

Reflecting on the Post-Retirement Opportunities Project

Happy, healthy, fulfilling retirement

Overview

The Post-Retirement Opportunities project (PRO) was a year-long pilot project funded by the Bristol and District Retirement Council (BDRC) and delivered by LinkAge Network in partnership with Business in the Community and The Anchor Society. The aim of the project was to help people aged 55 and over who were approaching retirement, recently retired or facing redundancy in later life, manage the shift into the next phase of their lives, enabling them to better understand where to look for information, have options to consider, and feel less alone in their experience of retirement.

The project operated across Bristol between April 2018 and April 2019 and offered the following **free** support:

- **Fairs** – events featuring guest speakers, workshops, taster sessions and information stalls, covering the areas of money, work, learning, volunteering, leisure, and health & wellbeing;
- **Workshops** – smaller group events focusing on some of the specific areas outlined above;
- **Ready for Work 55+** – a supported training and work placement programme for people aged 55+ wishing to return to paid employment, delivered by Business in the Community.

The events programme delivered by LinkAge Network provided participants with the opportunity to learn more about the support, advice and opportunities available to them, hear from those with lived experience of retirement, explore and share ideas, and meet other people at a similar stage in life. It also brought together organisations and individuals currently working with or supporting, or interested in working with or supporting, people approaching retirement.



Findings



of survey respondents felt the event they attended provided a suitable space for exploring and/or sharing ideas with others about their own retirement and/or retirement in general. Of those, **77%** felt they had benefitted, or would benefit, from the opportunity.



of survey respondents felt the event they attended offered them the opportunity to meet and socialise with people at a similar stage in life. Of those, **59%** felt they had benefitted, or would benefit, from the opportunity.



of survey respondents gathered useful information on volunteering, money, work, learning, leisure and health & wellbeing at the event they attended.

“Good mix of thought-provoking input and a real-life case study”

“Great to have an event not in the normal working hours for those of us still in work”

“More events please!”

“I enjoyed the event. I liked the venue. Had some conversations with people. Enjoyed refreshment!”

“Just being in a room with other people at a similar stage in life, knowing there are others going through the same thing, really helps you feel less alone”

Key learning outcomes

- The concept of retirement and how and when people are choosing to retire is changing and evolving, influenced by wider social, economic and political factors. Fewer people are opting for a traditional ‘cliff edge’ retirement, as more flexible options such as working part-time are increasing in popularity.
- A holistic approach to retirement planning and support is needed. The focus of retirement support is often purely financial, failing to address other important aspects of the transition to retirement such as health and relationships. Retirement support also rarely covers the psychological impact of the transition to retirement, and the possible detrimental effect on mental and emotional wellbeing of losing the social connections, identity and sense of purpose linked to work.
- Providing information and signposting people to support, advice and opportunities is useful. However, adopting a face-to-face, peer support approach, providing a space in which people can share experiences and ideas and hear from people with lived experience of retirement, is equally valuable, and also helps people feel less alone in their experience of retirement.
- The logistical elements of providing retirement support – the choice of venue and timings for example – are also important, contributing to the overall appeal, accessibility and inclusivity of the support offered.

Summary

Retirement is a major life transition which is changing and evolving in today’s society, and support with managing this transition plays an important role in enabling people to live happy, healthy and fulfilling later lives. There is a need for a holistic approach to the support offered, taking into consideration both the practical and emotional elements of retirement. The project also found that providing the opportunity for participants to explore ideas with their peers in a welcoming and inclusive space, increased the impact of the service.