



Shine Magazine

Lifestyle, learning and laughter during lockdown in Leeds

A Time to Shine Report

November 2020



About Time to Shine

Led by Leeds Older People's Forum, Time to Shine is one of fourteen areas which form Ageing Better; an ambitious, large scale programme funded and developed by The National Lottery Community Fund. Ageing Better aims to improve the lives of people aged 50 and over by reducing social isolation and loneliness.

About Mojo Film

Mojo Film is a Leeds-based film production company and social enterprise producing high quality and creative stories that powerfully tell stories and impact audiences. As a social enterprise which believes in positive mental health for all, Mojo Film helps people gain skills and hope for a stronger future with real prospects through providing workshops, film making training and work experience on commissions. Working in partnership helps to fund this vital work and changes lives for the better.



Introduction

The aim of this report is to provide a reflection on the development, creation, distribution and impact of Shine magazine in Leeds and to look at what lessons have been learned that can inform future development.

“How do I make sure I get every issue of this magazine? Because it is the best magazine I have read in years! I love that stories are about real people: this magazine has much more backbone than other magazines made for older people - no adverts! I have been so impressed by how positive the stories are and how they show that good things can come out of bad things and how people can turn their lives around.” (Shine reader)

The idea for Shine magazine was conceived shortly after the Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020. Time to Shine already worked in partnership with Mojo Film, a Leeds-based film production company and social enterprise, and existing work plans were quickly refocused in response to the pandemic. We know from experience that many people are isolated and shielding was set to make this worse! What positive and tangible things could Time to Shine do?

We decided to create a series of six glossy lifestyle magazines full of features and local stories relevant to people aged 50+ in Leeds. Older people co-produced the magazines with Mojo and submitted stories, photos, and ideas. Shine magazines were distributed fortnightly, via community hubs, to older people who were shielding during lockdown. The aim was to help boost morale, reduce feelings of loneliness and create a feeling of connectedness to their local community.

An online magazine would allow for stories to be gathered and shared, but that this would leave a gap and not allow us to reach those who were not online. It was clear that a printed version should be our priority if the most lonely and isolated people were to be reached.

“I really appreciate having a magazine that talks about things that I remember. Shine is directed right at my age group. So often it feels like older people’s views are discounted or not even sought. Shine is not preachy - it is comforting! I hope you get all the funding that you need to keep it going - we need it” (Shine reader)



Development and Creation

As Leeds went into lockdown, Mojo Film and Time to Shine went into action to look at how the magazine could be created. Collectively we had well-established links to community groups that connected with older people across the city, who promoted the opportunity for people and organisations to share their stories of life in Leeds.

Leeds Museums and Galleries provided historical content that created reminiscences of days gone by. Readers were inspired to send their own memories to be printed in Shine. Time to Shine delivery partners encouraged older people to write their own stories and columns and, for later issues, older writers and students from Sheffield University were asked to create content or to interview older people.

The design of the magazine was important as we wanted a high-quality product that was attractive and engaging and, crucially, connected with older people from all sections of the diverse community of Leeds. It was agreed that fortnightly production was a challenging but realistic timescale. The magazine was also made available online.

Distribution

The next challenge after producing the magazine was getting it into the homes of the people we most wanted to reach - those without internet access.

As part of the Covid-19 response, Leeds City Council had set up 33 ward hubs, each of which was distributing food parcels and medication to shielding people across the city. We approached them to ask for help with the distribution of Shine and received a very positive response. Thanks to their support we dropped off 100 copies of issue 1 to each of the 33 hubs. The magazine was included in food parcels, with medication and shopping and shared wherever opportunities arose. The distribution network grew and by issue 2 distribution numbers reached 4,500.

A team of drivers from the Time to Shine team delivered the copies to distributors which allowed us to see organisations face to face and discuss any problems or issues and enabled us to gather direct feedback. This was time-consuming and resource intensive but effective.

The online version of the magazine was shared electronically with partners across the city and with other Ageing Better programmes across the country.



Impact of Shine - our legacy

“At first I thought that the magazine was a nice thing to have - a luxury item. But then I started to see the impact it was having and how it connected with people who were shielding and rethought that - it is not just a luxury - it is essential!” (Potential funder)

Through Shine magazine:

- Older people felt connected during lockdown and shared their stories, giving them an opportunity to contribute, be heard and feel part of something big
- Older writers were able to develop their skills and evolve the magazine
- Shine raised the profile of Leeds Older People's Forum as the magazine reached the homes of people who had not connected with us before
- Leeds Older People's Forum and Time to Shine built on and strengthened existing partnerships such as links with Leeds Museums and Art Galleries and East Leeds FM
- New partnerships were also formed, through connections to ward hubs across the city, which have led to further partnership projects
- Community organisations found that the magazine was a tool to help them to reach the most socially isolated during lockdown as they had something tangible to approach with
- Community organisations were able to celebrate their work during lockdown and show how they had adapted
- As organisations recognised the reach of the magazine they approached us for print space to share health messages, health advice and community news therefore raising their own profile
- Public Health messages reached older people giving advice and guidance on how to stay well during lockdown



“One morning, a film guy named Tom pitched up on a boat owned by an organisation I do voluntary work for, with a remit to interview myself and my colleague Gary, on behalf of the charity ‘Time To Shine’. He wanted to know how we became involved with ‘Canal Connections’.

After recording us Tom asked if I would mind being filmed, to which I agreed, but that was cancelled due to Covid-19 and the first lock-down. As Tom knew I'd taken a writing course, he called asking me if I would be okay writing an article for a new magazine they had planned, which was designed to keep them in touch with their members.

As I always enjoyed interacting with people and had time on my hands I thought I'd give it a go, realising the written word is a good way of communication.

I found myself really enjoying it, while apprehensive as to how the piece would be received. No need to worry, as I ended up penning half a dozen articles for the new ‘Shine’ mag. This newfound confidence led me to writing some personal stuff, which I find rather therapeutic, and finding a creative writing group, which I hope to utilize once we have back our liberties. Proof here that something I was told in my youth is true, “every action causes a reaction”. Thank you Tom and Time To Shine.”

The future

Leeds City has an ambition to be the best city to grow old in. Shine magazine has contributed to uniting the city in that vision.

We have secured funding to continue to produce a further 12 issues of Shine which will be developed monthly throughout 2021. Written chiefly by older writers in the city, it will be distributed by partner organisations such as Age UK Leeds and Neighbourhood Networks, primarily to older people without digital skills or access to the internet.

The Shine website will provide similar content but also host films, podcasts etc and be a destination for anyone interested in older people's stories in Leeds.

A dedicated team of older volunteers and freelance writers will steer content and produce material and a team of older people will manage and promote Shine content on social media. Mojo Film will continue to edit and design the magazine.

Options for long term sustainability are being explored. Hopefully, Shine will exist whilst need exists. If need should decline, production will end and an over-arching evaluation report will be produced.



Friends Reunited!

Wendy, a member at AVSED in Yeadon, received issue 2 of Shine that had the story on Olga Denver. She knew Olga from when she met her Argentinian husband as he worked in a circus too. His mother wasn't happy with him for marrying an English girl so there wasn't much talk about the past. He died quite young too.

Wendy called the Shine magazine team with this story and was put in touch with Olga over the phone. They are planning to meet up when it is safe to do so and this has brought so much joy not only to Wendy but to the whole family. Her son Steve has already learnt more about his father and can share this with his grandchildren.

Steve said, "It's a big thank you from the whole family. The feedback from the family has been brilliant and thank you so much for helping two ladies reconnect after 50 + years!"

Key Learning Points

**“I thought the magazine was entertaining, really attractively presented and didn’t have that worthy feel that you sometimes get with these sort of things”
(Shine reader)**

- The content needs to be as varied and diverse as the community of older people in Leeds
- It’s vital to involve older writers who best connect with older readers
- Strong community partnerships are needed to reach the most socially isolated
- Many older people really appreciated having something in print during lockdown
- Quality matters!
- The stories need to speak to people and the local connection is important
- All content needs to be readable and interesting and we had to help organisations understand the vision: the magazine wasn’t a newsletter, it was something different
- People want to read about “real” people
- Memories and reminiscing is an effective way to get people talking
- Frontline staff and volunteers appreciated having something tangible to share when calling on older people
- Anything over 40 pages is too long
- A commitment to testing things out and learning quickly helped us to refine the process and improve the magazine over the six issues
- Producing a new magazine every fortnight is very challenging



Planning for Shine in 2021

“Absolutely brilliant idea and has been distributed at such a vital time for our community.” (Community organisation)

We took this learning and applied it when developing phase 2 of Shine, which begins in December 2020 and runs to December 2021, so that from now on:

- Issues are distributed monthly
- Christmas issues are “bumper” issues but all others are 36 pages long
- A team of older writers listens to the stories that older people share and turns them into engaging articles
- Community partnerships are strengthened to widen the distribution network beyond ward hubs
- Community partners are encouraged to feature in the magazine to attract new members - increasing social activity and engagement and reducing social isolation
- A steering group of older people keeps the magazine relevant, varied and authentic and develops a sense of ownership of the magazine
- Digital content is developed to support the printed magazine in the form of films and podcasts which are available online
- Magazine content links to Leeds Public Health and NHS messages to ensure consistency in Covid-19 recovery information
- Phase 2 focuses on long term sustainability to allow Shine magazine to continue as long as demand exists
- Volunteer roles are created for distribution, promotion and co-production
- Feedback is actively sought from readers and distributors and used to shape future issues
- Formal evaluation supports future sustainability

Further reading

All copies of Shine magazine can be found on the Time to Shine website at <https://timetoshineleeds.org/projects/shine-magazine> or use the quick links below:



[Shine issue 1
May 2020](#)



[Shine issue 2
May 2020](#)



[Shine issue 3
June 2020](#)



[Shine issue 4
June 2020](#)



[Shine issue 5
July 2020](#)



[Shine issue 6
July 2020](#)

The Covid-19 pandemic triggered a wave of change and adaptation throughout society, including the way we work at Time to Shine, and the way our delivery partners work. Find out more at timetoshineleeds.org/what-weve-learned/key-learning-covid-19-crisis