

Boosting confidence to regain independence

July 2020



Introduction:

This short report is based on the experiences of staff in 6 different Time to Shine projects, all of whom are helping participants to boost their confidence and regain their independence as lockdown restrictions ease.

Float Your Boat at Canal Connections has convened a small group of older volunteers and young people, who are part of the home-school network, to meet weekly via Zoom to share ideas and plan ways that the project can re-open safely. The project plans to collaborate with other partners to offer free, small-group canal boat trips for their participants. The hope is that an exciting, out-of-the-ordinary activity will be an incentive for some people to strive to regain their confidence and overcome fears about leaving home. For others, it will be a new experience and something different to talk about.

Making a Match at MAECare is planning a 4-week transition period to phase out some telephone support and phase in doorstep visits as a first step towards building confidence. Staff are using questionnaires to find out what support participants need so that service delivery can be tailored accordingly.

Sporting Memories Leeds at The Sporting Memories Foundation is also using a questionnaire to find out from participants when they may feel comfortable to return to face-to-face activities. Free resources on their website keep participants connected.

SELF at Leeds Mind is prioritising consistency and routine for participants and will only start to resume face-to-face work once the likelihood of a second wave (and associated local lockdowns) is reduced.

The Great Outdoors at TCV Hollybush is finding that some participants aren't interested in doing alternative, locally-based activities as lockdown eases, preferring to re-join their original groups when possible – however long this may take. Others want to attend guided, small-group walks in their local area as a stepping stone to resuming original activities.

Cara Too at Leeds Irish Health and Homes have continued to make doorstep visits throughout lockdown and, where necessary, are providing 1-2-1 support by accompanying participants on short walks to help them regain confidence. Small-group walks (led by staff and a volunteer) in four areas of Leeds will commence shortly, before being rolled out.

Bee Together at Health for All is talking regularly with older participants with learning disabilities about the new requirements for social distancing, face-masks and the need to leave contact details when requested. Bee Together has circulated an easy read information guide to older people's services in Leeds to help others produce clear, easy to read safety notices. The aim is to reduce the likelihood of a negative reaction from members of the public if guidelines are not followed.

Learning from other organisations:

- During telephone befriending calls, if appropriate, the conversation includes references to the easing of restrictions and the need to resume some activities, in a safe way.
- Talk about the way in which access to shops and leisure services have changed and the steps people are expected to make. These experiences are very different now to how they were pre-lockdown and conversations like these may help people to prepare mentally and not feel overwhelmed when they first venture out.

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- Accompanying people to a supermarket, post office or on public transport for the first time provides support, reassurance and encouragement for those who need it.

What are TTS partners learning that can enable the longer term recovery of our communities?

- A person-centred approach is vital as some people will need lots of support to build their confidence after lockdown, some will need a little support and others will be fine on their own.
- Talking helps: staff, volunteers or peers are important ‘sounding boards’ for participants to check out their understanding of the guidelines, put risks into perspective or share their worries. Those who don’t have regular conversations may find that the same worries or issues go round and round in their heads, which could result in a lack of confidence to reconnect socially.
- Helping people to examine their own feelings about the easing of lockdown restrictions and assess their own feelings about risk and reward helps a person to develop perspective and build confidence in their own ability to make informed decisions.
- Accompanying someone as they go out to complete an errand they are worried about can be a boost to their confidence and a step towards regaining independence.
- Members of the public can get agitated if they perceive that others aren’t ‘following the rules’ and this can knock a person’s confidence if this is pointed out to them in public. Helping people to be fully aware of the safety guidelines (and the exemptions) can help.
- Encouraging people to be aware of the amount of news they watch, read or listen to and the effect it has on them, with a view to finding a balance that is right for them.
- Timing is important: Encouraging people to go out is generally easier in the warmer, lighter months rather than in the middle of winter.

