SOPA Conference - Rebuilding Connections Post COVID-19
Tuesday 25th May 2021

PDP Presentation - Shared Learning from Leith (10 mins)

Background

Pilmeny Development Project (PDP) is a voluntary organisation, working in Leith area since 1979.We work primarily with older and younger people. We aim to maintain and improve the quality of life and to help socially isolated older people to remain independent and active within their local community. In 2020/21, we provided services for more than **2,708** local residents, **200** local groups/organisations, **84** volunteers and **170** Leith Timebank members.

Over view of PDP Community Connections work

PDP is part of the Third Sector which delivers the vast majority of preventative health and social activity within the City of Edinburgh. With current fiscal challenges and an increasingly frail older population, we need to ensure that older people in need of higher level, often critical, care are able to connect and access the services they need.

PDP knew that loneliness and social isolation was an issue for our older people and that it is a significant cause of ill-health and reduced wellbeing.
We wanted:

- to address local issues around social isolation and loneliness
- to look at how we could improve the ways in which isolated older people are linked in to activities
- to look at how we could better develop early intervention /prevention to enable older people to remain at home for longer.
- To look at how to establish and sustain better referral pathways with practitioners from across all sectors.

We achieved this through the development of a 'Community Connecting' Pilot Project, using local Community link workers and volunteers in North East Edinburgh in 2009-2013,
The success of our Pilot Project led to the development by CEC of a city wide initiative called LOOPs (Local Opportunities for Older People) funded by CEC in 2014 - 2019. LOOPs aimed to develop infrastructure solutions to three outcomes from the Commissioning Plan for Social Care Day Services for Older People 2012-17:

1. **Strengthening of the locality infrastructure** – LOOPs provides a support forum for local organisations to come together and share information in order to increase the uptake of all local community services by local older people.
2. **Strengthening community capacity and resilience** – LOOPs supports third sector organisations so that communities are more able to provide informal support for local vulnerable older people.
3. **Strengthening the voice of local older people** – LOOPs provides a forum so that older people have a direct impact on the services that are available locally and how these are modernised to meet their needs

PDP supported the LOOPS work in NE Locality – but unfortunately, funding came to an end in early 2019 and we were faced with the potential loss of services to over 1,635 older people and families in Leith and NE Edinburgh locality, as of April 2019.

We wanted to find a way to continue this much needed Community Connecting work. We have been lucky enough to receive support and some ad hoc funding towards sustaining the development of our Older People's Services Project (with volunteer support) since 2019-to the present in 2021/22.

During & After Lockdown

Pilmeny Development Project continued to provided services and provisions throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic and the various stages of lockdown in 2020/21. We reconfigured our services to meet the needs during the unprecedented, challenging times which we faced

Pre COVID – our Community Connecting work included:
- Information Stations in local venues & production of an Older People's Magazine (2,000 copies)
- Provision of 'Inreach' 1:1 services to support housebound older people
- Provision 2 older people's forums in NE Edinburgh (100 older people) and a NE Older People's Service Providers Network (155 orgs)
- Development of new activity sessions/opportunities (in line with older people's unmet needs and interests
- Volunteers recruitment/support

During COVID to the present

Much of our work at the outset of COVID-19 focused on community connecting to provided emergency support for extremely vulnerable local people, who lived alone, with no family support, who were shielding/suffering long term conditions, on low incomes and with no access to digital support.
We have /are providing:
- Telephone Befriending support
- Practical Help/support
- Volunteer recruitment/support
- Emergency Food deliveries
- Activity packs, special activities & newsletters
- Socially distanced face to face and online sessions including intergenerational activities
- Digital IT/Connecting project

Impact of COVID-19

Individuals – issues include:
- Mental and physical health & well being issues (poor mobility, deteriorating memory, carer stress etc)
- Fear and lack of confidence around re-engagement
- Lack of access to primary healthcare services (feet, dental etc)
- Poverty/low incomes/debt
- Digital divide

Organisations (Local, Citywide & National) issues include:
- Coming out of lockdown – complex
- Funding issues

- Lack of Communication
- Lack of National or local guidance for 3rd sector/community based services

Successful Community Connecting – 10 Top Tips
1. Know your community and what's available out there
2. Listen to the voice of older people & their carers
3. Identify local unmet needs/gaps and do something about them!
4. Engage and involve older people in finding your solutions
5. Make good use of and support your volunteers
6. Build trusted relationships with older people and those who work with them
7. Work together with other organisations and collaborate to find solutions
8. Find ways to ensure stronger integration of Community Connecting work within Community planning and locality structures.
9. Campaign for sustainable solutions/funding for Community Connecting work
10. Remember successful Community Connecting takes time – so to use the Leith motto…..Persevere!

Q&A (5 mins)

Anne Munro, Manager Pilmeny Development Project
18th May 2021