

## Rural Wisdom Get-Together

Wednesday 13th December 2017,  
Healthy Valleys, Lanark.



### Rural Wisdom: Older People Shaping Rural Communities

Rural Wisdom is a community development and shared learning project that explores the impact of community-based activities that are led by older people living in rural areas. It has been designed to benefit people across the UK.

There are 4 elements to Rural Wisdom

- Working alongside people in local areas in Scotland and Wales, to encourage more community-based supports and local services that are led by older people. The first locations are: Aberfeldy and the surrounding communities; Brechin, Edzell and the north Angus glens; Eaglesham; Leeswood and Milford Haven.
- Networks in Scotland and Wales, to bring together people from any area who are interested and want to share what they are doing.
- Linking up with people in other parts of the UK.
- Evaluating the impacts of what we do.

### Rural Wisdom: Get-Together

As part of the Rural Wisdom Project we will be holding a series of events across Scotland. These 'Get-Together' events are for anyone who is interested in how rural communities can work well for older people and others as they age. We hope these Get-Togethers can help build a nation-wide network to share ideas, enthusiasm and inspiration about age-friendly communities. This will also provide a place to share any challenges or issues and work together to overcome these. We feel that it is important that our get-togethers move around Scotland and visit places that can share valuable insights into rural communities.

### Rural Wisdom: Get-Together in Lanark, December 2017

We were delighted that our friends at Healthy Valleys offered to host our third get-together. Healthy Valleys is a community-led health initiative working across rural South-Lanarkshire. Visit [www.healthyvalleys.org.uk](http://www.healthyvalleys.org.uk) or call 01555 662496.

**If you would like to attend a future event, suggest a location or host a Rural Wisdom Get-together please contact: [hello@ruralwisdom.org](mailto:hello@ruralwisdom.org)**

## Sharing what we're hearing:

Shared learning is an important part of the Rural Wisdom project. We hope to build on this as the project develops; connecting groups, communities and organisations who can offer support and inspiration to each other in a variety of different ways.

We shared what we heard from our 'Vision for Change' events. Through these events the residents of Eaglesham, Brechin, Edzell and areas around Aberfeldy identified the changes they would like to see in their communities. A copy of each area report can be found here: [Rural Wisdom Scotland Area Reports](#).

As well as our friends at Healthy Valleys we were joined by a wide range of groups, organisations and individuals. They shared some really great examples of approaches that are working well for older people in their communities.

We were pleased to hear about the support that people in our communities can receive from the Police. Details of your local Community Policing Team can be found here: <http://www.scotland.police.uk/your-community/>

## Here are some short summaries of our discussions in Lanark:

### ***Action on Hearing Loss Scotland – What's working well?***

We were pleased that we were joined by Action on Hearing Loss Scotland's Information Officer and Volunteer Development Officer. They shared some information about their Hear to Inform and Connect project;

*“Hear to Inform and Connect will ensure older people feel better informed about how to manage their hearing loss and be better connected with their local communities, families and friends.*

*Our team of Information Officers and trained volunteers provide information in community settings across Scotland. They will also work with care homes, community groups and local organisations that provide services or support for older people with hearing loss, to help them make their services more accessible and inclusive.”* [www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk)

They also highlighted the complexity and challenges around supporting volunteers in rural communities. We heard about how they are trying to build a pool of volunteers who are keen to support a wider range of their projects. This not only offers more opportunities to the volunteers themselves but supports the projects to be more sustainable and resilient.

For more information please contact: [scotland@hearingloss.org.uk](mailto:scotland@hearingloss.org.uk)

## ***‘Volunteering – What’s working well at Healthy Valleys?’***

We know that Healthy Valleys have built up a great support network for those that volunteer with them. We asked them to share their approach, what they know is working well and how they ensure that their volunteers feel valued.

### **Flexibility for volunteers**

They stressed how important it was to offer flexibility to their volunteers – to provide volunteering opportunities that work for everyone’s circumstances. This ranges from regular volunteering to volunteering at one-off events. There are volunteering opportunities through a range of their projects which each offer something different.

***“Vary your approaches, different things work for different people”***

### **Recruiting volunteers**

It’s important to consider who you want to reach and the best methods to do this. Adapt your marketing to reach different audiences. Use case studies, video clips and real-life scenarios. Some approaches that they find successful are: Facebook, posters and leaflets, community events, word of mouth, free sites such as Gumtree and S1 Jobs, and through existing volunteers.

***“Stay in touch with people, always keep them updated”***

### **Supporting and valuing volunteers**

As well as covering volunteer expenses Healthy Valleys offer a package of additional support through;

**Training** – both essential and additional training covering a range of topics.

**Support and supervision** – have an ‘open door’ policy and provide varying degrees of support from 1:1 to group support.

**Peer support** – bring volunteers together to share challenges and successes.

**Volunteer reward and recognition** – such as group events, project events, newsletters, birthday cards...have fun!

**Award ceremonies** – have the volunteer’s formally recognised. This year Healthy Valley’s volunteers were awarded with VASLAN’s Volunteering Organisation of the Year.

***“Being a volunteer is really very important to me,  
I enjoy feeling like I’m a part of a network – something bigger”***

If you would like more information about **Healthy Valleys Re-Connect** project which supports older people to re-engage with their communities please contact: [barbara@healthyvalleys.org.uk](mailto:barbara@healthyvalleys.org.uk) or [fiona@healthyvalleys.org.uk](mailto:fiona@healthyvalleys.org.uk)

## **'Reaching Out'**

### ***Building relationships between organisations and communities.***

One of our afternoon discussions focussed around ways that organisations can 'reach out' to the communities they are serving; building trust, understanding and better relationships.

**Face-to-Face** – it's fantastic to find new ways to connect through technology but, at times, nothing beats being there in person.

**Go Visiting** – find out what's happening locally and ask if you can go along to events, groups and clubs. This will help your organisation reach more people, but it will also give you an idea of what's already out there and what's working well.

**Build reciprocal partnerships** – talk with other organisations and groups about sharing your resources. Can you offer some free meeting space to a local group? Could they help spread the word about your project? Play to each other's strengths and build meaningful relationships along the way.

**Think creatively** – use different methods and approaches. You might reach different people by providing information in different places.

*"We found the local hairdressers to be a great place to reach people, now we always make sure our new information is available there".*

## **What next?**

These are just a few of the points raised on the day. If you would like to share any advice, information, challenges or connect with others **please contact us:**

[hello@ruralwisdom.org](mailto:hello@ruralwisdom.org) / 0141 419 0451

We are busy planning our next Get-Togethers. We hope to visit Inverness in March and Ayr in June. If you would like to attend, host or suggest a topic for a Rural Wisdom Get-Together please get in touch, we would love to hear from you.

**For more information on the Rural Wisdom Project please visit:**

<http://ruralwisdom.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/RuralWisdom/>

