

TRANSFORM AGEING REPORT

Supporting people in later life
through social entrepreneurship,
community and design.

Transform Ageing is delivered by:



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Introduction

Transform Ageing is a pioneering programme that aimed to improve people's experience of ageing through community, collaboration social entrepreneurship and design.

Over three years, the programme saw people in later life, social entrepreneurs and public sector leaders work together to explore challenges faced by ageing communities in the South West of England.

Through collaborative design techniques and social entrepreneurship, the programme put people in later life at the heart of the design process. Their insight and experience led to new products and services that directly met their needs.

This report explains what we did, how we did it and the impact Transform Ageing has had on everyone who took part. From this learning, we hope to engage other communities interested in these approaches.





Supporting an ageing population

The backdrop to the Transform Ageing programme is a demographic shift that will have far-reaching consequences for society, the economy and public services in the UK.

We are an ageing population. For the first time, Britain's over 65s outnumber people under the age of 16. Now in 2020, we have reached the Office for National Statistics prediction that people aged over 50 will make up almost one third (32%) of the workforce and nearly half (47%) the adult population.

The implications of an ageing society will reach across generations, touch every part of our lives and affect us all. There will be challenges for individuals, families, communities, employers, service providers and government.

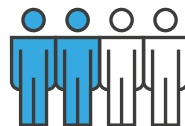
How will we respond to the needs of people in later life? This is one of society's most crucial issues and the question at the heart of Transform Ageing.

Our design techniques and collaborative approach meant the resulting products and services solved real problems. By actively engaging and working with the people who need them, we were able to take a design-led approach that leads to genuine innovation.



32%

of the workforce will be over 50 according to the Office for National Statistics.



47%

of the adult population will be over 50.

Exploring the challenge

Transform Ageing began with a series of ‘Exploring the Challenge’ workshops. This was an opportunity for our social entrepreneurs and public sector leaders to start working alongside people in later life, right from the outset.

Design-led process

The workshops followed a national review of research into ageing and used a design process based on Design Council’s Framework for Innovation. The aim was to identify and understand the issues that affect people’s experience of ageing, and how their lives could be improved.

The workshops and approach were a huge success. Our participants identified common themes, such as social isolation and loneliness. They then clustered their observations through a technique called affinity sorting.

Months of hard work, insight consolidation and refinement came to fruition in the creation of six innovation briefs.

Ideas with impact

How would our social entrepreneurs respond to the briefs? We wanted innovative ideas that would transform the experience of ageing. Whether new concepts or an expansion to an existing successful idea, they had to enhance the lives of people in later life and be able to reach them quickly.

Programme partner UnLtd made 62 awards totalling £819,441 and provided 12 months of non-financial support to social entrepreneurs.

Over four months, we engaged 120 people across 17 groups in four different locations in the South West.

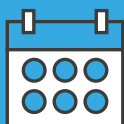
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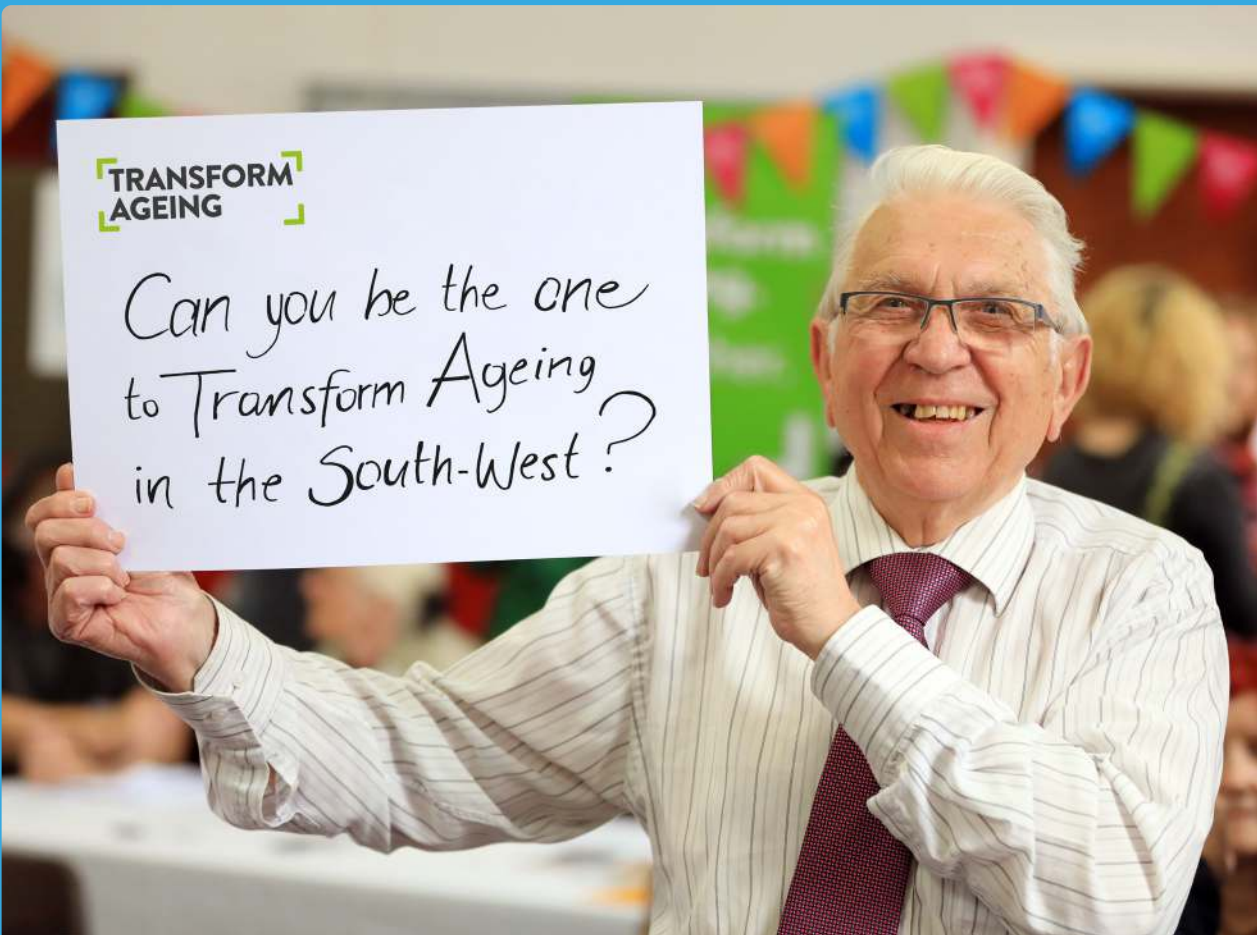
120
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4
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Innovation briefs

Each innovation brief set out a specific societal challenge to address with an innovative idea or solution. Our social entrepreneurs had to choose and respond to just one brief.



01

Steps to a positive future

How might we enable people in later life to have positive experiences of ageing?

02

Mobility and transport

How might we enhance independence and wellbeing through improved mobility?

03

Life transitions

How might we support people to prepare for life changes?

04

Caring about carers

How might we support, value and celebrate carers?

05

Right information, right time

How might we make information accessible, relevant and meaningful?

06

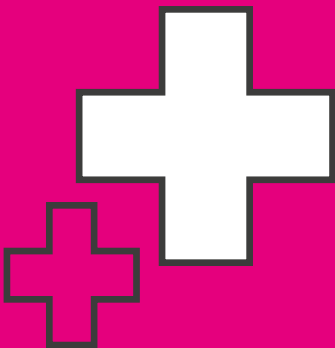
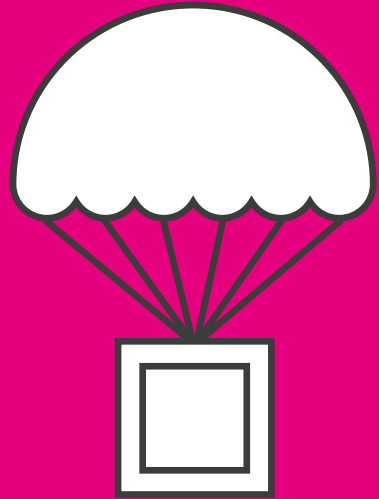
Making connections

How might we create opportunities for people in later life to connect with other people, communities and activities?

Read detailed versions of the innovation briefs on the Design Council website designcouncil.org.uk/transformageing

Products and services

Our social entrepreneurs developed multiple products and services as a result of the Transform Ageing programme. All were designed with the direct input of people in later life and local stakeholders. Together, they prototyped, iterated and implemented ideas to help them make a real difference to people's lives.



ADi Access – RoomMate

Movement-activated device that helps people with visual impairment use public toilets independently.

Aquafolium

Devon ‘forest bathing’ for older people, people with dementia and their carers.

Atlas Respite and Therapy

High-quality day care to people who are living with dementia.

AWOCA: A woman of a certain age

Website that aims to transform attitudes and lifestyle practices for women entering the menopause.

Book of You

Reminiscence app that is primarily aimed at people who have dementia.

CareCalls

Service that sends reminders and check-ins via landline or mobile phone.

Caremunity

Online platform that features advice, information, jobs and support to people in later life.

Crediton Community Bookshop

Supported volunteering scheme in a community bookshop that features intergenerational projects through work with schools.

Estuary ARNI Stroke Rehab Club

Post-stroke exercise and support programme to increase recovery and resilience.

Find Your Voice

Creates and animates singing programmes that engage the hardest to reach people in a community.

Foxhole Community Garden

Horticulture and craft activities that help reduce social isolation.

Good Boost

Using technology to create tailored musculoskeletal rehabilitation exercise sessions in local swimming pools.

Great Parks Torbay

Intergenerational, enterprise-based activities, including cookery, woodwork and gardening.

Little Bird Music: Chorus Connections

Chorus Connections intergeneration music and singing programme.

Local Spark: Torbay Community Supported Enterprise

Service that brings together older and younger people to combine their experience older and energy.

Local Treasures

One-stop shop for people in later life to take on jobs in their community's homes, gardens and businesses.

Longe Cote UK

Sea-based exercise programme to increase mobility, strength and wellbeing, and prevent isolation.

Made Open

Community platform to help people access information about local groups, activities and support services.

Make It Better CIC

Arts-based projects and activities for vulnerable people in care.

Moments Café and Hub

Innovative dementia café and hub that provides advice, information and support in a single setting.

Move It or Lose It

Activity session provider that operates under a licensing model and with people in later life as activity instructors.

NEDCare

Rural carers introduction service that brokers local care in the community.

One Stop Advocacy

Advice, information and advocacy service that involves people in later life in local delivery.

Our Grandparent's Secrets

Encouraging people in later life to share their skills, knowledge and advice with the wider community.

Par Track: Run, Ride, Relax, Repeat

Exercise project run by volunteers that used bespoke programmes to support increased physicality.

Pass The Pressure

Holistic home care and support service for people aged 50+ who live in their own home.

Peaceful Pups

Weekly dog training classes that encourage friendships and connections.

Personal Alarm Watch

Alternative to the pendant alarm with built-in monitoring to predict and prevent falls.

Remarkable Lives

Social networking app that celebrates the life stories and achievements of older people.

Renew Personal Training

Home and community based personal training, individually tailored for people in later life.

Rusty Road to Recovery

Car restoration and mechanics project to engage local older men.

Sense Ability Therapy C.I.C.

Physiotherapy clinic that uses specialist equipment to improve mobility for people in later life.

Sporting Memories

Reminiscence, wellbeing and activity sessions for isolated older men, which includes a network of professional sports teams.

Step in Time

Dance-based movement to increase mobility and wellbeing, and to help prevent falls.

Tea Dance Club

Tea Dancing network across rural Devon that includes several people in later life.

The Filo Project

Person-centred, community-based group day activity and support for people who have dementia.

The Hut in the Field

Mindfulness and wellbeing activities for people in later life that feature intergenerational schemes.

The Sewing Rooms

Sewing sessions for people in later life who can then sell products to generate money.

Virtue Health

Virtual reality experiences for people in later life and carers used for reminiscence therapy and group work.

Walking Fit – Quit Camp Project

Outdoor and ‘green’ exercise and mindfulness programme that can be individually tailored.

We Are Stories –**Digital Storytelling Workshops**

Storytelling sessions for people in later life facilitated by college students.

The impact so far

Transform Ageing has already brought about tangible benefits for people in later life. Through access to new products and services designed to meet their specific needs, it has reduced social isolation and people involved are healthier, happier and more connected.

“This programme has the potential to deliver new, scalable and sustainable solutions that meet the needs and aspirations of our ageing communities across the UK.”

Rt Hon Paul Burstow, former Minister of State for Care

Greater choice for people

On a fundamental level, older people in the South West now have a greater choice of products and services available to them. The six innovation briefs led to a diverse range of responses that cater for people with different needs.

Transform Ageing helped people in later life to meet new people and expand their networks. In the words of one participant “It (Transform Ageing) gave me an insight into people that perhaps I would have not come across in my normal circle of people and contacts”. For some participants it is this growth in personal networks that is essential for reducing social isolation.

Motivated and in control

Older people listed several positive changes they have experienced as a result of the programme. Many have reported feeling more confident, motivated and in control of their lives, others mentioned new transferable skills which enabled them to pursue hobbies and activities.



89,501

beneficiaries were engaged by ventures through their work.

Boost to local economy

The programme supported 62 social entrepreneurs and created a new market of non-statutory products and services that contributes to the local economy and have employed many local people. And with 46% of the programme’s initiatives led by people aged over 50, it has boosted employment for people in later life and changed mindsets around work for this group.

Change in perception

The programme helped social entrepreneurs and commissioners see people in later life as assets, rather than a group that needs providing for. It’s an important message that underlines the positive effect the programme had on everyone who took part.

New skills and networks

When surveyed, 57% of social entrepreneurs who responded said they had made new connections that have helped them develop their social enterprise. Most felt better equipped at identifying (71%), accessing (71%) and creating (50%) relevant networks.

Design for good

The programme's design process had a great influence on participants. Of the social entrepreneurs that took part, 11 adopted user-led design and continuous learning to help establish their venture into the region.

Seeing the value

Local commissioners now see the value of social entrepreneurs as a way to deliver a positive impact on people in later life. They have also seen that those people in later life are assets that can lead this work.

Tools and techniques

Four Delivery organisations (Devon Communities Together, Torbay Community Development Trust, Community Council for Somerset and Volunteer Cornwall) are now trained to use design tools and techniques for engagement across the South West.



86%

of social entrepreneurs feel more confident to act for social change as a result of Transform Ageing.

Expanding the programme

Our goal with Transform Ageing was to develop a pilot that could be carried out across the UK. Having already been able to scale and replicate their models in the South West, we believe 14 of our social entrepreneurs could have national reach. We've also attracted eight social entrepreneurs from other parts of the UK to bring their work and innovation to the region.



What have we learned?

Transform Ageing had a positive effect on everyone who took part. But what did we learn from the experience? Here we outline some of the key findings and observations from the programme.

Design thinking

Design thinking works best as an ongoing process.

The innovation briefs were not used by social entrepreneurs in the way we anticipated with social entrepreneurs using the briefs often as a framework rather than prescriptively following.

That suggests design thinking is most effective as an ongoing process of discovery and iteration, rather than one-off workshops. However, the design thinking tools used in the workshops and a design toolkit proved popular with a wide range of stakeholders.

People in later life value collaboration.

Older participants valued working with a diverse range of people and finding a shared language fostered understanding. Being able to share and contribute their own lived experience helped grow their confidence.

Find ways to engage with different stakeholders.

People respond differently to design-led approaches. Health, social and public professionals found the design process helped them slow down and not jump to solutions. Quickly adapting an engagement style that works with commissioners helps them engage with the work.

Synthesising data can affect the local nature of the project.

When you synthesise very rich and nuanced data, you do lose some of the local flavour. In the later stages of the programme, this made it even more important to make sure that people in later life who were involved in the workshops could play a meaningful role.

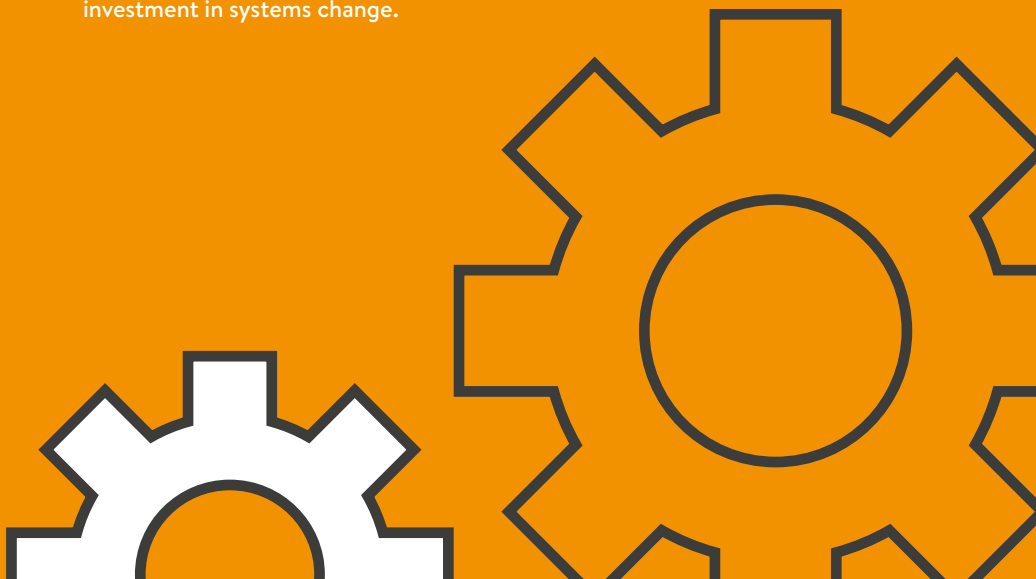


System change

Not everyone is interested in system-level thinking.

Many social entrepreneurs preferred to spend time and resources on what has an immediate impact. Those with models that challenged the system often saw system change as a journey and aspiration for the future. There is little investment in systems change.

Investment in organisations to work on system change seems to be low. That means there are very few that have the resources or capacity to capture or evaluate any work that they are doing on system change.



“It helped us see that it is not always about doing the same thing. Transform Ageing has helped us identify how to meet the needs of people in later life better and in a more personalised way.”

Social entrepreneurs

The design process challenges perceptions.

A design-led process helped challenge any preconceptions that social entrepreneurs had of people in later life. By working together, they gained a greater awareness of the challenges older people face.

Continuous testing led to the most successful projects.

Social entrepreneurs who continually tested with people in later life and involved them in the process saw the most success. Engaging with them and tapping into their skills and experience had the most impact on both those individuals and their communities.

Spreading existing projects can take as much work as creating new ones.

Some social entrepreneurs who brought an existing project into the area were surprised by the scale of the challenges. Barriers included being unfamiliar with the public sector, geographical distance, the region’s rurality, engaging public sector leaders.

Innovation never stops and needs ongoing support.

Social entrepreneurs who were slow to adapt saw their progress stall. We saw that even when something works well once, organisations need to innovate and adapt to deliver again in a new area, with a new audience, or both.

Peer support provides practical and emotional help.

Working with other social entrepreneurs on the programme was beneficial and partnerships are being forged to support each other going forward. One-to-one support from Transform Ageing Award managers also helped social entrepreneurs grow and develop their ventures.

“The level of individualisation and care from Transform Ageing Award Managers has been outstanding.”

Adaptive programming

It is important to reflect, learn and adapt the programme.

Using programme learning works best when structures are flexible enough to support change and innovation, Transform Ageing would benefit from more adaptive programming, with management as a function that enables and supports, rather than drives delivery.

Be ready to change according to participants' needs.

People in later life wanted to be more involved and develop ideas as well as identify needs. We responded by adapting their programme where possible and focusing energy on elements like for example the Inspire Awards (which were target for people in later life to explore and test their ideas).

Evaluate the different areas that engage people in later life.

Some participants were not clear how they could get involved, felt elements of the programme were only for engaging social entrepreneurs, and wanted more time and support. Future programmes can build on this feedback to provide greater clarity and better engage with people in later life.

Local knowledge is key to success.

Though the issue of rurality was a theme across all of the innovation briefs, there may have been London-based organisational bias in programme design. Equally, some of the social entrepreneurs outside the South West found it difficult to appreciate the changes needed to adapt and deliver in a rural area.

Participation

Open and flat approaches to participation work well.

Collaboration worked best when we used open and flat approaches to participation and decision making. Local delivery organisations brought in a range of voluntary sector organisations and people in later life, which created networking opportunities and space to build relationships across the region.

Local delivery organisations can bring people together.

In the second phase of the programme, our delivery organisations provided connected social entrepreneurs with people in later life. They also promoted the products and services developed through the programme, identified known gaps in provision and fostered relationships between commissioners and people in later life.

People in later life can take part in many ways.

People in later life helped social entrepreneurs assess applications, sit on panels, and prototype products and services. They also provided local intelligence about a geographic area or community. We now know to expect and build these opportunities into future work on the programme.

10 recommendations for future programmes

The Transform Ageing programme offered a new way of working and touched lives across the South West. Should you want to try something similar in different parts of the UK, here are 10 recommendations based on what we've learned.

01.

Involve people in later life throughout.

People-powered co-creation needs to be nurtured and iterated as an ongoing process.

02.

Take a place-based, whole-system approach.

Open up briefs to a wider audience (beyond social entrepreneurs), unlock more resources to tackle the challenge and invest in more local partnerships.

03.

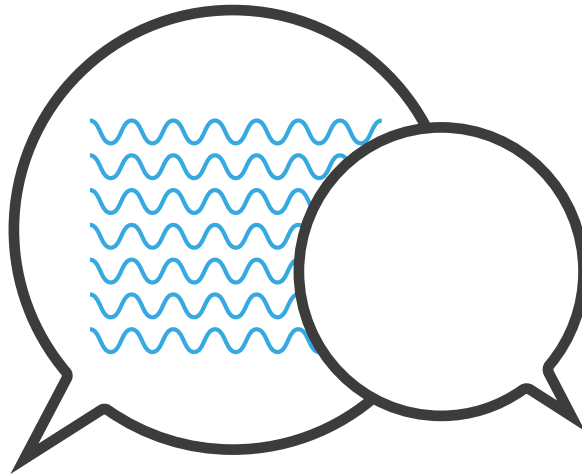
Harness the assets within local communities.

Use their strengths, knowledge and local insight by working with the VCSE sector.

04.

Support systemic design approaches.

Support stakeholders to develop an ecosystem of innovation and create connections and build relationships between them.



05.

Understand commissioners and connect social entrepreneurs into them.

Engage with them, step into their environment and learn what's needed to influence cultural change.

06.

But also, develop products and services for a consumer as well as commissioner market.

Social entrepreneurs need support to diversify their funding.

07.

Scale ideas without pressure to scale organisations.

More time for social entrepreneurs to scale ideas and demonstrate their impact.

08.

Consider rural counties test beds for innovation.

They are places for testing and spreading ideas away from London and big city bias.

09.

Focus more energy on the partnership.

Relationships here are essential and needs attention and resources to develop and sustain throughout any programme.

10.

Be flexible and adapt to change.

Governance should enable not constrain delivery, so that the programme can iterate and adapt.

Programme partners



Transform Ageing was funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, and was led by Design Council, alongside UnLtd (the Foundation for Social Entrepreneurs), the South West Academic Health Science Network (SW AHSN), and the Centre for Ageing Better.

The programme ran in Cornwall, Devon, Torbay, and Somerset from 2017–2020 and was supported locally by four delivery organisations: Community Council for Somerset, Devon Communities Together, Torbay Community Development Trust, and Volunteer Cornwall.

Join us to continue the journey of Transform Ageing.

#TransformAgeing
designcouncil.org.uk/transformageing

Sources

University of Northampton.
Transform Ageing Learning reports/papers.

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