel Good Factor are now partners in Connect Well, the social prescribing service in North Leeds.

With this kind of project there is always a risk of dependency as clients are often sad when the volunteer placement ends. Some placements were extended by moving them into Age UK Leeds' befriending service.

## Learning

Older people with a long standing illness found their health could vary from day to day which meant the project had to be flexible; similarly bad weather, especially in winter, could impact on the project as participants were unable to go out during showy or icy conditions.

Getting the right match between volunteer and participant was key and often resulted on friendships that lasted beyond the project. Finding volunteers and beneficiaries living in the same area was a challenge, especially when it came to participants living in South and East Leeds. It often meant volunteers had to drive and if they didn't have access to a car could make some matches challenging resulting in a longer waiting list.

The time required by volunteers was longer than anticipated Spending the time to set clear expectations and boundaries at the beginning was time well spent as it resulted in better outcomes for participants.

A 14 hour per week post wasn't sufficient for this project to meet its targets. Volunteer based projects offer lots of benefits and can also be a challenge as volunteers inevitably have other commitments that can impact on their availability.



## Case Study - Pat's Story

'I was finding it increasingly difficult to get out by myself because my balance had started to go. I missed being able to go into town by myself, but it was impossible to get on a bus on my own and manage my walker as well. The housing manager here mentioned [Walking with Confidence] to me and it sounded like a good idea and something I should definitely try. Adie [the Project Coordinator] came to see me with Susan, a volunteer who then came to visit me every Monday. It helped me especially in that it gave me the opportunity to go further afield and increased my sense of freedom. It was also lovely to have the company.

The sessions with Susan also helped me get more confident using my walker and actually going further with it. It's all about getting over a lack of confidence, it's stupid really. Seeing that I could go further afield has definitely helped me with my confidence and I do get out to social activities, the tea and chat at nearby Yoreth House is one of my regular weekly outings.

I plan to stay as active as I can. I have a friend who is about to re-open a "pay as you feel" cafe and I am hoping to go and help her out with it. I think [Walking with Confidence] is a wonderful idea; apart from anything else the company was wonderful, especially when you hit it off with your volunteer, which I did with Susan. In a funny way, I think that it may have been mutual support because there are things about her life that she used to talk to me about and she would say she found our conversations helpful.





# Resources

To find out more about Age UK Leeds go to [www.ageuk.org.uk/leeds/](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/leeds/)

To find out more about Feel Good Factor go to [fgfleeds.org](http://fgfleeds.org)

To find out more about Time to Shine go to [www.timetoshineleeds.org](http://www.timetoshineleeds.org)



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