



Good Practice Mentors

Sharing good practice to reach, involve and connect with older people

GPM@syha.co.uk

The Good Practice Mentors are a partnership funded to share the learning, resource and experience from the national Ageing Better programme. Ageing Better worked to reduce loneliness for people aged 50+, and engaged more than 150,000 people in over 366 projects.

The GPM team offer support for organisations to increase their engagement with older people. We can work with you to make improvements and changes to your services, learn more about co-production, and to reach more people in your community.

This resource has been produced by the GPM team to support organisations to engage with older people through activities and events in local communities this [International Day of Older People](#). This toolkit includes learning and 'top tips' around how to engage with harder to reach people, and ensure that activities and events are welcoming and accessible.



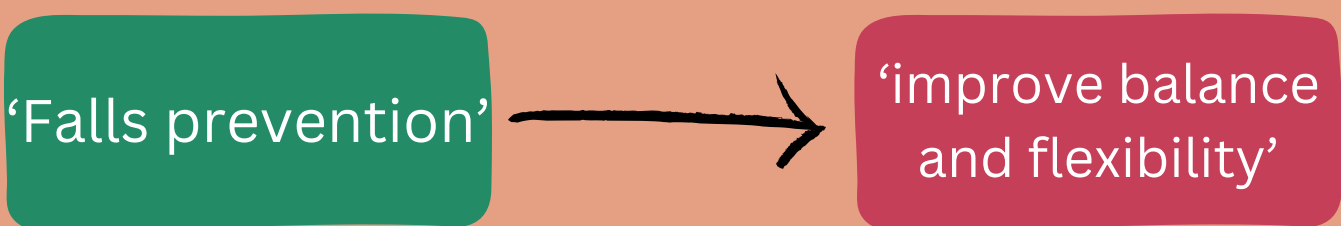
Producing comms as a tool to engage harder to reach older people

Often the older people we most want to reach and engage, have commonly held ‘it’s not for me’ barriers and preconceptions about groups, activities, services and support specifically targeted at older people. It can be useful to produce a piece of comms specifically as a tool to find and engage harder to reach people. This is likely to look quite different to materials produced for wider marketing purposes.

- Use clear transactional (says what it is on the tin) language to describe the activity/opportunity.



- Don’t assume that everyone will know what your activity is and if it’s accessible to them. E.g. yoga – how would you describe this?
- Focus on the positive, not the vulnerability. For example, rather than ‘falls prevention’, talk about the benefits or your activity. E.g. ‘improve balance and flexibility’.



- Avoid references to ‘elderly’, ‘older people’, ‘later life’, ‘loneliness’, ‘isolation’ and ‘vulnerability’. ‘50+’/‘55+’ is clearer and removes assumptions about who and what ‘older people’ means.




- Keep it simple, resist the temptation to list everything that's on offer in your space. This can feel overwhelming or result in people discounting themselves from your offer based on a preconception about something mentioned in your comms.
- Keep the tone of your comms casual and informal e.g. 'drop-by', 'drop-in'. Avoid references to formal sounding clubs or groups.
- Think about your social ask. Rather than inviting people to 'make friends, have fun and socialise', set peoples' minds at rest by describing the atmosphere, e.g 'it's relaxed/easy-going/informal'.



- Anticipate questions – what, why, where, when, who? Include this information in your comms.
- Provide images of the activity location (inside and out) and a map with clear travel directions - people are unlikely to go the extra mile to seek out information for themselves. Providing this information can also overcome barriers for people with literacy issues, ESOL speakers etc.
- Don't assume internet access or ability to contact you online. Provide a contact name and telephone number.
- Be mindful of the impact of images/representations of older people – if people don't self-identify with the people represented, this is likely to trigger 'it's not for me' preconceptions.

Outreach friendly comms example


Pop-up cafe
The Downstairs Lounge, St Albans Church,
Charminster Road, BH9 1DW



Every Friday morning


Drop in anytime between 10am and 12noon for free coffee and biscuits and our selection of books and magazines. Meet other local people aged 55+ in a relaxed informal setting.

Everyone welcome



Find us in the downstairs lounge via the entrance on Charminster Road (behind the bus stop) and follow the signs.

Local bus route information: Route M1, stops right outside on Charminster Road. Routes 5, 5a and U3, stop at the junction of Alma Road and Charminster Road, just a short walk down the hill to St Albans Church.



- Alternative to 'coffee morning'
- Transactional language
- People have autonomy over when they arrive and how long they stay for.
- No social risk
- Everyone welcome

Consider street outreach in the local area. This can have a significant impact on attendance and engagement with groups, including older men.

Information needs to be put up and visible in the spaces and places where older people go and are likely to see it (don't rely on noticeboards alone).

If you want to invite people to contact you, consider using tear off telephone number slips.

Make the most of your informal community assets – the spaces and places people pass through and visit as part of their daily lives. E.g shops, cafés, hairdressers and launderette windows are good locations.

How and where to use your comms:

Put up information a maximum of 1 week in advance of your opportunity, otherwise information may need to be refreshed.

Bus stops are particularly effective, but information is likely to be taken down quickly so may need to be refreshed.

How to create a Warm Welcome

Follow this
link to view
the full
toolkit!



- **Use the '3 second' rule** when people are arriving – make sure staff and volunteers know that they have 3 seconds to politely excuse themselves from the conversation they may be having to personally greet a new member on arrival.
- **Brief all members of staff, volunteers and building staff about greeting people.** Include reception staff and check that they have the capacity to welcome people when they enter the building and walk new members to the right place in the building.
- **Use clear and friendly signs** to guide and direct people into the building and to the specific room being used. For internal signs, use large, easily readable font and be sure to also use them for directing people to and from the toilets.
- **Sign people in** and **provide them with a badge** if you use both of these things.
- **Get staff or volunteers to accompany people** to get themselves a drink and have an introductory chat with new members. Be sure to then have them introduced to another volunteer or member in time to greet the next person.
- **Keep an eye on new people** throughout the session, use volunteers as 'buddies' and ask them to be with new members so they don't become left out.

Note: the 'volunteers' referred to don't have to be official or formal volunteers, they can be regular members of the group who are happy to support new members when reminded that everyone was new once!




Things you can do to prolong the impact of individuals attending a group

- **Use group introductions** – get people to introduce themselves and ask the group to answer a question or provide information about a topic.
- **Use name badges** – this offers discrete support to newcomers and anyone with memory issues.
- **Make time to socialise** – schedule ‘social time’ before and after the official session or activity. Make sure to brief the group leader about this so it is accommodated.
- **Provide refreshments** – this can provide space and time for people to build connections and have informal conversations outside of the activities.
- **Ensure there are enough staff/volunteers** to look after the number of people – this helps to make sure people don’t feel rushed or ignored.
- **Arrange the seating** – use different arrangements for different sessions to reduce the incidence of cliques developing. Use a circle when possible so everyone is included and visible. Place volunteers or table hosts on individual tables if using them to make introductions and keep everyone engaged. Be sure to have enough chairs.

How to get in touch

[Eventbrite](#)

 [LinkedIn](#)

 [@GPMentors](#)

 [Join our mailing list!](#)

If you are interested in a 1:1 no-obligation introductory call with a member of the team, simply contact us on GPM@syha.co.uk



Sharing good practice to reach, involve and connect with older people