

We asked a group of older people who have been involved in co-design and/or co-production of Ageing Better Middlesbrough to help us design the involvement aspect of our new Community Development Project for the next three years.

15 older people came along to the workshop. They have all helped the programme in different ways and have different levels of involvement, within different areas of the programme.

Below are the key themes that emerged.

We have used the term *involvement* to describe any co-design or co-production activity for the benefit of this document.

### **Communication**

- There needs to be two way communication between staff and the people involved. Feedback should always be provided about decisions that have been made as a result of involvement.
- There needs to be a single point of contact to provide information for people about involvement opportunities across the programme.
- All staff in the programme as a whole need to be up to date with the different opportunities for people to get involved and be able to provide encouragement and support for people at the right time.

### **Attract more people to get involved**

- Directly asking for people's help works. Do not be afraid to be direct and specific.
- Seeing staff doing a good job motivates people to want to help.
- Being specific about the role or skills needed for certain things could attract someone who would not respond to more vague or general requests to get involved.
- Avoid the word volunteer, it has negative connotations for people.

## **Choices and flexibility are key**

- People's specific interests can attract them to opportunities to get involved. Staff need to recognise when there might be opportunities to support someone to take the next step to get more involved in the programme.
- Providing an overview or induction about what the programme does as a whole will help people see how they could fit in and encourage them to get more involved.
- People need to feel they have choice and control over what they do and how much they commit to.

## **Provide the right support**

- One to one support should be offered to everyone involved in the programme, helping staff understand someone's personal goals, skills and experience, as well as any barriers they might have.
- Opportunities to meet on a one to one basis should be offered throughout someone's involvement with the programme.
- Meeting other people who are involved is also important and bringing people together in groups to share experiences is valuable.
- People need a safe space to try out new responsibilities without judgement or commitment.

## **How it should feel**

- People should feel valued and appreciated.
- People should feel they are being encouraged and cared about.
- People should feel included and part of something.
- People should feel like they are building confidence and able to take small steps.

## **Developing people's skills**

- People might need specific training to do new things and this should be available and accessible.
- A 'how to set up a new group' tool kit could be developed.
- A 'how to set up a group' training course would be useful.

## **Some barriers to consider**

- Transport is a barrier for people to get involved.
- People need to be reimbursed for any expenses that arise from their involvement.
- Mobility issues can prevent people from being more involved.

## **Some other points**

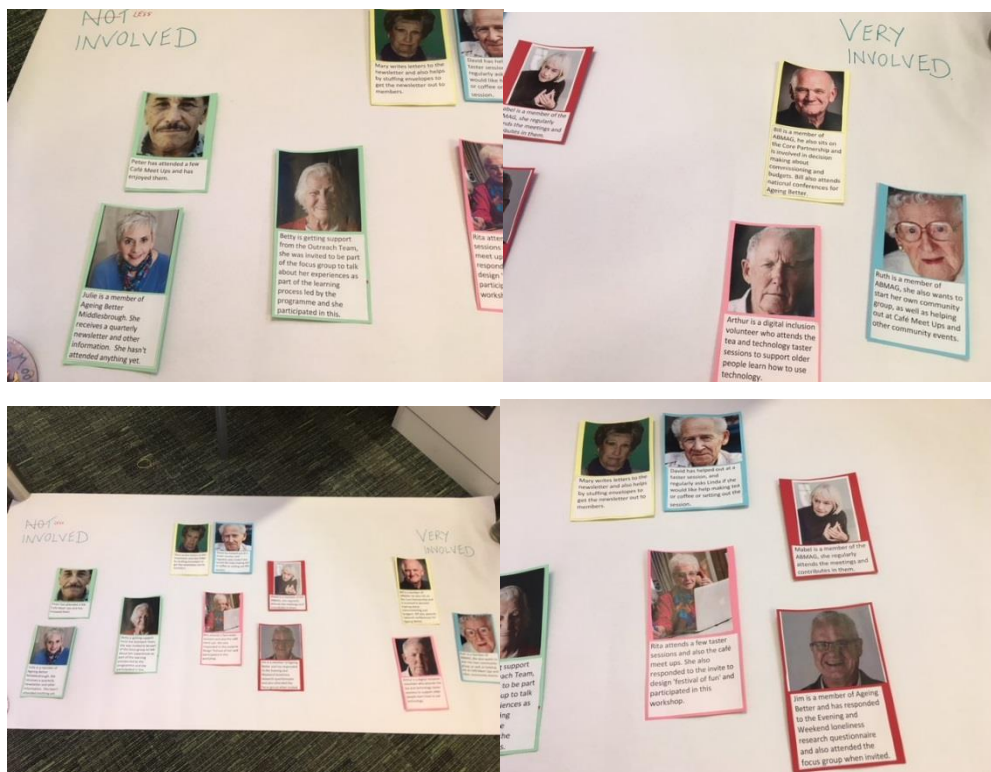
- People need to be reminded that they will get lots out of giving something back. As well as access to Ageing Better Middlesbrough activities, they will also get lots out of it personally.
- People need to know they will be helped to help.

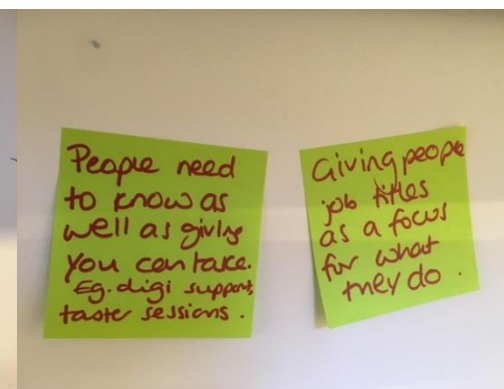
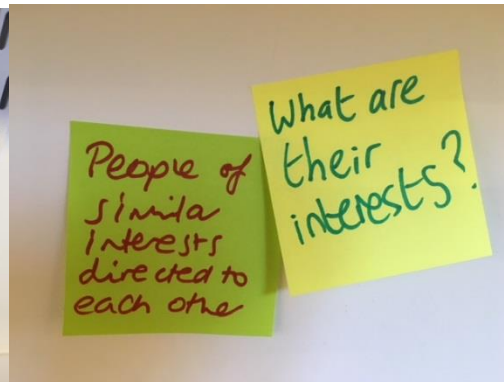
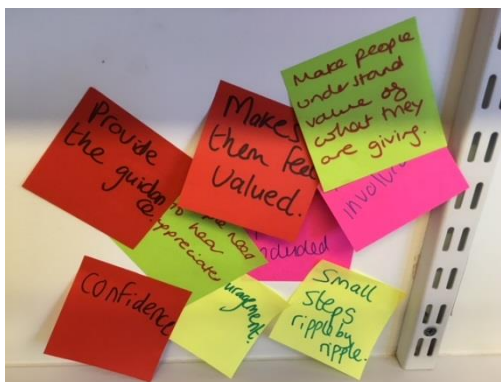
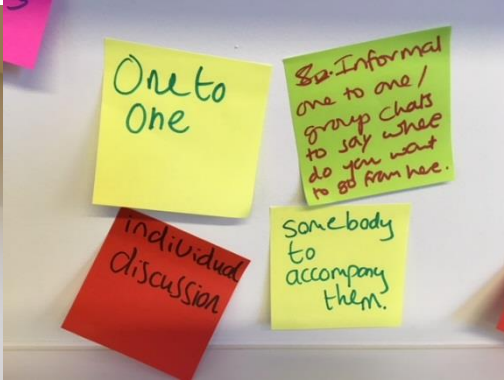
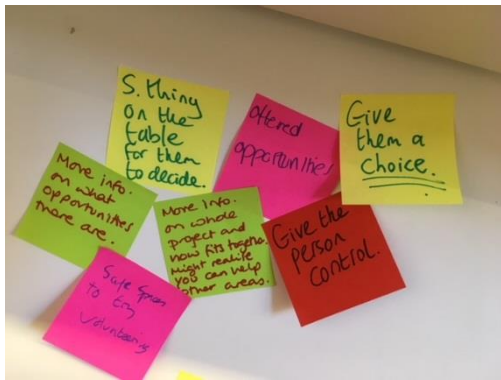
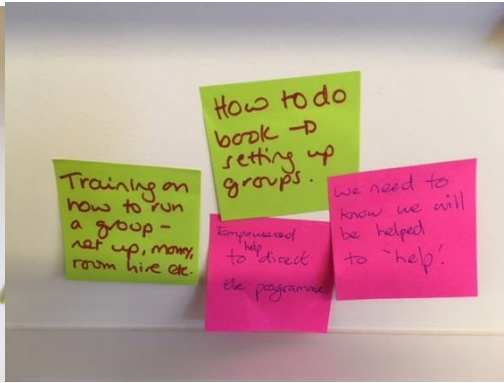
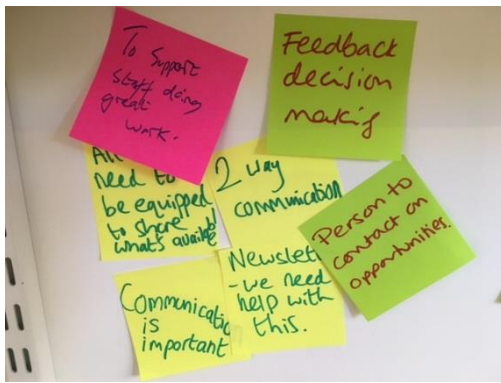
## Workshop photos

We created some fictional Ageing Better Middlesbrough 'supporters' based on what we know about the range of ways people are involved in the programme and asked the older people to place them on a scale of involvement from *less involved* to *very involved*.

We came up with three broad groups of people (involved a little, quite involved and very involved). The older people worked in groups to identify what support these people would need and write them on post-its. The following questions were used to guide the activity:

1. What support might these people need to sustain their current involvement?
2. Do you have any ideas about how to make their involvement experience as positive as possible?
3. Are there any opportunities to get more involved? If so, what do you think would help them to take the next step?





**Feedback from participants**

"That was smashing, I really enjoyed it, I'd like to do more of this kind of thing in the future if there are more opportunities"

"It was enjoyable because of the people here, all working together and lovely company"