



Rural Wisdom Evaluation

Case Study 5: Community activities through Rural Wisdom – Singing Group in Brechin

January 2020



At the start of Rural Wisdom each community came together to discuss the key issues for older people living there and how Rural Wisdom could help. These issues helped inform the priorities for the Development Workers, their engagement with older people and work with organisations. The following case study highlights one example of what has been achieved and sustained in Brechin, Scotland.

“More community activities for older people living in and around Brechin” **(Local resident)**

When invited to talk about local issues over cake and tea in the early days of Rural Wisdom, one of the first things people suggested was ***“more community activities for older people living in and around Brechin”***. In September 2017, the North Angus ‘Vision for Change’ event agreed this should be a priority for Rural Wisdom.

The Development Worker (DW) took this on board and the Brechin Community Singing Group began as taster sessions in February 2018. Publicity for the group stressed it was *‘open to everybody who wants to sing. All are welcome and there are no auditions!’* The purpose of the group is to bring together local people who enjoy singing and share a passion for music to create a sense of social connections and shared endeavour.

When the taster sessions were over, the group overwhelmingly stated that they would like to continue. Since April 2018 the Community Singing Group has met every two weeks and attracts 10 – 20 people at each session.

Highlights have included a Christmas Carol afternoon last December to thank residents from Newington Sheltered Garden complex for allowing the group to use their lounge for their fortnightly sessions – which everyone enjoyed!

So how have people got involved in the singing group – and what are they getting from it? As one Brechin resident explained:

“I got involved through Singing Group as Shona [the DW] contacted people who might be interested through the church, where I heard of it. Through the group I am now also involved in the Big Lunch events and the Big Walk”.

The Singing Group is certainly helping people make connections. This happens both directly by coming to the group and more widely through meeting others in the group and finding out about other activities.

Building connections in the community

“Men don’t like to say they’re lonely – they prefer to come to an activity”.

A Third Sector partner in North Angus thinks that the singing group is ideal for Brechin as: ***“Rural Wisdom is adding to what’s already there and not doing to people. It’s putting on new things like the singing group that didn’t exist and are uplifting – not misery making like with health groups – should do this, shouldn’t do that etc.”***

This partner also notes that in addition to a social activity, singing is good for breathing and health. They think it’s positive that men and women are involved as it can be difficult to get men to things. Members of the Brechin Community Singing Group have also been taking more responsibility for running the group. As one resident put it: ***“People in the Singing Group now take turns to book venue, provide refreshments etc. It should continue to run all right after Shona [the DW]”***

leaves – although we will miss her.”

The Development Worker explains that there are steps towards older people leading change: ***“People first have to get together and be more connected – often through social activities like the singing group or tea dances. Then they can take more responsibility in leading or co-ordinating these sorts of events and some of them can be encouraged to get involved in wider issues”.***

She has encouraged this by supporting people, slowly getting them to do more from choosing music and providing refreshments for the group, to having conversations about what else they can do in Brechin after the singing session ends.

This approach has worked and been appreciated. One resident explained: ***“Shona [the DW] gives us confidence – then people can do more themselves”.***

Resources

Find more information and resources at:
www.ruralwisdom.org

Other case studies from Rural Wisdom:

1. What’s On (Milford Haven)
2. Transport Group (Highland Perthshire)
3. Intergenerational Work (Eaglesham)
4. Community Café (Leeswood)
5. Singing Group (Brechin)

www.ndti.org.uk/news/rural-wisdom-evaluation

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