TORFAEN 'FRIENDS FOR LIFE' BEFRIENDING PROJECT EVALUATION

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

Welsh Institute for Health and Social Care · University of South Wales [November 2014]

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INTRODUCTION

The Welsh Institute for Health and Social Care (WIHSC) based at the University of South Wales were commissioned to evaluate the Torfaen 'Friends for Life' befriending programme which was established in October 2011. The service is a collaboration between Age Concern Torfaen, Torfaen Mind, and Crossroads Care South East Wales. The service is aimed at reaching older people (50+) in the Torfaen area who are socially isolated. The befriending service takes place in community hubs which are located at different points throughout Torfaen. The service is designed to have a positive impact on the well-being and social interaction and confidence of beneficiaries. The researchers from WIHSC tailored the evaluation activity towards understanding how exactly the programme is able to achieve these outcomes. This report builds on the interim evaluation report which was presented in January 2014.

METHOD

A range of data was collected as part of the evaluation and was based around the 'results-based accountability' (RBA) framework. The three key RBA questions – how much are we doing, how well are we doing it, and is anyone better off, were used to formulate the evaluation strategy and provide a useful structure for the evaluation report. Data was captured using quantitative and qualitative methods:

1) Questionnaires were developed to monitor the outcomes that the project aimed to deliver. These were completed by hub members at baseline (October to November 2013) and at follow-up (July to October 2014) to provide data about change over time and the impact of the hubs on its members.

2) Community hub members were asked to record diary accounts of their experiences at the hubs. Nine members provided written accounts which covered several weeks of involvement in the project. These accounts were a rich source of insightful data into the thoughts and feelings of 'Friends for Life' project beneficiaries.

3) The WIHSC team undertook discussion groups and interviews with beneficiaries, staff, volunteers and stakeholders to understand from them the impact of the programme. The interviews and discussion groups took place across the time period of the project and many were conducted at the community hubs themselves or over the telephone when necessary.

4) Staff at the community hubs also provided the WIHSC team with written case studies of beneficiaries, which provided detailed information about individual clients and their progress over the course of their involvement with the project.

The questionnaire data was analysed to provide key demographic information about who was attending the hubs and also to assess what impact the hubs were having. Statistical

techniques were used to assess the extent of any change reported by beneficiaries. The qualitative data collected during visits to the hubs and from formal and informal interviews were analysed using NVIVO software which helps to thematically classify qualitative data.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

This section provides data on the 'Results-Based Accountability' (RBA) evaluation for the 'Friends for Life' befriending project and is based on the internal activity data and evaluation data (captured via questionnaires between October 2013 and October 2014). This section is structured around two of the key RBA questions: how much did we do, and is anyone better off?

1) How much did we do?

149 beneficiaries completed a baseline evaluation questionnaire. The baseline demographics of these beneficiaries are provided in Table 1 (a breakdown of demographic information by hub is provided in Appendix 1). A majority of beneficiaries who completed a questionnaire were from Croesyceiliog (19%), Oakfield (17%) and Ponthir (16%) hubs. 70% of the beneficiaries reported that they attend a hub once a week. Over half the respondents were aged 70-89, 56% were female and 22% were male. 19% reported being married or co-habiting, with 48% reporting being widowed. A majority of respondents (72%) were retired. A range of main disabilities were reported, with the most common being sensory impairment (n=15) arthritis (n=14), depression (n=10), and heart conditions (n=10).

Table 1. Baseline demographics of evaluation sample

		EVALUATION SAMPLE BENEFICIARIES (n=149)	
		n=	%
Hub	St Marys Croesyceiliog	28	19
	Court Farm and Oakfield	26	17
	New Inn	20	13
	Pontnewynydd	18	12
	Ponthir	24	16
	Victoria Village, Abersychan	14	9
	Broad Street, Abersychan	4	3
	Only Men Allowed	4	3
	Home befriending	11	7
	Total	149	100
How often do you attend the hub?	Once a week	96	70
	2-3 times a month	4	3
	Once a month	5	4
	No Response/Unknown	*33*	*23*
	Total	138	100

Category		Count	%
Age	50-59	9	6
	60-69	8	5
	70-79	40	27
	80-89	41	28
	90-94	11	7
	Over 95	5	3
	No Response/Unknown	*35*	*23*
	Total	149	100
Gender	Male	33	22
	Female	83	56
	No Response/Unknown	*33*	*22*
	Total	149	100
Ethnicity	Welsh	59	40
	British	14	9
	Other	43	29
	No Response/Unknown	*33*	*22*
	Total	149	100
Living arrangements	Living alone	80	54
	Living with partner/husband/wife	29	19
	Living with family/friend	5	3
	Other	0	0
	No Response/Unknown	*35*	*23*
	Total	149	100
Marital Status	Widowed	72	48
	Married	27	18
	Co-habiting	1	1
	Single	4	3
	Divorced	4	3
	Separated	3	2
	No Response/Unknown	*38*	*26*
	Total	149	100
Employment Status	Retired	108	72
	Not Retired	7	5
	No Response/Unknown	*34*	*23*
	Total	149	100
Religion	No religion/non-religious	1	1
	Other	0	0
	Christian	47	32
	No Response/Unknown	*101*	*68*
		149	100
Main Disability	Angina	2	1
	Anxiety	2	1
	Arthritis	14	9
	Blind	5	3
	Blood Pressure	6	4
	Cancer	2	1
	COPD	1	1
	Deaf	1	1
	Dementia/Alzheimers	2	1
	Depression	10	7
	Diabetes	7	5
	Hearing Impaired	4	3

	Heart condition	**10**	7
	Parkinsons	**1**	1
	Partial sight	**1**	1
	Stroke	**5**	3
	Vertigo	**2**	1
	Other	**1**	1
	No Response/Unknown	**14**	9
	Total	***59***	***40***
		149	100

2) Is anyone better off?

149 Hub members completed a baseline questionnaire and 65 members completed a follow-up questionnaire. As part of the baseline evaluation, hub members were asked to think back to how they felt *before* joining the hub and reported the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following outcome statements on a 7-point scale, with scores ranging from 7 (=strongly agree) to 1 (=strongly disagree):

- Before joining the hub I felt lonely
- Before joining the hub I wasn't feeling good about myself
- Before joining the hub I didn't feel involved in my local community
- Before joining the hub I didn't socialise with others
- Before joining the hub I wasn't confident in meeting new people
- Before joining the hub, aside from my family, I didn't have any meaningful relationships

In order to track any change over time, hub members were asked the same questions again during the follow-up part of the evaluation, but were asked to think back to how they felt during the last few days. Table 2 shows the number of members who had responded to each question at baseline and at follow-up and the average score in relation to each outcome statement. Average scores for each statement could range from 1 to 7, with higher scores (i.e. agreeing with the statement) corresponding to worse outcomes for members. Scores over 4 correspond to agreement and scores below 4 to disagreement with the statements. As shown in Table 2, average outcome scores decreased from baseline to follow-up for all questions – indicating an improvement over time – except for 'feeling good about myself' (2b), where average scores stayed the same. The biggest improvement over time was in 'feeling involved in my local community' (2c), where the average score decreased by 0.7 from 4.3 to 3.6.

Table 2. Average outcome score at baseline and follow-up with average change score[1]

Question	Numbers Responded to Q		Average Outcome Score		Average Change Baseline-Follow-up
	Baseline	Follow-up	Baseline	Follow-up	
a. In the past few days I felt lonely	148	61	4.2	3.7	0.5
b. In the past few days I wasn't feeling good about myself	147	60	3.6	3.6	0.0
c. In the past few days I didn't feel involved in my local community	147	64	4.3	3.6	0.7
d. In the past few days I didnt socialise with others	144	65	3.5	3	0.5
e. In the past few days I wasn't confident in meeting new peope	146	65	2.9	2.6	0.3
f. In the past few days aside from my family I didn't have any meaningful relationships	146	65	3.2	3	0.2

The responses of members who completed both a baseline and a follow-up questionnaire (n=64) were analysed separately to give a clearer picture of change over time in the same individuals. The proportion of members who agreed (either strongly agree, agree, or slightly agree) with the statements provided at baseline and follow-up is shown in Figure 1. The proportion of members who agreed with the statements decreased from baseline to follow-up, which represents an improvement in outcomes. Similar to the results shown in Table 2, there were improvements across all questions except for 'I wasn't feeling good about myself', where the proportion of members agreeing with the statement increased slightly from 36% at baseline to 39% follow-up.

The proportion of members who disagreed (either strongly disagree, disagree, or slightly disagree) with the outcome statements was also calculated and a similar picture emerged, whereby the number of those who disagree with the statements increased over time. As seen in Figure 2, the largest improvements from baseline to follow-up were in beneficiaries feeling engaged with their community (39% to 58%), socialising (55% to 70%), and having confidence with meeting new people (63% to 81%).
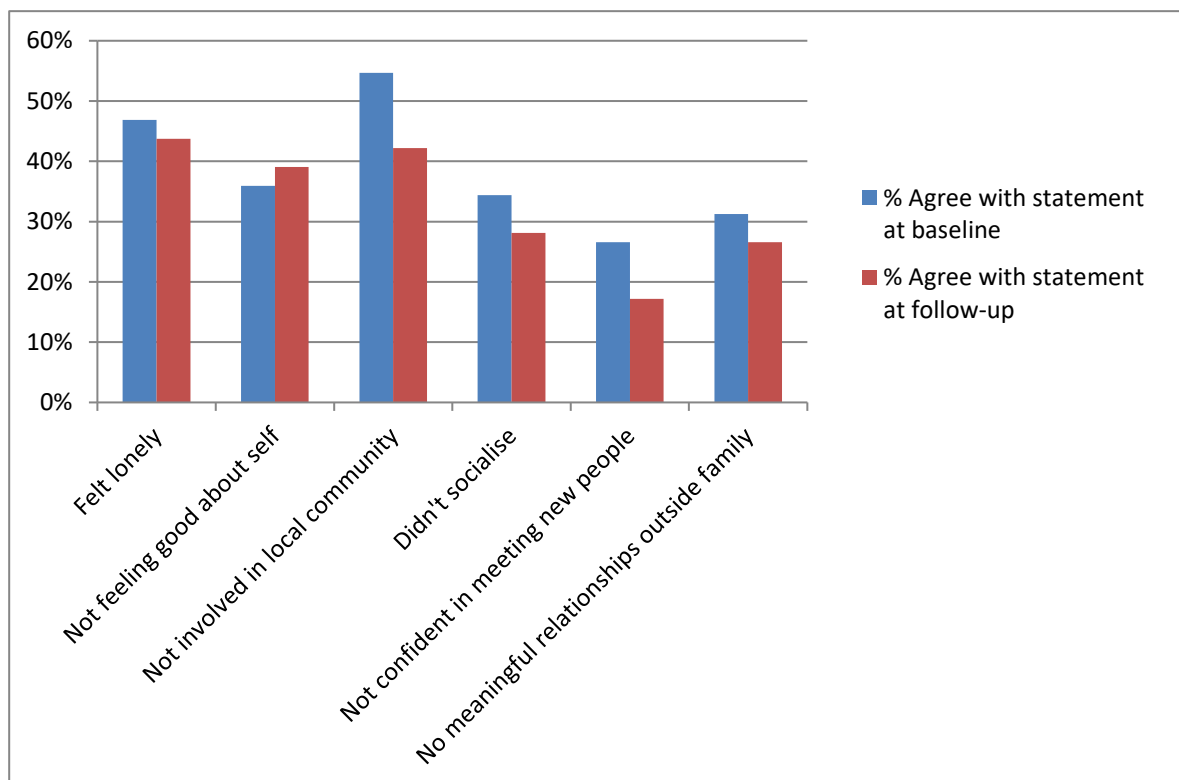
Statistical analysis

The data from members who completed both a baseline and a follow-up questionnaire were also analysed using the statistical software SPSS. A statistical test (the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test) was used to compare responses to the questions at the two time-points to determine if there was a significant change from baseline to follow-up. This statistical test is

[1] The data presented relates to all beneficiaries who completed an evaluation questionnaire. This data has also been analysed: 1) excluding the home befriending clients, and 2) by including only those members who provided valid answers to these questions at <u>both</u> baseline and follow-up. These analyses provide similar results to those in Table 2 and can be found in Appendix 2a and 2b.

based on the proportion of people who give more positive answers at follow-up compared to baseline (such as a score of 6 at baseline and a score of 2 at follow-up). Further information is provided in Appendix 4. As summarised in Table 3, there was a significant change from baseline to follow-up for the outcomes of feeling involved in the community and socialising with others. There was a significant decrease in agreement with the statement 'I didn't feel involved in my local community' from baseline (median score=5) to follow-up (median score =2), where 30 out of 63 members reported an improvement. There was also a significant decrease in agreement with the statement 'I didn't socialise with others' from baseline (median score =2) to follow-up (median score=2), where 28 out of 58 members reported an improvement. These significant results suggest that there was a real improvement in these outcomes, and we can assume that it was the befriending project that caused an improvement in these domains.

Figure 1. Proportion of members agreeing with outcome statements at baseline and follow-up

Figure 2. Proportion of members disagreeing with outcome statements at baseline and follow-up
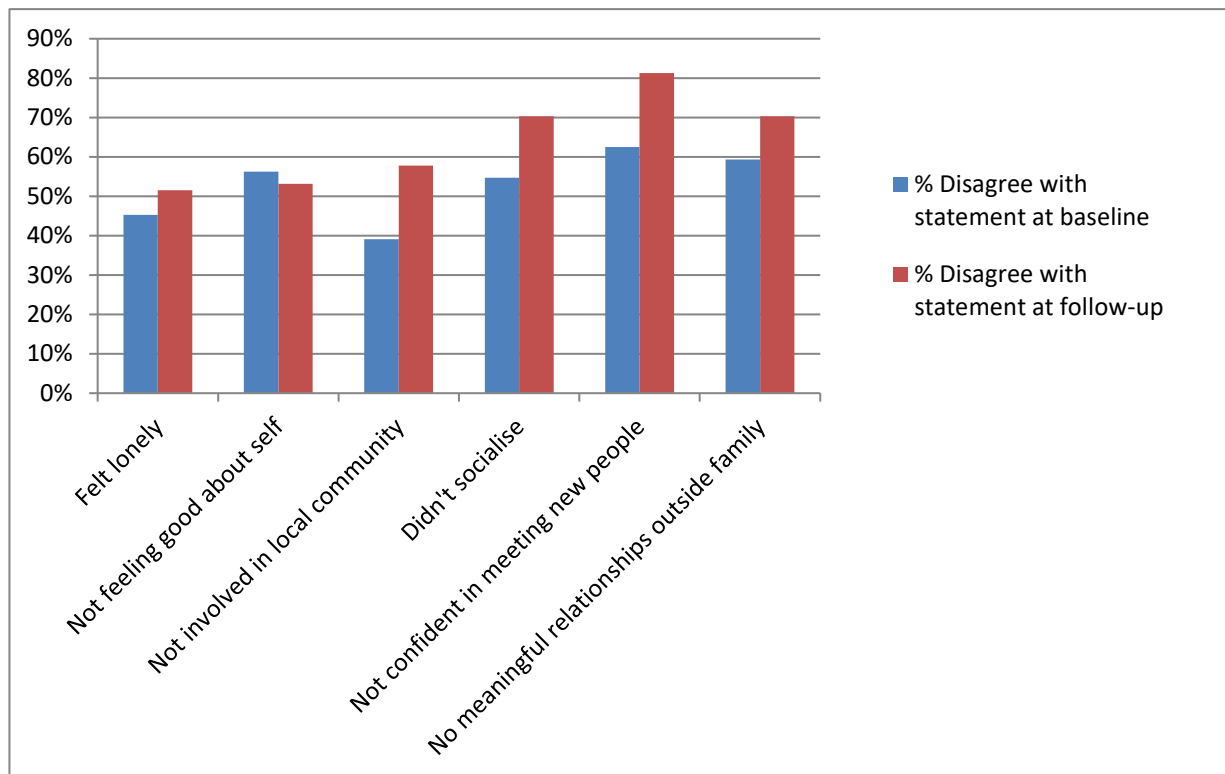
Table 3. Summary of statistical analysis (Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test)

	I felt lonely	I wasn't feeling good about myself	I didn't feel involved in my local community	I didn't socialise with others	I wasn't confident in meeting new people	Aside from my family, I didn't have any meaningful friendships
Median score at baseline	4.5	3.0	5.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Median score at follow-up	3.0	3.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Z	-1.129	-.471	-2.629	-2.052	-1.868	-.540
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.259	.637	.009*	.040*	.062	.589

*Statistical significance is assumed if the number in the final row is less than .05

It should be acknowledged that there could be factors other than members attendance at the hub to account for these findings, however it is encouraging that there were improvements across all of the outcome statements, with the exception of 'I wasn't feeling good about myself'. The average score (see Table 2) for this statement stayed the same from baseline to follow-up and the proportion of members who agreed with that statement increased slightly. It is difficult to explain this finding given the improvements in all the other domains such as loneliness, socialising, having meaningful relationships outside of the family and confidence in meeting new people.

This data should be considered in conjunction with the following section which reports on the qualitative data collected as part of the evaluation.

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

The section aims to provide and insight into the variety of impacts that the project has had on beneficiaries, volunteers, staff and stakeholders and highlights individuals experiences of being involved in the project. This section aims to answer the questions how well are we doing it, and is anyone better off?

COMMUNITY HUB BENEFICIARIES

The first section reports on findings relating to community hub members, including formal and informal discussions at the hubs, and diaries written by members. The views expressed below are from a range of members – some who were new to the community hubs, and some who had been attending for longer periods of time. Many of the members we spoke to had been attending since the very beginning. As such, we were able to gather a range of experiences from members. The majority of respondents reported attending their local hub each week. This fact alone demonstrated how beneficiaries felt about the project.

Why do members attend the hubs?

Researchers asked members to think back, and to describe why they decided to come along to the hub in the first place. In part, this was to enable the team to better understand the challenges faced by the ageing population and to make a more accurate assessment of the difference the project had made to the lives of its beneficiaries. A number of similar scenarios were reported by members, which are outlined below.

For some, the hub had been **recommended to them** by others – namely, by friends and family; '*My friend, she phoned and told me there would be a gathering in the Community Centre. I said, yeah, no problem. And, I have been coming ever since*' [Interview with hub member]. In some cases, the recommendation came from a concern for their well-being:

'I only came because my family recommended it...I was sitting at home all day on my own...so it was important for the social aspect'. [Conversation with hub member].

'I came along to encourage my mum to come. She has lost her confidence and needs a push to attend'. [Conversation with hub member]

The most commonly reported motivation for attended the hub was a feeling of **loneliness and isolation,** and in some cases this was closely associated with both feeling low, and low confidence; *'I was really lonely and down in the dumps...I don't see one person from one day to the next...I was on my own and I was suffering'.* [Conversation with hub member]. For some, this seemed to be heavily associated with specific times of the year, such as Winter:

'You have to keep yourself energised...it is very lonely in the house, especially during the winter. You get to a stage where you don't want to go out...it is easy to hide away'. [Conversation with hub member]

'Each Autumn I dread the thought of the dark winter days with the only change of four walls being on Sundays when my daughter takes me to her home for a delicious traditional roast'. [Member's diary extract]

Hub members described particular circumstances which increased their sense of isolation and loneliness. **Bereavement,** and loss of a partner or loved one was a common theme:

'I'm on my own unfortunately. I've got family locally and there's no problem there..but it doesn't get rid of the loneliness...the house is big and empty especially after 64 years you know....loneliness is a killer, and I often have a break down...but there is nothing I can do about it unfortunately'. [Interview with hub member]

'I've been a widower for 15 years...I was down to about 6 stone in weight, pretty down you know. Then I said, you just need to get a grip of yourself. I enjoy these two days. There is only so much housework you can do!' [Interview with hub member]

'Before joining the Hub I had two bereavements... and I wouldn't go out.' [Conversation with hub member]

Another common theme was **poor health** and for many, being less mobile stopped them from going out thereby increasing their feeling of isolation; *'I am 90 years old and in rather poor health but being able to bring my portable oxygen cylinder enables me to attend the Hub... for years the only changes of scene available to me have been with family and friends'*

[Member's diary extract]. As shown later in this report, the hubs have facilitated the involvement and engagement of many older people who have specific conditions or disabilities – for example, through the provision of transport. In some hubs, the team spoke to members who attended as couples, whereby one individual was a long term carer for the other. For them, attendance at the hub was a rare opportunity to socialise as a couple. In addition, it provided full time carers a period of respite.

In some cases support networks for individuals (e.g. family, friends and neighbours) were lacking; *'My family are all scattered around the place...they have all flown the nest. I only have my four walls to speak to. It is a big thing having someone to talk to when you live alone'* [Conversation with hub member]. It was certainly evident from conversations, that not many members felt able to rely on neighbours for support either, which inevitably increased feelings of isolation; *'I live on my own and it is company to come here...I don't see many people and I don't have good neighbours, as people around me are busy working'* [Interview with hub member]. Some members suggested that levels of neighbourly support had declined over the years. And, although many members did have family living close by, this did not always prevent them from feeling lonely.

The hubs were described as a rather unique opportunity for bringing people together in the local community; *'There is not this type of thing going on...nothing. That is why we have tried to support it'* [Interview with hub member]. Many members specifically joined the hub to meet new people from their local areas – something which they felt was not always easy to do, especially in later years of life. For them, the hubs provided a helpful forum for meeting others; *'In all walks of life we must meet strangers half way and make the first approach if necessary'* [Member's diary extract].

Although the findings above suggest that for many the hubs were an opportunity to reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness, some members attended out of a motivation to keep active and to have a busy social schedule throughout the week. So for these members, to some extent, the Hubs were a way to **prevent** feelings of isolation; *'I'm busier in the week than I am on the weekend, and I don't see anyone much over the weekend, so coming here on a Monday is good'* [Interview with hub member]. There was also a sense that members get involved to **support others** who are a similar age, but who might be affected by more difficult circumstances; *'I am not lonely...but there is not much going on...I brought friends to join the group, I am known as the recruiter'* [Conversation with hub member]. Such members often took on more active roles in the hubs – recruiting new members and supporting the work of volunteers; *'Everyone should join. We tell people about it and encourage them to come along but some people assume it's for the "very" oldies.'* [Conversation with hub member].

What do members think about the hubs?

Members described the routine of their hubs and the activities that take place. The range of activities were vast, from things that occupy the mind (such as chat, debates, speakers and memory tests) to exercises, beauty classes and relaxation methods. Hub members were overwhelmingly positive about their involvement in the project; *'When I leave on a Thursday afternoon, I can't wait until next week'* [Conversation with hub member]. First and foremost, members enjoyed being with and connecting with others; *'It's bringing people together, that is what I find!'* [Interview with hub member]

Despite the range of activities on offer, the opportunity to chat over a coffee and lunch emerged as the core focus of the hubs. Members highlighted the **importance of talking** and conversing with others:

> *'I find the Men's Group good – we're people who have the same sort of background and we might talk about the mines, or working on the buses, and it's still interesting to talk about things like this.* [Interview with Hub member] *The good thing about coming here is to speak to people that I know, to talk to the girls and the boys. It's surprising the things that come up, and we'll talk about old times you know, and it's a funny thing that you can remember things that went on 50 or 60 years ago, but I struggle to remember the things in daily life. It's nice to be in a situation with others who are like me, and we can talk about those times together.'* [Interview with hub member]

> *'I am always surprised at how we manage to chatter and eat and the same time!'* [Member's diary extract]

> *'It is always cheery. People chat to you. It makes you see you aren't the only one with problems.'* [Conversation with hub member]

Members enjoyed both **meeting new people**, but also **re-connecting with people** from their past and from their local area; *'Last week I discovered one of the regular ladies had lived as a child only a mile away from my home. She'd gone to my church, knew all the village shops – had the services of the village doctor. She was thrilled – me too! Spent a long time talking of things past. One up to the friendship club!'* [Member's diary extract]. The quotes listed below demonstrate this theme further:

> *'It's nice to meet some different people – it's surprising who you'll meet and who you'll talk to even if you haven't met them before. We'll have a chat and get to know others – it surprising, because you wouldn't meet them in any other way.'* [Interview with hub member]

'We enjoy the company of people our own age and learning and sharing with the other people that attend' [New Inn, Informal Discussions]

'I like meeting new people...I didn't before.' [Conversation with hub member]

Members were extremely complimentary about the work of **staff and volunteers**; *'All the helpers are the most patient, and nothing is too much trouble. One can almost think they understand the difficulties experienced by we 'wrinklies'!'* [Member's diary extract]. Members reported a welcoming and relaxed **atmosphere** within the hubs, which they attributed to the efforts of the staff and volunteers; *'A lovely sunny day. I arrive at the club and everyone is in a jolly mood. The staff all came out to greet us - make sure we are all OK. Lots of talk, laughter and catching up on the time between meetings. Some of us – me included – look forward to meeting up'* [Member's diary extract].

This emerged as particularly important to the success of the hubs – encouraging the groups to grow in numbers and helping the more vulnerable feel at ease; *'The staff are very charming, very helpful and very nice – nice in a nice way, you know? They welcome you and you really do feel welcome. They do a good job at amalgamating people into the group, especially the new people who have come'* [Interview with hub member].

Members praised the **lunches** provided during their visits to the Hub, primarily because they offered variation to their normal routines at homes:

'You have a laugh and a talk, and you have a nice meal cooked for you. I have Meals on Wheels cooked for me every day, which are very good, but it's the same thing every week. It's lovely to come here and have something else...If you don't like it, they are very good, they let you tell them' [Interview with hub member]

'Lunch was lovely – well cooked, very tasty and very nicely served' [Member's diary extract]

'My favourite thing is my meal! There is no washing up to do!' [Conversation with hub member]

As well as weekly hub sessions, Members described **events** which they had been fortunate to attend as part of the project. Some of the diary extracts provide very detailed and positive accounts of such occasions:

'The Christmas party. What a joy! All those involved in the planning and work involved are to be congratulated and thanked for making a memorable day

for us. The beautifully laid tables, so attractive and welcoming, music, and seasonal hats, rather scarce but adding to the scene, photographs taken. All added to the jollity as we enjoyed our customary warming tea or coffee. As most of us are hard of hearing this is rather noisy interlude as we shout our greetings' [Member's diary extract]

'The round tables were set with lovely delicate floral china and tiered cake stands containing various sandwiches and the most gorgeous fattening cakes. Scones with clotted cream and strawberry jam also appeared together with pots of tea and coffee. At the same time a group of girls who I gathered were from a local welsh school trouped in. They sang beautifully, mostly in Welsh, and a trio of seniors sang to the accompaniment of a harp and this following more singing, and a trio playing on flutes... I considered myself most fortunate to have spent such a lovely afternoon' [Member's diary extract]

Although not for all members, some described the community hubs as a rare opportunity during their week to get out and about; '*I can now enjoy each Thursday. It is a rare treat'* [Member's diary extract]. The meeting gave them something to look forward to each week; '*[I am] fed, watered and very happy, looking forward to our next meeting. It's something different every week and so much to look forward to'* [Member's diary extract].

What suggestions did members make?

Members were asked how the hubs could be improved in the future. There were very few suggestions put forward, indicating the high levels of satisfaction with the project. The suggestions that were made included:
- More effort to be made in encouraging individuals to stay *after* lunch for the activities
- Increase the variety of food and activities offered; '*Used to have exercise group – she doesn't come anymore. More exercise! More activities!* [Conversation with hub member]

Many of the free-text comments from the follow-up questionnaire indicated that hub members were happy with the way the hubs were currently being run and were hopeful that they would continue; '*Enjoy trips, enjoy hub. Hope it keeps going!'* [Comment from hub member]. Several members of different hubs were concerned about the long-term success of the hub being dependant on funding and reported taking an active role in running the group:

'Hope to keep it going. Formed a committee – decided to pay £1 a week hopefully to keep it going.' [Comment from hub member]

> *'Important funding is confirmed so we know where we are going – have to be able to plan'.* [Comment from hub member]

> *'All up in the air regarding funding, hope it continues'* [Comment from hub member]

What impact do the hubs have?

So far, this section has outlined why people get involved in the project, and what members enjoy about the hubs. Researchers also asked members what difference they think their involvement in the hub had made to them and their lives. There were many comments from members about the generic impact the hub has on them, with reports that the hubs *'make them feel better'* and that after attending they *'feel a lot of difference'*. The quotes below provide an example of the types of responses provided by members:

> *'I think it's really important because it's getting us out, meeting different people and talking about things, and helping people to understand each other. When I come along I feel so much better – I stay in for so long and I think "I need to get out" and this is just here* [Interview with Hub member]
> *It always involves extra effort to be ready and waiting for my lift, but I never return home wondering if it has been worth it....Then back went a crowd of happy people to their dull work-a-day lives. What a difference the Hub has made to mine....On reflection I know what a difference the Hub has made to my life. How quickly the dark, wet weeks seem to have passed, the shortest day almost unnoticed. Then, not one, but two Christmas parties to dwell on'*
> [Member's diary extract]

> *'There is a difference in me from 12 month ago when I wasn't coming but it's hard to put your finger on what it is'* [Interview with hub member]

> *'I always enjoy going and I do feel a lot of difference when I return home'*
> [Member's diary extract]

> *'Since joining I have definitely become more outgoing. Having transport makes a difference – marvellous and makes a difference to my life.'*
> [Conversation with hub member]

> *'Coming to the hub has really opened up life again for me. It's given me hope to get on with life and get on with people – it's all good as far as I'm concerned.'* [interview with hub member]

Some members explicitly argued that the hubs helped **reduce their feelings of loneliness** to some extent; '[I] *felt very lonely, no family around, husband passed away and no children. I love it here. I keep coming back. These days if you have a good neighbour you are lucky. Everyone here is very nice and they pick me up each week. You get to hear things. It has made a big difference, [I] feel less lonely'* [Conversation with hub member]. However, there were many other impacts which members described, which implicitly suggest that the hubs can reduce loneliness.

First, and as suggested above, the hubs provide an opportunity for members to **develop connections** through the social interaction with others, that they might not have developed otherwise; '*It's nice to meet some different people – it's surprising who you'll meet and who you'll talk to even if you haven't met them before. We'll have a chat and get to know others – it surprising, because you wouldn't meet them in any other way'* [Interview with hub member]. Members described building **new friendships**; '*I get friendship from this group and some information about things that are going on. I've met new people – there's a lot of people that I didn't know before. I've got friends now that I wouldn't have made if it hadn't been for the group'* [Interview with hub member].

As a result of such interaction, members also described what could be understood as enhanced **support networks** – especially during times of ill health:

> '*Most of us have got our numbers, if someone isn't well I would call round the house. You got people in here in their 90s. So if I know they aren't well I'll ring and turn up to make sure they are all right. We were used to this years ago – good neighbours. You looked out for each other. That got lost along the way somewhere. People don't have time for it'* [Interview with hub member]

> '*People have got to know me up here now. They didn't know me when I first came. I had to go to the hospital one Monday and I couldn't come, then I went away for a fortnight. When I came back, one lady even called to see if I was alright. See, that's the difference it makes. I have made friends. I can laugh with the girls as well as the ladies. That's all that matters to me'* [Interview with hub member]

> '*I have got to know people in the village...we give each other lifts and it has improved neighbourliness'* [Conversation with hub member]

Closely related to 'support networks', members described using the hubs as a way of getting **information** about, and connecting them to, local services. Staff, guest speakers, and other hub members exchanged information and signposted each other to useful and relevant services:

> *'I got friendship from this group and some information about things that are going on'* [Interview with hub member]

> *'This morning I received a phone call from the gentleman from the fire service who spoke to us at the beginning of November about protection from fire. Twenty minutes later he arrived and installed two new alarms which would be effective for 10 years (at 90+ I should be so lucky). He also installed an alarm designed for the deaf, which lives under ones pillow – a new and rather wonderful idea. On mentioning this at the meeting one other member said she also had alarms installed by the same gentleman'* [Member's diary extract]

> *'If you need anything, [staff member] will answer and put you in touch with the right people. For example, the nail cutting service'* [Conversation with hub member]

> *'It is a great place to exchange information with one another. Things like who is doing your gardening, odd jobs etc. what you thought of them or how much they charge'* [Conversation with hub member]

Second, the Hubs appeared to promote more **active lifestyles**. Not only did the Hub provide an opportunity to get out of the house; *'I don't go out I am housebound. This is the only day out of the week'* [conversation with hub member], but, the specific activities which took place in the hub enabled members to keep their bodies active and stimulate their minds in different ways:

> *'We all have a go at the exercise – it's a laugh you know, because we're not athletic by any manner of means but we give it a go. I feel better afterwards too, and it takes me over to the next day'* [Interview with hub member]

> *'We might have a game of bingo, or something like that. You might have a game of cards and occupy your mind, and that's good to do'* [Interview with hub member]

In addition, the weekly occurrence of the Hub provides an ongoing **motivation** for some to keep active socially:

> *'Coming to the hub has really opened up life again for me. It's given me hope to get on with life and get on with people – it's all good as far as I'm concerned'* [Interview with hub member]

'You just can't be bothered. [But] when you are in something like this there is a driving force. We say to people 'are you coming next week?' and we book our meal. So we do that in advance...We can all slide in to a bit of a rut, especially with Winter coming up. It's that added incentive to do something' [Interview with hub member]

'Coming to the Hub has definitely given me an incentive to get out of my flat. It is really good to meet different people...I have learnt again to travel and mix with people' [Conversation with hub member]

As mentioned in the introductory sections, for many members, the feeling of isolation and loneliness was often closely associated with **confidence** and their general **mental well-being**. In some cases, members felt that the Hub helped them in this respect:

'I was very depressed before coming here, I suffered a lot with my nerves. Coming here has helped' [Conversation with hub member]

'Before, I felt awful. I wasn't confident before I came here but I am now' [Conversation with hub member]

'I think it does do something for my mood, you know, it perks you up a bit when you're feeling down' [Interview with hub member]

Whereas some members were previously dependent upon volunteers and staff to arrange their transport to the Hubs, many members were now confident to travel to the Hub independently. This is demonstrated in the case study of Mrs S below[2].

Lastly, as the Hubs have established over time, the longer term members appear to have developed a sense of **ownership and belonging** within the Hub, often referring to the hub as their own. This is demonstrated in the quotes below:

'We seem a regular and settled group now and we all get along fine and seem genuinely pleased to see one another each week' [Member's diary extract]

'They ask us what we want to do and they listen to our suggestions' [Conversation with hub member]

'One very nice touch: I had a birthday card and the group sung happy birthday. It makes you feel as if you 'belong'' [Member's diary extract]

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[2] Case studies were supplied to the WIHSC team by staff from the Friends for Life project

Many beneficiaries had taken on administrative responsibilities within the hubs which adds to their sense of ownership and belonging. As shown in the second case study, 'Mrs M' was supported to take an active role in the running of the Hub and felt integrated within the community.

Case study: Mrs 'S'

Background:

Mrs S lives alone in a complex. Mrs S does not have much interaction with others in the complex, stating not a lot goes on there. Mrs S has trouble with her walking, but is able to get about using a walker or walking stick. Mrs S has relied on her son to do her shopping for her and control her finances, only going out to church on the weekends. Mrs S has also been unable to read and write for seventy years.

Impact:

After visiting Mrs S in the home, she was very keen to start socialising within the community and attended the hub at Croesyceiliog the very next day. Mrs S was transported by a befriending support worker for her initial visit. Mrs S thoroughly enjoyed herself and soon become a regular attendee. Mrs S was able to continue accessing the hub via the Community Transport bus that had been set up to collect ten clients each week. It was clear for all to see, that with each week Mrs S was growing more and more in confidence. Mrs S was now engaging with everyone at the hub as well as participating in discussions with guest speakers, never afraid to ask a question or have her voice heard. Mrs S also became keen to show off her latest fashions and jumped on any opportunity to wear fancy dress, such as the Christmas Party. Mrs S has attended nearly every trip that has been organised as well as a string of other activities such as the quiz night, summer party and afternoon tea events. Mrs S has also become a regular at the Widdershins centre, making the most of their extend exercises classes and their health suite, having both her hair and nails done regularly. Mrs S accessed all this via public transport, now having the confidence to do so. Through being more active, Mrs S' health has benefited through losing weight and now takes a keen interest in eating more healthily.

Keen to make even further progress, Mrs S asked for support in learning how to read and write. Mrs S was supported in attending reading and writing classes at a location near her, which she still continues to attend. Mrs S was encouraged to bring her books and homework in to the hub and designated a volunteer to help her each week with her reading. Mrs S is now able to write her name and address, sign cards and much more. On top of this, through the hub Mrs S has found a male companion. Mrs S and the gentleman now make their own way to the hub using public transport and go on many outings together. Mrs S has also moved to a different flat in the complex which is more suited to her mobility needs, again supported by staff to bid on the property. On top of this, Mrs S has now begun to take control of her own finances. Mrs S is now fully independent and socially active, going out at least five times a week.

Case study: Mrs M

Background:

Mrs M is a lady in her early sixties. She has no health concerns, has good mobility and describes herself as an active person who likes to keep busy. In 2011 her husband passed away and she found herself becoming socially isolated. Mrs M has a sister, children and grandchildren who live locally and she sees them often. However she had experienced increasing loneliness and had begun to feel cut off from her local community. In March 2012 she learnt about the Friends for Life project and decided to attend along with her sister.

Impact:

During her initial assessment Mrs M said that along with wanting to increase her social interaction she felt that she had also lost some of her self-esteem and confidence and would like to work on these issues. The community hub was able to provide an environment where Mrs M could meet new people and try new activities. Over her first year at the hub Mrs M took part in activities and trips/events that were held inside and outside of the hub. This increased her social interaction further and her self-esteem and confidence also increased as she tried new activities/experiences. It was observed that Mrs M was now starting to initiate conversations with new members and she appeared more confident in herself. During her annual review in 2013 Mrs M felt that she had achieved her main goals of increasing her social interaction/reducing her feelings of low self-esteem and confidence. Mrs M then enquired about taking a more active role in the community hub so she was given the opportunity to help run the food co-operative along with another hub member. This is now successfully run by the ladies. In 2014 Mrs M has increased her involvement in the hub even further by joining the hub committee as treasurer. She has taken responsibility for collecting weekly membership monies and recording attendance. Mrs M banks the money along with proceeds from the raffle. Initially Mrs M was supported in this role until she felt confident to do this independently. Mrs M has also organised a holiday for hub members and is currently in the process of arranging a trip to a musical event. The opportunities that the community hub was able to offer Mrs M have enabled her to be fully integrated in the local community. She reports that she no longer has a sense of loneliness and isolation. Her general wellbeing has improved and she says she feels brighter and happier in herself.

It is important to note that some of the members did not report huge impacts, which would suggest that some really benefit from the Hubs more than others; *'It's made a good difference, but not a huge difference. Our routine is reasonably the same throughout the week, this is just one part of that routine. We have each other, but if we didn't this place would be a God send and would make a real difference'* [Conversation with hub member]. As demonstrated earlier in this report, for some, the motivation to get involved in the hubs was more about finding ways to *prevent* feelings of isolation and loneliness, or supporting others.

HOME BEFRIENDING BENEFICIARIES

Three telephone interviews were conducted with home beneficiaries towards the end of 2013. In two cases, the beneficiaries were in the relatively early stages of their support programme, therefore an assessment of impact is difficult to ascertain. That said, the feedback generated from home befriending beneficiaries is extremely powerful – demonstrating that it is those in the most isolating circumstances who can potentially benefit the most. The quotes listed below help illustrate this:

> *'They actually saved my life...I didn't know why I was on this earth...I just wanted to end it all...I now know what a caged animal must feel like....truthfully now, I feel a lot better. [It] made me realise I have a life...I have a different perspective on life. They saved my life...I would never be able to thank them enough.'*

> *'It is someone to talk to...get depressed on your own if not...all I have is the television.'*

> *'I am having my hip done in January...at least I know I'll know someone will visit me after that.'*

> *'They take me to the Hub...I get to meet people like me [which is] absolutely fantastic...they accepted you for who you were when you walked in. It's like you have a group of friends.'*

> *'This project made me feel less of a burden...100%....they make me feel useful.'*

> *'I feel it is something we can both benefit from... teach each other things. '*

SUMMARY

This section provides an insight in to the experiences of those involved in the 'Friends for Life' project, and the kinds of impact that the project has had on them. Feedback from beneficiaries suggests that there are high levels of satisfaction with the project. The intended outcomes of the project are:

- To reduce loneliness and increase wellbeing through improving social interaction
- To increase confidence and the ability to meet the challenges and opportunities of ageing

 The qualitative data therefore provides evidence that the benefits described by individuals are relevant to both of the project outcomes. The conversations with hub members have also highlighted the individual needs and experiences of each individual. Some stated that membership at the hub should be increased; they enjoyed the busy atmosphere and would like more activities after lunch such as the exercise classes. Whereas others reported that they just came for some company and lunch and were not as interested in the organised trips. Regardless of how members benefited from attending the hubs, comments from the follow-up questionnaire demonstrate that members were hopeful for the hubs to continue and were willing to contribute to their long-term success.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Five support workers from Oakfield, Pontnewynydd, Croesyceiliog, Victoria Village, Ponthir and New Inn hubs took part in a semi-structured telephone interview. Data was also gathered from one focus group (using graphic facilitation) and informal interviews with 11 volunteers.

The role of the volunteer

The role of the volunteer is to 'befriend' and facilitate: '*If we left it up to them, they might find it difficult...I am in the mix'* [Interview with volunteer]. One volunteer reported that the larger groups in particular benefit from this type of support, to encourage interaction and the development of friendships – but it was also suggested that perhaps this support was not always provided frequently enough in the hubs, resulting in some individuals missing out. Volunteers saw their role as important in bridging the gap between members and staff by greeting new members and creating a safe and enjoyable environment. One volunteer suggested that there was a benefit of being an 'amateur' – volunteers are not professionals, which is viewed as a positive thing: '*you do something because you love to do it, not because you are paid to'* [Interview with volunteer]. The volunteers who provided their feedback were satisfied with the level of support they receive from staff and felt part of the project team. The volunteers were also highly praised by all the staff who were interviewed and were seen as being vital to the success of the Hubs. The case study of the Ponthir I.T. club, demonstrates how the volunteers' knowledge and skills were valued and utilised.

Positive aspects of the project: impact on members

The most positive impacts of the hubs upon its members were from the social contact provided by the hub and the forming of new friendships. This often led to members becoming friends outside of the hub meetings and the support workers were confident that these friendships would continue after the project:

> *'A lot of these people contact each other by phone and get together more outside the group and they have a life outside the group'* [interview with support worker]

> *'I think that their friendships have developed such that they might sustain themselves. When the women found out that the men were planning to go away they decided that they wanted to go away too so that they weren't missing out!'* [interview with support worker]

> *'They're a really good group at keeping people in contact with each other, and the hub has acted as a massive catalyst in helping people to make friendships – a couple of them knew one another before coming, and lots of people have come because of friends, but also lots of them have made new friendships when they've been there.'* [interview with support worker]

This is linked to another positive impact of the hubs reported by the support workers in terms of providing social contact for often isolated, lonely people. Interacting with these elderly individuals can lead to noticeable improvements in their mood and well-being:

> *'For a small number of people this is the only time in the week that they have to go out. The majority of people get out every day, but not necessarily with their friends, which lifts their spirits and improves their mood.'* [interview with support worker]

One example provided by a member of staff demonstrates the life-changing effects of providing elderly people with opportunities to engage in activities with their peers in their community:

> *'One of the ladies that came to us hadn't stepped outside the house for five years before coming along to the hub and this is just so powerful – she comes every week without fail, and she come to quiz nights and got on a bus for the first time in 30 years, and this has changed her life. This is probably the most isolated person that we had, but people are able to make big changes...they've been able to realise there's a world for them outside their four walls.'* [interview with support worker]

The volunteers were also asked about the impact of the hubs on its members, and as shown in Figure 3, they reported a variety of benefits including increased confidence, reduced loneliness, gaining skills, improvements in health, and feeling valued.

Case study: Ponthir I.T. club

- Volunteers were asked about their experiences of volunteering at the IT club
- Members were given individualised tuition to help them to achieve competency in I.T. in relation to their abilities and their requirements
- Members became proficient in using their technology and software to communicate online with family and friends, for internet shopping, and to access information about hobbies and interests
- The I.T. club was also a further social group for some of its members

I.T. club volunteers:

'The role of the computer club is to help people with their particular computer type of problem, that could be on their laptop, on their tablets or on their fancy mobile phones and they used to bring them along – although we had spare machines in the room – they used to usually bring their own along and we would help them on an individual one to one basis with something that they were stuck on rather than doing up front class tuition. It was absolutely essential that it was bespoke to what the person wanted because you are dealing with people that have different bits of equipment so you can't easily teach from the front anyway and you're dealing with people that have specific needs about what they want to do. One may want to learn email where others know how to do email but doesn't know how to move their photographs around. One may want to do some online shopping – lots of different things that they may need so they would get that individual one to one tuition for that one hour session'

'We have worked with them to help them communicate via the internet using Skype, emails and sending photos to family members and FaceBook. Some members have family members and friends living in other parts of the world – so it is keeping in touch with them. Connecting with others.'

'Older people – their short term memory is not as good. They have to make notes. They need to be told how to do something over and over again. "Practice makes masters". That is why this club is useful. Older people can't learn as quickly.'

'The members are very competent. They feel more competent. They can switch their machines on, they know what to look for, they have even tried buying and purchasing things online.'

'It's also about friendship. Having others to talk to and feeling part of a group. They talk about everything, about life. It's a club. A friendship group. A general discussion group.'

I.T. club member:

'I have had a PC for six years, but I wasn't using it. Saw the ad for this club and thought I would come along. First thing I wanted to achieve was to get information about railways. I am part of several railway associations and I was finding that people wanted to email me. They email updates and newsletters. Now I want general knowledge. I am getting better. I have learnt how to upload photos and send the occasional one by email.'

Figure 3. Graphic representation of volunteer focus group: What is the impact on others?
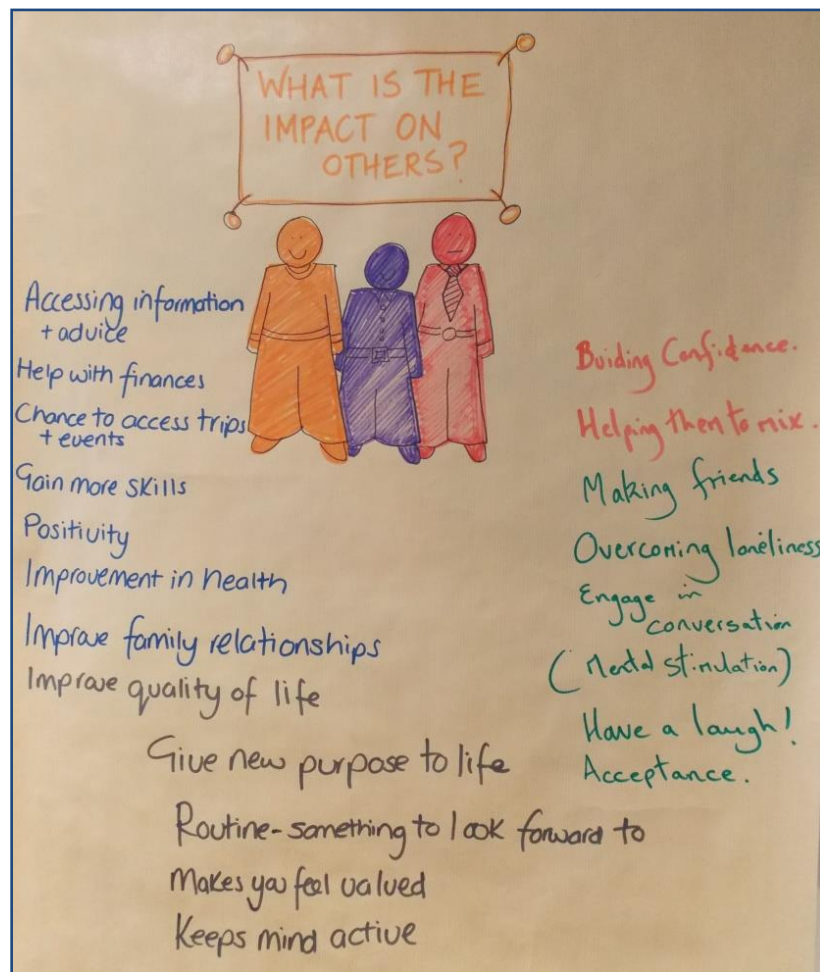
Positive aspects of the project: constitution of the hubs

All the support workers who were interviewed were positive about the impact of the hubs on its members and believed that they were successful. Reasons for this include the increasing number of members and the increased engagement of members. As a result, all hubs had now become constitute and the support workers were optimistic about the future of the groups:

> *'In Pontnewynydd people see this more as a lunch club and it's been hard to engage people in activities. This has changed now and they are keen to constitute the group and continue it on after the project. They're like a community now and they've come a long way, and they've come a long way together and they'll maintain this.'* [interview with support worker]

> *'The group is now formally constituted and they pay a weekly membership fee and they've active in keeping things going. They've got a really good chance of*

sustaining this and there's enough of the members I think who are actively involved to keep things going.' [interview with support worker]

'The group is now in a position to be able to run on its own and the members are setting up bank accounts and other things so that they ready to run the group themselves, and if you'd asked to do that for them in the beginning they'd never had said they'd do that.' [interview with support worker]

One hub was more difficult to constitute and required more support and encouragement from staff members and volunteers, especially for older group members:

'In terms of the constitution, we've tried to bring volunteers in to help move the group towards being self sustaining and constituted. The older people are less willing to take on the responsibility of running the group and in February no-one wanted to take it on, although we've managed to convince them over time, although we were the first to discuss being constituted and the last to formally accept the constitution.' [interview with support worker]

In contrast, the younger age of members of a different hub had contributed to its success in becoming constituted:

They're quite an active and a young group, and that probably makes a difference with wanting to be engaged with activities and things like the constitution – because they're a bit more physically able than some of the other hubs. [interview with support worker]

One support worker stated that the long-term maintenance of the group would be dependent upon having some support from a member of staff:

'I'm really hopeful that the groups will still be running in a year or two as there'll be a support worker sort of in touch with them. If there was no support at all I'd be a bit less certain.' [interview with support worker]

Volunteers were encouraging about the future of the groups and reported that they would continue their role. One volunteer reported that *'we are looking forward to doing things our own way'* [interview with volunteer]. Another volunteer said that she would continue to organise trips independently, which had been successful and popular with the group:

'To be honest I don't think that it will make a lot difference to the day trips and excursions we organise if Age Connects isn't running the lunch club because we do them independently anyway. So in the future I'll just be carrying on and doing exactly what I do now.' [interview with volunteer]

Impact on staff and volunteers

As well as having a positive impact on its members, the hubs also had a positive impact on staff and volunteers. The support workers highlighted many benefits of working in the Hubs, including finding the work meaningful and rewarding, feelings of increased confidence, and the enjoyment gained from meeting new people and helping those in need:

> *'Running groups you've got to have the confidence to speak to people and there's been improvement for me, and got skills in developing digital stories and run workshops all of which was new to me. I was reluctant to speak in public before and this has really brought me on. The older people have been very understanding of me and it's nice to build up my confidence with them alongside me.'* [interview with support worker]

> *'I'm going to come away with a big smile on my face because it's been a tremendous success. I enjoy meeting people and helping to make connections especially for those who were a in a poor situation and helping them to feel better gives me a tremendous sense of satisfaction.'* [interview with support worker]

The volunteers also highlighted the impact of volunteering in the focus group. As seen in Figure 4, the volunteers noted that working on the project was rewarding, helped to build confidence, and was a way to engage with their community and connect with others.

Challenges

The most commonly reported challenge to ensuring the success of the hubs was transport problems. Staff reported that many members were often reliant upon them for booking taxis and community transport to the hubs:

> *'The transport has been a difficulty on occasion and the older people have relied quite heavily on us in relation to making contact with taxi firms and others.'* [interview with support worker]

> *'the community transport can sometimes be quite hard to book, and if they didn't have it they may not come.'* [interview with support worker]

> *'Transport has been an issue so if I could have waved a magic wand I would have loved to have had a minibus to help out with this.'* [interview with support worker]

Staff also expressed uncertainty about whether the 'Friends for Life' programme was successful in engaging the most vulnerable and isolated people in the community and one volunteer also raised the question as to whether the most isolated beneficiaries were accessing the Hubs. Although these people may be difficult to reach, they felt that more could be done to contact and engage with those most in need:

> *'It would have been good to have developed some of these groups in sheltered accommodation or residential care.'* [interview with support worker]

> *'Perhaps we could have targeted more isolated people but if they're not known to other professionals, it's really hard to know where they are and who they are.'* [interview with support worker]

Summary

The staff and volunteers who contributed to this evaluation were all in agreement that the project was beneficial for its members and could all report examples where there had been a real impact in terms of reducing isolation and encouraging social contact amongst the elderly community. However, there was some concern that perhaps the most vulnerable and isolated individuals were not being identified. Many of the groups had become constitute, with members and volunteers taking responsibility for running the hubs and also arranging trips and activities outside of the weekly hub visits. A majority of the staff and volunteers were confident that with the continued enthusiasm and support of the members, volunteers and support workers, the hubs could be successful in the long-term. The data gathered from staff and volunteers further supports the achievement of the projects two intended outcomes. The staff and volunteers reported that they had benefitted from working on the project in terms of improved confidence, developing new skills and engaging with their community to help those in need. All the respondents reported that the work was rewarding and satisfying.

Figure 4. Graphic representation of the volunteer focus group: 'What is the impact on you?
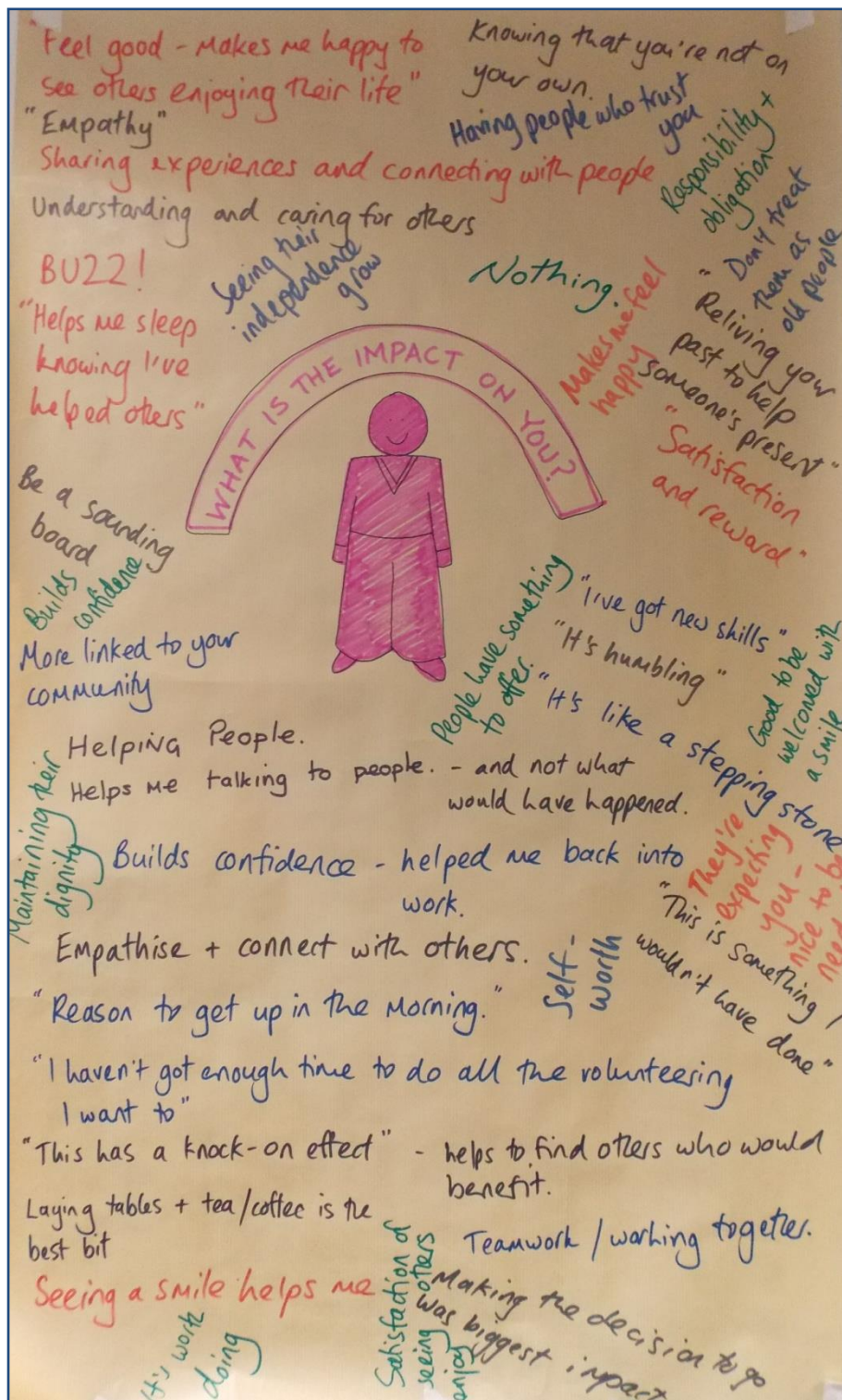
This report sums up over a year of data collection for the 'Friends for Life' project to which over one hundred individuals have contributed, including community hub members, staff, volunteers and stakeholders. The conclusions to this report are based around the intended project outcomes, any areas for further consideration, and also considers the impact of the project in terms of the current Welsh policy context for social services and well-being.

Have the 'Friends for Life' project outcomes been attained?

The intended outcomes of the project were set out as follows:

1) To reduce loneliness and increase wellbeing through improving social interaction
2) To increase confidence and the ability to meet the challenges and opportunities of ageing

The quantitative and qualitative data both provide evidence that the project outcomes are being achieved. Taking into account the total baseline evaluation sample of 149 members, 55% reported that they felt lonely before joining the community hubs, 37% agreed that they did not socialise with others before joining the hub, and 32% reported that they had no meaningful relationships outside of their family. 65 members completed a follow-up questionnaire. There was a decrease in all these areas at follow-up with 46% reporting they were lonely in the last few days, 29% did not socialise, and 28% reporting that they did not have any meaningful relationships. However, the fact that nearly half the follow-up sample reported feeling lonely suggests that there is still progress to be made on achieving the outcome of reducing loneliness. It should be noted that there are other factors that could account for the questionnaire findings aside from involvement with the community hubs. Members may have had bereavement or ill health and we cannot be certain if all respondents to the questionnaire were active hub members. Therefore, the questionnaire data should be considered alongside the qualitative data, which provides further support for the first outcome.

From informal and formal discussions with hub members, volunteers and staff, and from the analysis of free-text questionnaire comments and diary accounts of hub members, it is clear that the hubs were highly valued by the members as a source of social contact, activity and a way to connect with their local community. Many members described meeting new people or reconnecting with people from their past and these friendships were maintained outside of the hub environment. Members reported 'looking out' for each other by calling fellow members if they hadn't attended the hub that week. Many hub groups were now independently organising their own outings and trips and were optimistic about keeping the hubs running after the project had ended. Although interviews with members suggested that the hubs helped reduce their feelings of loneliness and isolation, many reported that

they were not lonely before joining the hub and viewed the hub as another social activity, providing an opportunity to meet new people and take part in activities. For these members, the hubs could be seen as playing a role in *preventing* loneliness and isolation, and may go some way to explain the finding from the questionnaires that a majority of people were socialising and had meaningful relationships before joining the hub. Also, if the weekly hub visits were the only social contact for some members, they may still report some degree of loneliness. This is linked to another issue that was raised by some of the staff and volunteers in that it is unknown if the hubs are successful in engaging the most isolated members of the community and perhaps more could be done to publicise the hubs to those most in need. Indeed many hub members reported that they were keen to recruit new members to the hub and increase attendance.

With regards to the second outcome of increasing confidence and meeting the challenges and opportunities of ageing, the area that showed most improvement from the questionnaires was that of feeling involved in the local community. This change was found to be statistically significant, so we might assume that the community hubs caused this improvement in feeling involved. Before they joined the hub, 38% reported that they felt involved in the local community which increased to 58% at follow-up. From conversations with hub members it became clear that that they had developed support networks within the hubs and also viewed the hubs as a source of getting information about local services. Members reported having talks about fire safety and being directed to services such as toenail cutting. The case study of the I.T. club also demonstrates the role of the hubs in increasing the skills and knowledge of the older population, and was successful in increasing members' confidence in using their PCs, laptops and tablets to communicate with family and friends online, to do internet shopping, and to search for information relating to their hobbies and interests. The information provided by the hub, the skills and knowledge that they gain, and the sense of belonging to their local community can all enhance individuals well-being and confidence and help them to meet the challenges and opportunities of aging. This is also in keeping with the Welsh Governments Strategy for Older People in Wales 2013-2023[3], which states that all older people in Wales should have the social, environmental and financial resources they need to deal with the opportunities and challenges they face. In particular, older people want to participate in and contribute to their communities and access services and amenities.

Areas for further consideration

Some areas which could be given further consideration emerged from the evaluation data collection. These issues were raised by some of the people who were engaged with the

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[3] http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dhss/publications/130521olderpeoplestrategyen.pdf

project and should be taken into account either when taking the 'Friends for Life' project forward or when developing similar projects.

- Consider strategies to ensure the most vulnerable and isolated members of the community are engaged with the service
- Increase effective publicity and engagement with organisations who refer into the service
- Continue support at community hubs to ensure long-term success
- Listen to the voice of service beneficiaries and encourage them to have an active role in developing the service to adapt to their needs
- Provide effective support for volunteers in their roles and support inclusion within the service, considering that volunteers' experiences and needs are as individual as the hub members'.
- Partnership working:
  - Agree shared common policies and procedures from the outset
  - Ensure communication channels are open and effective
  - Promote equal partnership for all organisations
  - Ensure clarity around governance and accountability for staff and managers

Impact in terms of the National Outcomes Framework

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act[4] became law in May 2014 and created a new legal system for social services. The Act aims to increase the emphasis on preventative action, bring people closer to decisions about the services that affect them, and address the challenges of economic and demographic change. The National Outcomes Framework[5] was created to fulfil the duties set out in the Act and is a key tool to track progress locally and nationally. Having this framework will help measure how much the care and support provided is making a real difference to peoples' lives – how it is enabling them to achieve the things we all expect for ourselves and for our family and friends. The 'well-being statement[6]' describes the important well-being outcomes that people who need care and support expect.

The outcomes that are most relevant to the Friends for Life project are: well-being; physical and mental health and emotional well-being; education, training and recreation; domestic, family and personal relationships; social and economic well-being; and contribution made to society.

This report of the Friends for Life project has demonstrated that the Hubs provide an opportunity for people to become socially active and engaged with people in their community. Table 4 below demonstrates how the Friends for Life project has achieved

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[4] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2014/4/pdfs/anaw_20140004_en.pdf
[5] http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dhss/publications/140624NOFen.pdf
[6] http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dhss/publications/140624wellbeingstateen.pdf

some of the well-being outcomes set out in the National Outcomes Framework, with supporting quotes from beneficiaries.

Table 4. Impact of the Friends for Life project in terms of the National Outcomes Framework

Outcome domain	How it can be measured	Supporting quotes from hub members
Well-being I know and understand what care, support and opportunities are available to me I get the help I need, when I need it, in the way I want it	• People having the right information to lead a healthy life • People whose quality of life has improved from the care and support they have received • People that received the right information or advice when they needed it • People who feel satisfied with the care and support they have received	*'We have had some very interesting and informative talks from various people, most notably from the fire service who run us through the various appliances commonly used in the home and the safety aspects thereof and also more recently, a lady giving us an enlightening talk on the new dates of benefits which the government proposes to implement.'* *'It's a great place to exchange information with one another. Things like who is doing your gardening, odd jobs etc and what you thought of them or how much they charge.'*
Education, training and recreation I can learn and develop to my full potential I can do the things that matter to me	• People reporting that they can learn and develop to their full potential • People reporting that they can do the things that matter to them	*'I am also now attending the IT classes, for which we have two very experienced tutors – although at the moment, being a complete rookie, it is all a bit confusing, but I'm hoping the penny will drop before too long.'* *'I enjoyed making cards at the event, recalled my youth when money was very tight and most of my presents were hand knitted and cards handmade.'*
Physical and mental health and emotional well-being	• Self-reported status of physical and mental health • Self-reported happiness	*'We all have a go at the exercise – it's a laugh you know, because we're not athletic by any manner of means but we give it a go. I feel*

I am healthy I am happy	• High life satisfaction scores	*better afterwards to, and it takes me over to the next day.'* *'A lovely sunny day. I arrive at the club and everyone is in a jolly mood. The staff all came out to greet us - make sure we are all OK. Lots of talk, laughter and catching up on the time between meetings. Some of us – me included – look forward to meeting up.'*
Domestic, family and personal relationships I belong I have safe and healthy relationships	• People who feel they belong to their local area • People who think that their local area is a place where people from difference backgrounds get on well together	*I find the Men's Group good – we're people who have the same sort of background and we might talk about the mines, or working on the buses, and it's still interesting to talk about things like this.* *'You see a lot of people, you have a laugh... People have got to know me up here now. They didn't know me when I first came. I had to go to the hospital one Monday and I couldn't come, then I went away for a fortnight. When I came back, one lady even called to see if I was alright. See, thats the difference it makes. I have made friends.'*
Social and economic well-being I have a social life and can be with the people that I choose	• People satisfied with the amount of time that have to do things they like doing	*'Coming to the hub has definitely give me an incentive to get out of my flat. It is really good to meet different people (apart from the people living in the complex I live in). I have learnt again to travel and mix with people'* *'Have enjoyed the company. Friendly atmosphere'*
Contribution made to society I can engage and participate I feel valued in society	• Things I do in my life are worthwhile • People reporting they feel valued in society • People reporting that they often feel lonely	*'They ask us what we want to do and they listen to our suggestions.'* *'Feel less lonely now. I feel happier. We are socialising and stimulating each other with our thoughts and experiences'* *'Got to know people in the village. Give each other lifts and has improved neighbourliness.'*

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