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RESEARCH ON CARE,
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age UK
Love later life

Age UK's Cascade Training Programme

Empowering volunteers to support older people to improve their health and wellbeing

A summary of the evaluation





The Cascade Training Programme supported organisations to empower their volunteers and staff to help older people from ‘hard to engage’ groups to improve their physical, mental and social wellbeing.

Between 2013 and 2015, the programme has been accessed by 75 organisations; training 1,382 volunteers over 249 sessions; with the trained volunteers engaging 5,368 older people into activities.

The programme consisted of six projects that involved 14 hours of expert consultancy support provided by a national partner. This support was accompanied by a comprehensive training package.

The Cascade Training projects:

Building Better Buddies

Training for older men to become peer buddies and mentors, to motivate and encourage vulnerable older men to take part in new activities.

Moving Movements

Training for volunteers in the importance of understanding faith and culture when engaging older people from ethnic minority communities, into opportunities for meaningful physical activity and wellbeing.

Come to Tea

Training for volunteers, supported by care home staff, in roles to support greater independence, mobility and social interaction.

Life and Soul

Training for older people living in sheltered housing to volunteer and support activities for other residents.

Talking Tonics

Training for volunteers to facilitate teleconferencing sessions with socially isolated older people who may struggle to leave home, aiming to promote independence, mental health and wellbeing.

EngAge

Volunteer training in providing peer support to socially isolated older people who struggle to leave their home, the aim being to increase health and wellbeing and improve nutrition.

What was learnt from the evaluation?

- ✔ Organisations accessed the programme for a **variety of reasons**: to improve **knowledge and skills** of volunteers; to improve **ability to engage** with certain groups of older people; and to improve **outcomes for older people**.
- ✔ The training packs are **flexible and adaptable**, enabling them to be applied to satisfy a range of organisational **training needs and services**.
- ✔ The delivery of the training packs, and need for consultative support, varies by **differences in the knowledge, confidence and experience** of trainers.
- ✔ Working in **partnership** with several organisations within a community is seen as **key for the cascading of information** from the training packs – with volunteers based in the community being **assets to help achieve this**.
- ✔ The programme **empowered and increased confidence** of volunteers (nearly 70 per cent reported an improvement in self-esteem) to encourage older people into participating in activities to improve their physical, mental and social wellbeing.

What delivery organisations said about the project:

‘We don’t have a strong training offer for our volunteers so I saw this as an opportunity... it was a nice and easy way of someone giving me the resources and then just pulling the volunteers together, as it is really difficult to provide tailored training to volunteers.’

‘I have learnt to trust volunteers and the value of volunteers. Cascade Training was part of the process of getting actively involved in increasing volunteers, it has turned my view around and made me more enthusiastic. We only had one or two volunteers working on projects prior to this... Cascade Training was a clear route into becoming involved in volunteering and it has changed my perception and the way that we work.’

‘The most useful part of the training is having the training pack and the chance to adapt it to fit the criteria of all the different homes.’

‘Older people have benefited from the information and have told their friends, which in turn encouraged their friends to take part in specific activities.’

‘Prior to...doing the training I had lost confidence. I was bereaved suddenly, upping sticks and moving to a new area. I have an older daughter who lives close, but I had to do it on my own. But doing the course it wound me up again, I thought, ‘I have a brain, I can use it’, the training and the trainer gave my confidence back.’ (volunteer)



The information for this pamphlet was sourced from the document, *Age UK's Cascade Training Programme – Evaluation Report*, which is authored by Sarah Alden, Andrea Wigfield and Erika Kispter.

The authors are based at CIRCLE (Centre for International Research on Care, Labour and Equalities) at the University of Leeds. The evaluation report was completed in July 2015.

For more information please visit:

www.ageuk.org.uk/health-wellbeing/fit-as-a-fiddle/cascade-training-packs

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