

Age Friendly York

Your Time - Baseline Assessment

Leisure Time

Four Shocking statistics behind social isolation:

1. Lacking social connections can damage a person's health as much as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.
2. Loneliness can increase one's risk of developing diseases
3. Social isolation and loneliness presents one of the biggest health and social care challenges of the 21st century, increasing one's risk of dying by 29 per cent.
4. Half a million older people do not see or speak to anyone for more than six days a week. (Alzheimer's Society)

Introduction

Age Friendly York are looking at how older people can make productive and rewarding use of their time, by carrying out a range of Your Time checks against the World Health Organisation age friendly standards. These have been split into leisure and employment, with employment covered in a separate report:

World Health Organisation checks:

- A range of flexible options for older volunteers is available, with training, recognition, guidance and compensation for personal costs
- Decision making bodies in public, private and voluntary sectors encourage and facilitate membership of older people
- Voluntary services by people of all ages are encouraged and supported
- Community wide settings, activities and events attract all generations by accommodating age-specific needs and preferences
- Older people are specifically included in community activities for “families”
- Schools provide opportunities to learn about ageing and older people and involve older people in school activities
- Events are held at convenient times
- Events can be attended alone or with a companion
- Activities affordable with no hidden cost
- Good information about events and activities is provided
- A wide variety of activities is offered to appeal to a diverse population of older people
- Gatherings that include older people are held in a variety of local community spots, such as recreation centres, schools, libraries, community centres and parks
- There is consistent outreach including people at risk of social isolation

The COVID impact

This piece of work started prior to the COVID-19 pandemic with some key impacts during the COVID period:

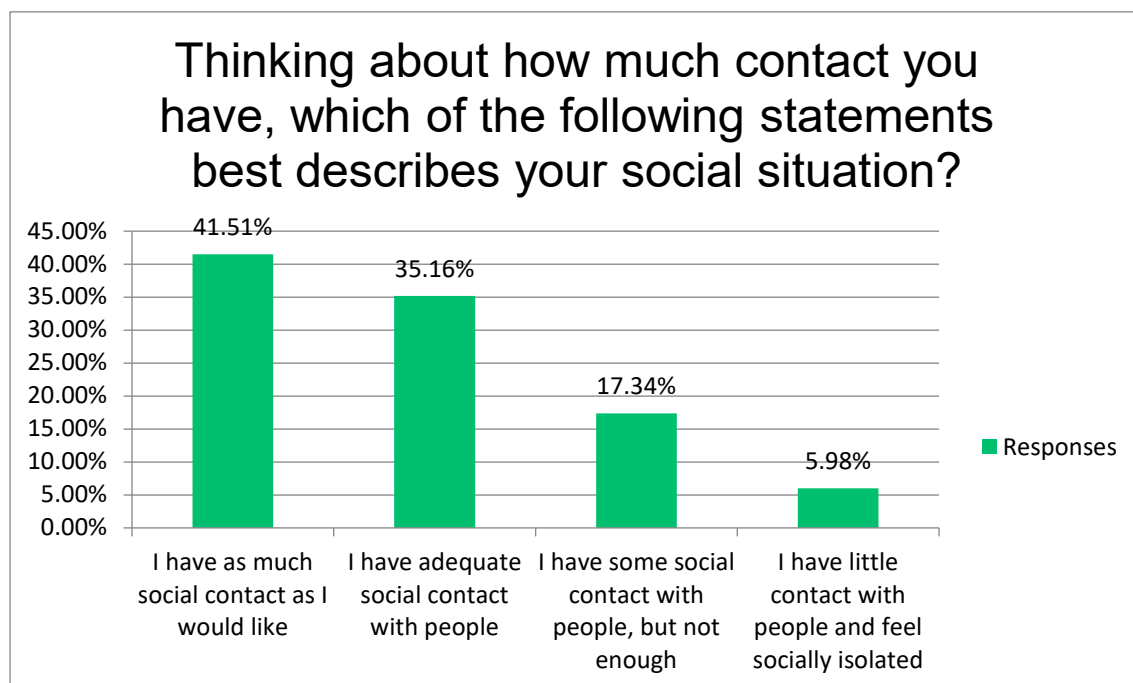
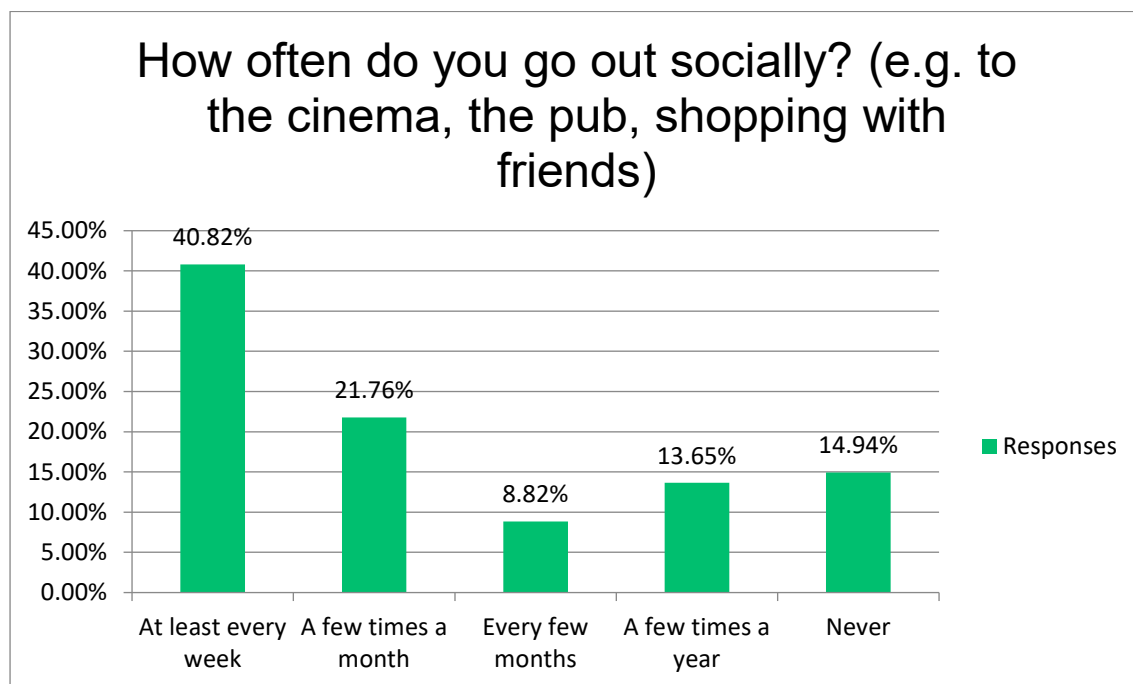
- Older volunteers have been required to step back as they were restricted to only volunteering from home during the first lockdown (for people 70 years old or over).

- Local surveys with the voluntary sector by York CVS indicated many community groups had a reduced number of volunteers, impacting on what they could offer which indicates the impact of older volunteers.
- Concerns from the same survey about staff fatigue and capacity which then impacts on support being available to navigate older people to softer social solutions. The focus in the first lockdown was on welfare rather than wellbeing solutions.
- There was a significant reduction in community activities. Live Well York recorded over 650 community activities which then reduced to less than 50 in the third lockdown.
- Digital inclusion impacting on older people to maintain social contacts. Local and national offers for supporting people to digitally connect were promoted as well as opportunities to receive a re-furbished device for those who could not afford to buy one.
- “Corona-virus exploits and accentuates inequality” (COVID 19 and Social Exclusion – Manchester Urban Ageing Research Group 2020). This would indicate the need for Age Friendly York to ensure there is a place based approach for example where possible supporting social solutions through the Northern Quarter initiative.
- Even through a range of approaches were implemented to encourage regular physical activity, there is still a concern regarding the impacts on some people, particularly older people becoming more sedentary during the pandemic. A reduction in the number steps to less than 1500 per day can result in about 4% loss in muscle in 65-75 year olds.
- Local responses have accelerated existing models of community engagement and built stronger community relations. (Move – mobilising Volunteer Effectiveness Oct 2020). York had a fantastic response to volunteering over the COVID period with over 4,200 volunteers registered in the first lockdown as well as many other local volunteer responses by both businesses and community groups.

York Human Rights City produced a report in 2020 on the impact of the pandemic on Human Rights. The report identified the potential increased impact on older people in respect to loss of routine and regular social contact. In addition it recognised that the limited options that were available during the pandemic were predominantly online heightening the impact of digital exclusion

What we knew prior to COVID

This section covers how people of York can use their own time, including volunteering. We are aware that there is significant social isolation in York and that transitions in life including becoming older and reaching retirement age can have significant impact. We have information that supports our understanding



York Older People Survey 2018

Over 23% percent of older people surveyed indicated they do not have enough social contact. This demonstrates that there is more required to be done with deliberate opportunities to socialise.

Looking at asset based solutions social isolation is in the top three reasons for referral with both Local Area Coordination and Social Prescribing in York.

In the 2018-19 Adult Social Care Survey (for those that receive care) only 36% of residents said “I feel I am able to spend time as I want” and only 43% of people stated “I feel that I have as much social contact as I want” although 71% of people said support services help them in having social contact with people and 68% stated support services help them to spend time as they wish.

We are aware that transport is a barrier to accessing community activities, particularly at key times. This can be due to demands for specialist vehicles during school runs or too many community activities being run at the same time. There is also no community transport in the evenings.

For those that have a care package, there are additional challenges with availability of carers and care hours to enable someone that needs assistance to get to an activity (covered in more detail in Your Services).

Knowing how accessible a venue is also important. [Access Able York](#) provides information on a range of public and community venues, including outdoor spaces (covered in more detail in Your Information).

The York older people survey asked “what things would you like to do but don’t”. We received over 500 responses many of which have these specified activities on Live Well York or through other promotion sites, which does indicate there must be other barriers to getting out and socialising through joint activities.



The most popular activity people wanted to do more was walking yet there are [21 walking opportunities](#) on Live Well York including ones aimed specifically at getting people more active again like Health Walks.

In the survey we asked “What is preventing you from being able to do this?” Most older people regarded their health as a barrier to not accessing activities they wanted to do, whether this is due to a disability, long term condition, rehabilitation or risk of falling.

We recognised that there needed to be a personal approach to breaking down these perceived barriers and that everyone can do more if they are willing to give it a go. Move the Masses provides a walking buddy who will call for them at their house and have a walk and chat. This is already showing to be an effective personalised approach:

Move Mates Case Study Two

Catherine was at her GP surgery discussing her low mood with her GP. She mentioned that she was feeling lonely and isolated due to her reduced mobility meaning that she struggled to get out. Catherine’s GP connected her with Ways to Wellbeing and her social prescribing practitioner suggested she might like to be a GoodGym coach. Through her allocated GoodGym volunteer, Catherine heard about Move Mates and thought it was a good idea to help her get out of the house. She lacked confidence, was fearful of falling and had poor physical mobility. She got in touch and made a self-referral.

Catherine has had two Move Mates. She walked with her first for six months and has recently been paired with a new Move Mate to take over from the first.

Catherine said “At first I didn’t think I could go any further than bottom of garden, but my Move Mate encouraged me to walk around cul-de-sac. I discovered, if I took it slowly, I could make it. My Move Mate was convinced I could do more and slowly I too realised I could go further. He was very patient, it might not feel a lot to him, but it feels a lot to me. He was interested in me and supported me.”

Catherine worked towards her goal of walking to the second furthest bus stop by going a bit further each time with her Move Mate’s support. Previously, she has found it hard to summon the

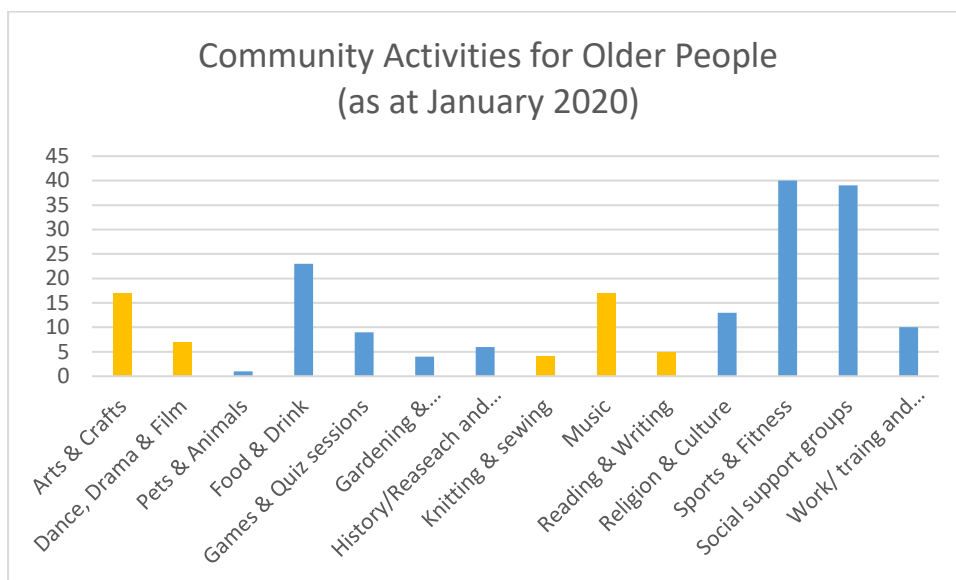
motivation to get out on her own. Catherine said “There is no pressure, but my Move Mate is gently encouraging. When it’s cold and wet I could make excuses. Recently on a rainy day my Move Mate encouraged me to go out for a short walk rather than not going at all. I like chatting, it distracts me, and I want to walk a bit further so that we can finish the conversation”

Catherine has achieved her original goal of walking to the second furthest bus stop and is now aiming to continue increasing the distance each time. She said “I can walk to the post box independently now. I still write letters to my friends that live far away in Cornwall and Scotland and now I can post them without having to ask anyone else. The more I walk the more the aches go away. It’s better to keep moving, it could get to the point where I couldn’t do it if I don’t walk regularly, if you don’t use it you lose it!”

Walking with a Move Mate has improved Catherine’s confidence and is helping to keep her active. She is pre-diabetic and therefore walking regularly helps to avoid a worsening of this. It is also helping to alleviate the loneliness Catherine was previously experiencing. “I like meeting somebody different, we talk about all sorts of things. It’s like a bonus to the physical aspect- it keeps my brain active. The other day on our walk we bumped into a young man foraging for horse chestnuts. We stopped to have a chat with him, and I learnt some new things about horse chestnuts. That wouldn’t have happened if we hadn’t have gone out for a walk.”

Part of the city’s response to reducing social isolation is to ensure people can easily find the activities they are looking for. [Live Well York](#) provides this solution as a co-produced website across [19 partners](#). The website offers over [640 community activities](#) (pre-COVID) which can be searched by where/who/what. With having all the community offers in one place this also enables mapping to take place to ensure we are asset rich.

Within the 640 community activities there are 118 specifically targeted at older people. It is worth noting that although York is a relatively small city, travelling to a community activity can be just as impactful as what is available. The Getting Out And About Action Plan has therefore identified an action on developing a collective approach to volunteer drivers through the Community Transport Group.



Other approaches that have been adopted over recent years is encouraging conversations at an early stage to help build resilience and improve the quality of people's life before rather than during or after crisis. Social prescribers, Local Area Co-ordinators and Health Champions contribute to this approach.

Social Prescribing signposting to community based solutions have indicated that 30% of these solutions are cultural. These include those activities identified in orange above. Awareness of the evidence of cultural wellbeing is becoming more deliberate with the development of a cultural strategy and the recent appointment of a cultural lead in York as well as developing some cultural commissioning principles.

There has been a significant increase in research into the effects of arts on health and wellbeing. A recent report by the World Health Organisation - What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and wellbeing 2019 found evidence from a wide variety of studies that demonstrated the arts potential impact on both mental and physical health.

In recognising the value of the arts it recommends:

- Ensuring cultural diverse forms of art are available across the life-course.
- Developing interventions that encourage art engagement to support healthy lifestyles

The report also recognises the importance of strengthening the structure and mechanisms for collaboration between culture, social care and health sectors, including referral processes.

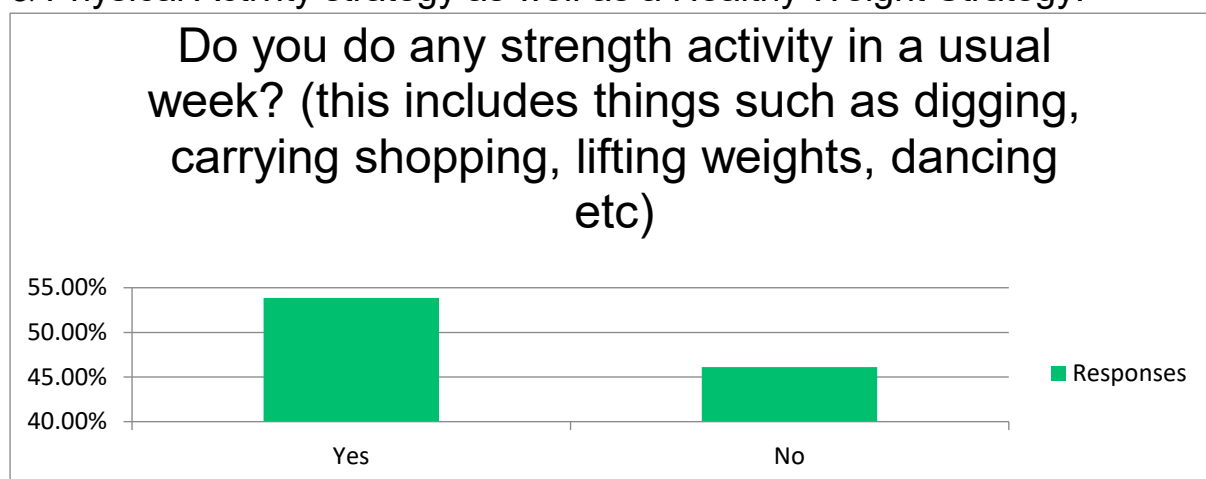
York is already on this journey with examples of Cultural Commissioning through the York Museum and Galleries Trust from joint Public Health and Adult Social Care commissioning arrangements. In addition York has been ahead of the curve with the introduction of Social Prescribing over 3 years ago with grant provision for community solutions.

Free Theatre tickets to overcome loneliness

York Theatre Royal are offering charities and community group free theatre tickets for the people that they work with, to enable them to go and see the play Quality Street in June 2020. As part of their 'Community Drive' initiative, they have funded tickets available for the matinee performances of the show and can arrange transportation to and from the theatre ensuring that the theatre is welcoming and accessible for all. The theatre believe an activity like attending a show can help people overcome feelings of isolation and that it provides an opportunity for them to reconnect with their community.

Last year they launched the first 'Community Drive' for their production of Driving Miss Daisy. It was a huge success with 51 older people from York, who would not otherwise have been able to come to the theatre, enjoyed a memorable afternoon out, talking to staff about past visits to the Theatre Royal, enjoying the show and taking away a programme, as a memento of their visit.

Physical wellbeing is also an important consideration when looking at Your Time which will be enhanced through the development of a Sports & Physical Activity strategy as well as a Healthy Weight Strategy.



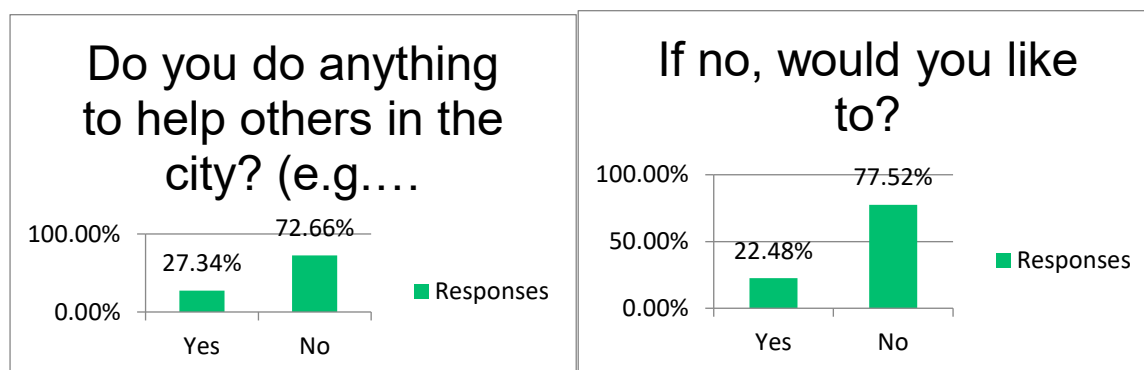
Recognition, through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, of strength based activities is also important as this can also improve balance and

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reduce risk of falls. The risk of falls links to both the external environment through Getting Out And About domain and the internal environment through the Your Home domain.

There is a wide range of strength based activities available in York. Live Well York provides the ability for people to search for the activities they are interested in and also provide feedback if there is not the activities they are looking for.

Volunteering



There is a large proportion of older people that do not volunteer and do not want to, as the survey results would indicate. However evidence has shown that those that volunteer in later life report an increase in wellbeing, self-esteem and social connections. This is mutually beneficial to society with older people have a wealth of knowledge and experience to offer to younger generations.

Research shows that barriers to volunteering can include issues around transport or mobility, having other commitments that require flexibility from your volunteering and lacking confidence. Also older people can be impacted by major life events, too, like becoming a carer, experiencing a new long-term condition or losing a loved one can lead to a withdrawal from volunteering if people aren't given the right support. (Age Friendly and Inclusive Volunteers – June 2019 – Centre for Ageing Better)

Social Prescribing is one solution to this challenge with 30% of people approaching their GP being for non-medical reasons. The model fully recognises the impact of self-esteem on making a decision to re-engage by attending with them to a chosen activity for the first time.

During the pandemic a number of social contact offers were coordinated through the COVID Help line to support people's emotional wellbeing:



Social Isolation and dementia

People affected by dementia have a higher risk of being socially isolated and lonely than other social groups (35% stated they felt lonely recently – Turning up the volume May 2017 – Alzheimer's Society).

“A very good friend of mine is afraid to come and see me. I have contacted him, but he hasn't got back to me. A couple of people are a bit wary of me, because I've got Alzheimer's and they are afraid of what it might be.”

- Person living with dementia

Social isolation and ethnicity

Ambition for Ageing produced Ageing for Place for Minority Ethnic Communities (August 2020) where there were two key messages: Risks of social isolation amongst minority ethnic communities - Bonds between people of a similar background are important for feelings of safety, cultural identity and practically in terms of language and cultural norms. Those who took part in the research had access to strong social networks and sources of support within their own ethnic community but little evidence of their social networks extending beyond this.

Social Infrastructure as a means to maintain bonding and bridging capital - Looking at the spaces that were important to these participants - religious

buildings, specialist retail spaces, green and outdoor spaces and minority ethnic led-community and voluntary organisations - there are signs of the potential for individuals to make social connections that act as bridges into other social worlds though weak ties of association.

Green and outdoor spaces was previously identified as an important consideration with access to all. Age Friendly York teamed up with York Disability Rights and Children's services to ensure the physical spaces are accessible for all. However as a result of this report Age Friendly York contacted ethnic groups to ensure they had the opportunity to input into the survey in respect to any ethnic considerations.

The research demonstrates the importance for older people with a shared cultural identity to have places where they can meet together, not only to maintain their sense of identity but also for bonding social connections. It is unclear whether these opportunities are sufficiently available in a city with the 2011 indicating 96% of the York population identifying as White British, higher than national figures. The Chinese community has the highest representation with a large proportion being students with access to social solutions within the University offer. However the ethnic diversity of York is increasing which will create an increased need for specific ethnic social considerations.

This Baseline Assessment demonstrates the importance of social contact both prior to the pandemic and even more so as we go through the pandemic and out the other side. The [Campaign to end loneliness](#) states "The Campaign to End Loneliness believes that nobody who wants company should be without it" a statement Age Friendly York can very much support.

[Social Isolation with long term conditions or disabilities](#)

It is recognised that the challenges of accessing social activities are significantly more challenging when someone has a disability or long term condition. This could include: using public transport; being able to get an electronic scooter into a taxi; having sufficient room at a venue if you are in a wheelchair and having changing facilities. The list of challenges are far longer than this and can be specific to individual needs. For example being hard of hearing or deaf can create challenges in communicating and can result in people feeling excluded. During the pandemic this has had further challenges with the use of face

coverings where people lip read. The York Disability Rights Forum steering group has suggested volunteer communication training which may for example include signing.

Finding information about community activities

There is a wide range of approaches older people use to access information about activities with the most used approach through the surveys received being the website, followed by notice boards, local groups and local venues. 74% of those that completed the question were able to find what they were looking for from looking over the last 6 months. As it is not possible to provide a good range of information that is up to date on notice boards it does create the case for consideration for community electronic notice boards.



Beyond COVID-19

As we plan to come out of lockdown a survey was issued to community groups to identify if there were any barriers in re-opening community activities and identifying what support was required to address these barriers. The objective is to reach or exceed 550 community activities again.

Access to community activities is currently significantly reduced with 49 “COVID Ready” activities identified during the third lockdown (winter 2020-21). This is where groups have been able to modify their approach and

predominantly provide activities online. This compares to over 550 community activities promoted through Live Well York.

As we started to enter into the first phase of the roadmap more community activities were gradually becoming available (56 as at 4th March 2021) increasing to 60 at the start of the second phase. A survey was conducted to encourage community groups to start thinking about what they can offer and if there are any barriers.

42 organisations responded in March 2021, of which 41 indicated that they are already (33 groups) or are planning to provide activities again when government guidance allows them to do so. One group was not offering a community activity prior to COVID but are now.

30 groups identified that there were barriers in starting up again. A list of useful contacts was provided and positively received with some people stating this opportunity for key contacts needs to continue to be available. A number of responders said they would specifically use the contacts that were made available.

“Our main concerns are publicity - getting word out that we're here. However our problem is more that people cannot be 'bothered' to sign up.”

“It is very difficult to communicate the benefits to them when not meeting up face to face. A way to showcase what we can offer might be nice - I know you have a website, but how about a digital spotlight each week?”

“Our concern is that our students many have lost a lot of confidence since COVID 19, or have heightened anxieties as a result of the pandemic which makes them reluctant to leave their homes.”

“Grants needed to enhance the future projects.”

“I am not sure issues around confidence can be fixed as easily as other issues (e.g. fund-raising - this is easy!)”

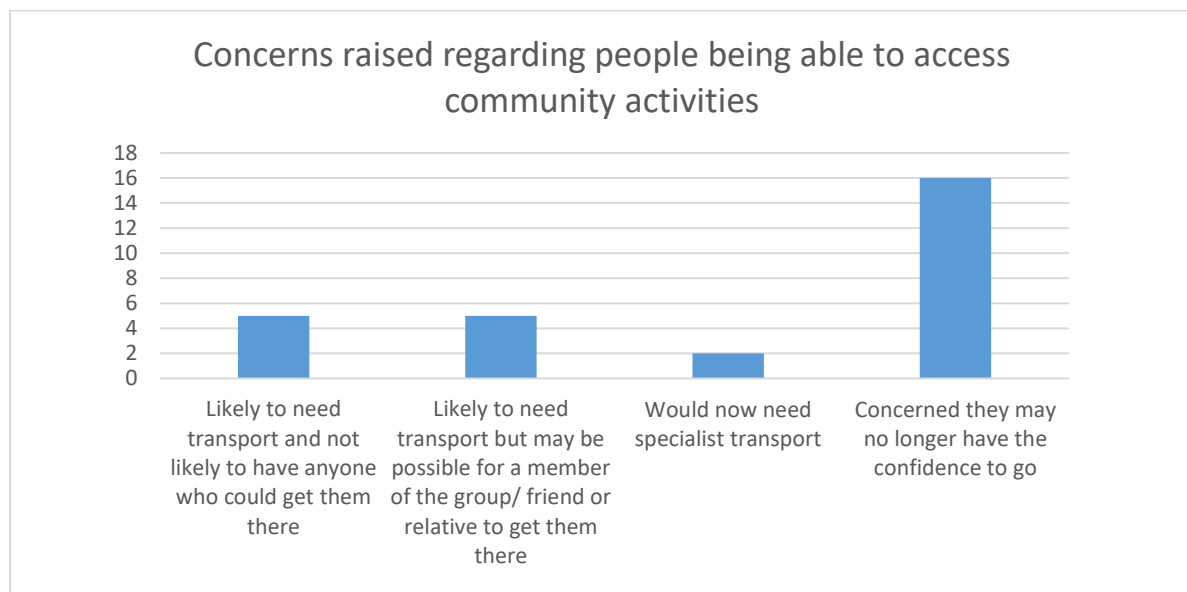
“Support in encouraging participants to re-enter community settings and social groups. A buddy scheme perhaps?”

Specific questions were asked regarding any concerns in people getting to activities. The most significant concern raised was around confidence and anxiety in accessing activities in the first place. Social prescribers can attend with someone for the first time but there will need to be other initiatives that run alongside this. For example a coordinated volunteer driver initiative could

recruit volunteers that would also be happy to motivate the person to attend and even go in with them if required.

There were previous concerns regarding community transport and the small resource available including specific taxis being required at the same time as other requirements like school runs. 14 groups specified they would consider changing the time of the activity if access to community transport was restricting people from attending.

5 groups specified they use volunteer drivers and two groups specified they have community transport although one of these is under review.



There were a range of individual barriers mentioned to accessing activities again: being vaccinated; transport including frequency and timing of buses; access to venues for wheelchair users; access to internet where this approach continues. In addition to the survey to community groups there was a crib sheet developed in partnership with Age UK York and Healthwatch York with the [Groups and Activities Survey findings report \(May 2021\)](#) produced. This explored further with 55 people thinking about accessing activities again (75% were over 55 years old and 37% having a long term health condition and 30% having mobility issues).

The discussions (March/April 2021) revealed that around 70% of the activities that people used to go to were offered online which helped to maintain a level of social contact for those that were able to go online (around 60%). Those that were not available included physical activity like yoga, walking groups and

tennis. Even though there were a range of vertical options it did not fully meet peoples needs:

“The gym I was a member of shut down due to financial reasons but online exercise classes don't have the same social aspect or motivation anyway.”

“Socials don't work as well online because you can't have lots of separate conversations happening at once.”

Around 90% of people were intending to return to activities but not necessarily straight away:

“I'm reluctant to mix with strangers as I don't know how seriously they take adhering to restrictions and guidelines.”

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As further analysis takes place nationally and more locally there will no doubt be further concerns regarding many impacts from the pandemic. The importance of Your Time and what people may have access to, to enhance and maintain both physical and mental wellbeing will be there alongside other identified issues. Age Friendly York will therefore ensure the action plan for this domain reflects the concerns raised.

[Further evidence against World Health Organisation checks](#)

A check was made against the key WHO checks identified at the front of this document to look at where further evidence will be required to be incorporated into the Age Friendly York Action Plan. These are as follows:

Volunteer options:

- provide training or guidance
- provide recognition
- offer expenses
- encourage membership of all ages

Activities and events

- proportion that attract all generations

- accommodate age specific needs
- family activities welcome older people
- held at convenient times
- can be attended alone or with a companion
- are affordable without any hidden costs
- various locations for activities

Learning

- schools provide the opportunity to learn about older people
- schools involve older people