



Rural Wisdom is a five-year Big Lottery funded project exploring the impact of community-based activities that are led by older people living in rural areas in Scotland and Wales.

As part of the project ambitions, the Rural Wisdom partners, Outside the Box, Volunteering Matters Cymru and the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) are sharing the learning to enable people living and working in rural areas to apply and benefit from, what works.

Project Aims

More older people in rural areas are having a voice and leading change in their local communities.
More older people get the support they want, which works well for them, through a wider range of community based services.

Policies in Scotland and Wales support older people to continue to live in the rural communities they know and encourage older people's contribution to their communities. The experience of older people in rural areas, and of their communities, contribute to the growth of communities across the UK that value, include and support older people.



Rural Wisdom Communities

Scotland:
Eaglesham
Highland Perthshire
North Angus

Wales:
Leeswood
Milford Haven

Further Reading
www.ruralwisdom.org

What we found

Councils and Health and Social Care Partners like the creative ways in which RW has reached and engaged with older people and others in small rural communities to improve links with the public sector.

Rural Wisdom can build on this role to widen the public sector's understanding of the value of listening to older people directly and developing skills for co-production.



Challenges

- Some people don't want the commitment to take a leading role.
- Some people don't feel they have the confidence to take a leading role.
- There's an underlying awareness among older people that for communities to thrive and activities to be sustained, younger people are needed, so as the community ages there are people who can take over.
- It is important to build more opportunities for people across all generations in a community to be together. Working-age people are often absent from these activities for a number of reasons.
- Some people don't feel they have the experience to take a leading role.
- There is some confusion around which agency is responsible for what in terms of providing and improving services which makes it difficult to engage.



Who Needs to be involved?



People of all ages

There's an underlying awareness among older people that for communities to thrive and activities to be sustained, people of all ages need to be included so as the community ages there are people who can take over

Varied support levels

In some cases, residents have needed a small amount of input to get things started. In others the Development Worker has been needed to lead each session to keep the group going

Development Workers

A number of skills and attributes have been identified that are important for this post: having enthusiasm, being approachable, strong communication skills to keep people informed

Volunteers and Community Roles

Community consultations revealed a need to involve more volunteers of all ages in the community activities

Rural Wisdom has made considerable progress in supporting older people to access services that meet their needs and lead change in their communities, but this has taken time. For this to continue, it is important that the Rural Wisdom supported activity can be sustained through local capacity and resources. Funding is an additional factor for groups' sustainability.



Questions for Next Year...

The lessons from the first year has led to several important questions. We will be working with communities and partners to explore these in the second year:

01 How can we encourage greater community ownership of local initiatives including through older people leading change?

02 How can current Rural Wisdom activities/initiatives be sustained beyond the current funding to embed joint working and co-production?

03 How can we use and build on existing links with the Welsh and Scottish Governments to maximise the impact of Rural Wisdom on national and UK strategies and programmes?

Further Reading
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