

Cambridgeshire Celebrates Age

Evaluation of 2010 programme

A summary

Cambridgeshire Celebrates Age is funded by : Cambridge City Council and South Cambs District Council

Cambridgeshire Celebrates Age (CCA) aims to improve the well-being, independence and quality of life of older people. We want to improve access to opportunities that will help

- People keep fit and healthy,
- Reduce social isolation
- Promote active living
- Promote intergenerational work and integration into the community
- Challenge age discrimination
- Show and value what older people do and what they achieve.

CCA started in 2004, when some Cambridgeshire Older People's Enterprise (COPE) members, decided to use the International Day for Older People¹ on 1st October to Celebrate Age, and galvanised action to achieve this. That year, a small number of activities were published in Cambridge City. A review suggested that the agenda was huge, not achievable by a single organisation, and partners sharing the same objectives were sought. Cambridge City Council's Community Development team became involved in 2005, and a wide partnership comprising of people from the statutory, voluntary and community sectors was formed². In 2007, activity widened to other parts of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire. Since it started, an ever increasing number and range of activities, from greater numbers of partners³, are published in the yearly programme.

Each year we have learnt lessons through review. We learnt that:

- Organisations and people involved benefit from being involved e.g. they learn new things, extend networks, get new members for their organisations, look at things anew, and continue to want to be involved.
- Feedback⁴ from activities was good. People enjoyed the events. Some regular events got new additional attendees and some new activities had become ongoing. People gained ideas from others and developed similar activities. But prescribed/imposed events do not succeed. People only go to activities which have meaning for them.
- People are more likely to go to local events. Access, particularly in the rural areas, remains an issue and it is still difficult to reach some people.
- Many of the activities published are organized and provided for by people aged 50 and over.
- Intergenerational events are valued.

¹ Where "Older People" is defined as people aged 50 and over.

² Steering group members are listed at the end of the evaluation report.

³ Evaluation report describes groups involved.

⁴ Where available

In response, CCA has attempted to create opportunities for greater local involvement through development of hubs⁵ based on district councils. Success is varied, as partnership development is difficult with frequent changes in funding, organisations and personnel. In 2010, hub meetings were held in Cambridge City, Huntingdon, and Fenland, where local groups planned their own 2010 programmes very successfully. Cambridge City, Huntingdon, and South Cambs hubs were involved in the evaluation this year.

Numbers, range of activities and partners continued to increase in 2010. Evaluation reinforced points raised previously. But new issues were raised:

- People were confused when they saw their routine activity being “badged” as a CCA activity.
- Some steering group members questioned how much the primary focus on the yearly programme in October, made a difference to people and contributed to sustainability.
- For the first time, local residents rang to ask about CCA, but all queries were about ongoing events, rather than the October programme.
- New partners e.g. Camread, Cambridge Hard of Hearing group, showed us that we need to ensure access for people with impairments/differences
- Some joint events were highlighted as being particularly successful.

During 2010, Cambridge City had collated information of activities for the over 50s in the city. The list is not currently comprehensive but ensures that available information is together and easily accessible.

The steering group has agreed that we will:

- Continue to encourage local groups to use October to celebrate age and if possible, use it as an opportunity for joint working.
- Work with local hubs to collate information on ongoing activities.
- Work with local hubs, to explore efficient and effective ways of communicating information to those in need. Front line workers and carers could be crucial in this information dissemination. We discussed and agreed that blanket universal cover is not effective in reaching those most in need because of the potential of information overload.
- The yearly published programme will change. We will publish a programme of special celebratory events and a programme of what is routinely available in each local area (Building and improving on its comprehensiveness and accuracy year on year with local hubs).
- Working with partners, we will improve access to people with sight and hearing impairment. The multi-ethnic event in Cambridge City helps intermingling and sharing between different communities and is seeking to widen to include more communities.

⁵ Cambridge City, South Cambs, East Cambs, Fenland, Huntingdonshire.

- Evaluation will change: from counting numbers of activities to examining how partners and hubs work together in collating and disseminating information and improving access to those in need.

CCA's budget over the years has remained static but the programme has continued to develop in spite of considerable personnel and organisational changes. This has been possible because of the commitment and input from partners and individuals, working together, flexibly, with mutual respect for each other, and the pressures each face, personally or at work.

This year, we have challenged the approach we have used to date, resulting in a rebalancing of priorities. The programme is ambitious, and there are considerable external pressures. But we anticipate that we will continue to make progress if we maintain our ethos of mutual respect for each other in our partnership work. We will report on our progress, as usual, and describe the outcomes of this revised approach.

This report was written by Suan Rowland on behalf of the Cambridgeshire Celebrates Age Steering Group (Feb 2011).

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