



Talk, Eat, Drink (TED) Ageing Better in East Lindsey EVALUATION SUMMARY

Report for YMCA Lincolnshire and Partners by
Liz Price, Ivan Annibal, Jennifer Jackson, Jessica Sellick and Rebecca Herron



TALK, EAT, DRINK (TED) AGEING BETTER IN EAST LINDSEY

1. Introduction

This summary report presents the findings of a two-year evaluation of TED (Talk, Eat, Drink) in East Lindsey conducted for YMCA Lincolnshire by the University of Lincoln and Rose Regeneration.

TED (Talk, Eat, Drink) in East Lindsey is part of 'Ageing Better', a seven-year, England wide, £84 million programme funded by The National Lottery Community Fund that aims to support older people through creating new and enjoyable ways for them to be actively involved in their communities, helping to combat social isolation and loneliness. The partnership is led by YMCA Lincolnshire working with East Lindsey District Council, Lincolnshire County Council, Age UK Lindsey, Citizens Advice Lindsey, Carers First, Magna Vitae and Lincs Digital. The aims of TED are to:

- Reduce social isolation and loneliness
- Help older people to become better connected with volunteering, social, leisure and health improving activities
- Provide opportunities for older people to influence the design, delivery and evaluation of both the services and businesses available to them

2. About the Evaluation

Our evaluation has included both formative and summative elements, and a range of research methods to gather existing and primary data from participants and delivery partners. These include: (i) desk research; (ii) attendance at Programme Management Group and Delivery Group meetings; (iii) analysis of the Ecorys Common Measurement Framework (CMF), including the development of a local database; (iv) qualitative interviews with TED participants; (v) a survey of 31 Age-friendly Businesses; and (vi) two Learning Events which showcased the achievements of TED.

3. About TED – Ageing Better in East Lindsey

TED has been delivered using a partnership approach, working with local businesses and healthcare professionals to build a referrals process and target support to those with greatest need. The 'test and learn' approach of Ageing Better has provided the flexibility to commission new activities.

Service	Delivery Focus	Delivery Partners
Befriending Service	Provision of a Befriending Service to operate across East Lindsey and with a particular focus in the defined TED areas.	Age UK Lindsey ConnectTED team at YMCA Lincolnshire
Advocacy / Advice	Provision of confidential and impartial advice, advocacy and wellbeing support for the over 50s in East Lindsey (with a particular focus on the defined TED areas).	Citizens Advice Lindsey
Digital Skills	Delivery of digital skills training and support and advice to the over 50s in East Lindsey in order to maximise income, access services and provide opportunities for social interaction.	Lincs Digital
CHAPS and Men Do	Provision of services targeted at men aged over 50 in response to research that shows that men are less inclined to become socially active and involved within their community.	Magna Vitae Carers First

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Service	Delivery Focus	Delivery Partners
Fitness, Food and Friends	Provision of services designed to support the mental and physical wellbeing of older people in East Lindsey.	Magna Vitae
Age-friendly Businesses	A scheme for local businesses that offer an excellent service and environment for older customers.	TED Team at YMCA Lincolnshire
Friendship Groups	Support to new and emerging Friendship Groups which welcome anyone over the age of 50 to get involved with their local community and meet new people.	TED Team at YMCA Lincolnshire
Volunteer Management	All these activities have been supported by the recruitment of volunteers who have been trained and supported to engage with older people to make them feel more connected.	TED Team at YMCA Lincolnshire

4. The Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic has led the TED Team at YMCA Lincolnshire to adopt alternative methods of delivery during lockdown periods in 2020 and 2021, including:

- **Befriending calls in place of group activities** provided by delivery partners, alongside those provided by Age UK Lindsey and the ConnectTED service.
- **Moving to online delivery:** movement of face-to-face group activities to an online format delivered by video conferencing, with support for using ICT provided by Lincs Digital.
- **Delivery of support packages** by the TED team at YMCA Lincolnshire and its delivery partners to people who are isolating, along with (outdoor) wellbeing visits and monthly newsletters.

5. About TED Participants

- 62% of participants are female, 38% are male
- 1:2 participants live alone
- 1:5 are carers
- Two thirds report having an illness or disability
- 99% are White-British
- 64% of participants live in neighbourhoods that fall within the 30% most deprived nationally, which include areas of the coastal communities of Mablethorpe, Ingoldmells and Skegness.

6. Key Achievements of TED

- Supporting 10,000 older people through its programme of group activities, classes, friendship groups, befriending calls, and advocacy and advice services.
- More than 1,400 referrals have been made into and from TED and partner organisations, which suggests that the programme is deeply embedded within local stakeholder networks.
- Over 100 businesses in East Lindsey have been awarded Age-friendly Business status, which reflects their role in supporting the needs of older customers, and the growing Age-friendly culture of the district. Many have supported older people during the Covid-19 pandemic, through online/telephone orders and doorstep deliveries.
- TED has mobilised 537 volunteers who, collectively, have contributed 13,678 hours to supporting the programme. Based on the national minimum wage, this represents an economic contribution of £112,296.

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- Our evaluation has shown that many participants, once engaged in TED activities, show an interest in taking a more active role and contributing their time through volunteering.

7. Impact of TED

While participating in TED, many older people experienced improvements in their level of wellbeing and social engagement, as well as being more likely to volunteer:

Impact of TED on participants	% reporting a change
Had greater wellbeing	45%
Were less socially isolated	30%
Increased their level of volunteering	34%
Increased their social contact	21%
Increased their participation in social activities	30%

Analysis using the Social Value Engine reveals that **TED has delivered £2,418,307 of social value over the last two years.** This works out at a **Social Return on Investment of £5.52 per £1 invested.**

8. Overall Findings

What is the effectiveness of different interventions within TED?

The project has used a **range of different interventions** to support older people, including group activities, befriending and advocacy, and supporting existing groups. Delivery partners have brought **a distinctive offer**, including health and exercise (Fitness, Food and Friends), digital inclusion (via Lincs Digital) and social isolation (befriending and support for friendship groups). Some activities have had a gender focus, such as CHAPS and Men Do, which recognise that the need for bespoke men-only activities. The **'test and learn' approach of TED has provided the flexibility** to bring new delivery partners into the project, such as Carers First.

Many participants have valued the **opportunity to have their say in the design of the activities or take part as a volunteer.** Participants reiterated that **older people have many years of experience** and are themselves a useful source of information and advice for others.

Alternative services delivered during lockdown, including online classes, befriending calls, and care packages, have been greatly appreciated by participants. However, there is an **overwhelming sense of eagerness to return to face-to-face** gatherings and activities.

What have been the most effective methods of engagement?

Participants become aware of TED in a **wide variety of ways**, from noticeboards and leaflets, to referrals and word of mouth from partner organisations. However, some felt there **could also be more systematic methods of awareness raising**, such as via radio and newspaper adverts, to ensure that a broader representation of older residents is reached.

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Having a **friendly, welcoming environment** where participants did not feel like an outsider nor feel self-conscious is key to ensuring ongoing participation. The **role of the project worker** was identified as essential in facilitating activities effectively and ensuring they went at an appropriate pace.

What are the challenges and barriers to engagement?

Prior to March 2020, the principal barriers to engagement related to **participants' awareness of TED** activities, and the **rural nature of East Lindsey**. Participants identified a **lack of public transport as a barrier** to participation. **Lockdown restrictions from March 2020 have created new challenges for engagement**. While the TED partnership shifted to online advertising and delivery of classes, **digital exclusion remains a key barrier** for those who are shielding or without internet access.

What has been the impact of supporting older people in rural settings at risk of isolation and loneliness?

TED participants have reported an increase in social engagement during and after their participation in TED activities. Many indicated they would be **more likely to consider volunteering** in their community. While most participants have health conditions, their **overall sense of wellbeing has remained consistent** during their participation in TED.

For those taking part in groups, participants have reported adopting a **healthier lifestyle**, developing **ICT skills**, and developing **new friendships**. The groups have helped people from remote communities **feel more connected**. Those receiving befriending services have felt **supported in their mental health**, particularly during lockdown. Recipients valued **one-to-one relationships** with befrienders, as well as **care packages** and **information/signposting** to services.

What is the social impact of supporting older people in rural settings at risk of isolation and loneliness?

The Social Value Engine reveals that TED East Lindsey delivers **significant social impacts** through helping to **address social isolation**, and **health and fitness** among older people. The programme has widened **opportunities to volunteer** and supported the development of **an Age-friendly culture** through the Age-friendly Business Award. The social impact of TED in **providing ongoing social connections** and **supporting mental health**, particularly during lockdown, is clear.

What impacts has the partnership achieved through engagement and increased capacity?

A strong area of TED's contribution has been towards **building community capacity**. This is evident in **support to friendship groups**, which is valued for moral support, new ideas, access to funding, and helping to ensure the groups' sustainability. Group activities have been valued for **bringing 'something to do' to small and remote communities** (e.g. Mablethorpe and Chapel St Leonards) that do not have many existing community groups or services, as well as **adding to the tapestry of existing community activities** in places like Horncastle and Louth.

TED has demonstrated **Strategic Added Value**. This includes **cross-working and referral** between delivery partners; **the sharing of learning and best practice** by the TED Internal Learning and Evaluation Officer with the national Ageing Better programme; and the production of an **Age-friendly Business Toolkit**. The TED partnership has **raised the policy focus on healthy ageing**, linking with Lincolnshire Ageing Better Partnership and Lincolnshire Towns Fund proposals.

What have been the potential savings to public services?

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TED has delivered £2,418,307 of social value over the last two years. This works out at a **Social Return on Investment of £5.52 per £1 invested.** A large share of impact relates to savings associated with wellbeing, including loneliness, health, volunteering and the services of Age-friendly Businesses.

Unit costs of key services: due to the ‘test and learn’ nature of the programme there are no established benchmarks for unit costs. It has, however, been possible to identify a number of output unit costs. **Unit costs provide useful benchmarks for planning the likely future costs and impacts of the programme.** More work is needed to **isolate the costs of facilitating the programme.** This will help to consider its sustainability after National Community Lottery funding has ceased.

Efficiency of outcome delivery: In the absence of clear delivery targets, and changes to the structure and focus in the last two years of its operation, it is difficult to make strong judgements about efficiency. It is clear that **there is sustained demand for the services provided through the programme and its individual projects.** The **impact of the overlapping work of a suite of providers associated with TED** is a strong legacy and ‘take away’ from its implementation.

Reflections

TED has delivered powerful change in **building the resilience of older people in East Lindsey.** The initiative has achieved a number of legacies spanning the outcomes as set out below:

- Innovation –the development of **innovative processes of older person engagement** through projects such as Fitness, Food and Friends and CHAPS.
- Policy –a **driver in the agreement to make Lincolnshire the rural pathfinder partner for the National Centre for Ageing Better.**
- Business – the **Age-friendly Business scheme, while not unique at a national level, is a major and distinctive campaign in the context of business engagement in Lincolnshire.**
- Return on Investment – **achieving a creditable £5.52 of social value for each £1 invested.**

Legacy Planning

The following provide opportunities for learning from TED to be retained and implemented:

- A LEP pipeline proposal for an Ageing Hub as a centre of expertise, which includes an outreach service and a package of ongoing support to Age-friendly Businesses.
- The approval of the Mablethorpe and Skegness Towns Fund bids, along with associated investments in Boston and Lincoln, bring forward potential connections with TED.
- The proposed Campus for Future Living in Mablethorpe, a multi-agency health hub with a medi-tech and older person outreach service.
- Links to the National Centre of Rural Health and Care, based in Lincolnshire, which has a dedicated remit to look at national best practice in primary care.

There is a need to consider a **sustainable future for the momentum and initiatives arising from TED,** in East Lindsey and across Lincolnshire. The Covid-19 pandemic has increased the policy prominence of the healthy ageing agenda. Consolidating the legacy of TED by building on the connections with key policy bodies and partners should be a key priority for the future of the initiative.