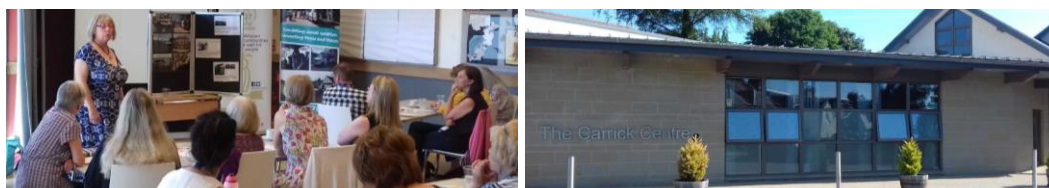


## Rural Wisdom Get-Together

Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2018

Maybole, South Ayrshire



### 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 Maybole, June 2018

The [Carrick Centre](#) in Maybole provided us with a great venue where we were joined by people representing a wide range of groups, organisations, services and a guest speaker to talk with us about community transport.

**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)

## South Ayrshire Community Transport

Catriona Haston introduced us to [South Ayrshire Community Transport](#) (SACT) and shared some of the solutions that they have developed to fill the gaps identified in their area.

SACT is a registered SCIO (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation). This brings together various community transport operators, third sector organisations and community groups to provide a coordinated approach to transport across South Ayrshire.

Their initial research showed that the biggest gaps were found in the rural communities, particularly around the Carrick area. They started with 2 mini-buses and through various funders have been able to grow their fleet to 8 vehicles, ranging from MPV's to 16-seater mini-buses.

### What services do they offer?

- Vehicle Hire: Groups and organisations can hire the mini-buses or MPV's with or without a driver.
- CB8 Barr Bus Service: The Barr Bus started in 2017 and operates 3 times a week, 5 times a day from 8.20am – 6.00pm. There are designated stops in Barr and Girvan and operates a 'hail and ride' service between. It's the first scheduled bus service in the Barr area in over 10 years. The user numbers for this service have almost doubled in the past year.
- Out and About Excursion Club: These weekly clubs offer a variety of outings. They offer a door to door service and use their wheelchair accessible buses. The clubs are designed to support people who may find it difficult to get about independently. Membership to the club is free and participants only pay for the trips that are of interest to them. SACT run two clubs, one covering the Carrick area and the other covering the Kyle area.

### What are some of the challenges?

- Operating costs: There is the initial outlay for the vehicles themselves, as well as ongoing maintenance costs. For example, The Barr Bus service costs around £36,000 annually. Funding is also required for the SCIO itself to ensure there are staff to coordinate the services and comply with relevant legislation.
- Volunteer Drivers: SACT would not be able to operate without their volunteers but due to the success of their services they always require more volunteers. They offer training and support and their volunteers comment that they enjoy the drives as much as their clients.

### For more information:

Website: [www.sacommunitytransport.org](http://www.sacommunitytransport.org)

Email: [info@sacommunitytransport.org](mailto:info@sacommunitytransport.org)

Telephone: 01292 270864



We used our afternoon session to discuss some of the themes that were identified through our earlier discussions. The following discussion notes highlight some of the challenges and opportunities that relate to ageing well in rural communities. If you would like to contribute to these discussions or would like to highlight something that's working well in your community, please get in touch.

## Transport

Transport has been a recurring topic across many of the communities we have been working alongside throughout the Rural Wisdom project. We know that innovative solutions are being led by communities in many areas across Scotland. Community Transport can play a critical role in the lives of those in rural communities. They fill the gaps and create links with health, education, employment as well as support the wellbeing of residents by enabling them to remain socially connected and independent. An effective transport infrastructure is essential to sustain our rural communities and enable them to thrive.

### Challenges and impacts

- Our current transport infrastructure isn't providing sufficient links to employment opportunities.
- Young people and families are moving away to seek out employment and financial stability elsewhere. This can divide rural communities creating older populations. This becomes problematic when people find themselves living in areas that no longer work well for them.
- A lack of accessible transport in rural areas creates additional barriers for people who are living with disabilities or mobility issues.
- Current transport systems are disconnected and do not interact with each other; bus and train routes don't sufficiently link, and timetables are often out of sync making journeys unmanageable for many people.
- For some people taxi's can be a solution for shorter journeys but the costs can be prohibitive for regular use or longer journeys. As well as financial restrictions there are access issues as not all taxi companies can provide fully accessible vehicles.

### What's working well?

- Pembrokeshire Association for Community Transport Organisations (PACTO) is another great example of a collaborative solution: Scooters to boost employment opportunities, bus buddies to support those with mobility issues, dial-a-ride's and various car schemes. [www.pacto.org.uk](http://www.pacto.org.uk)
- Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) is an on-demand service provided in Muckhart and West Kinross-shire (DRT1), and Kinloch Rannoch and Rannoch Station (DRT2). Provided by local private taxi companies the fares are close to local bus fares and journeys are free to those with a Scottish National Entitlement Card. <http://www.pkc.gov.uk/article/14957/Demand-Responsive-Transport>

## Intergenerational Practice

Opportunities to come together as a whole community, or to meet others of varying ages has been something that we've heard from the local communities who are working alongside our development workers. This can take any form, ranging from community projects, planned events to informal gatherings. We are working on some stories and case studies from our Rural Wisdom project to share with you soon.

### Benefits

- Creates and strengthens partnerships and collaborations by bringing together different groups; schools, nurseries, men's sheds, care providers etc.
- Brings together local knowledge, skills and passions that can support people of all ages achieve their goals. Could there be a place for intergenerational activity to support people to gain employment through acquiring new skills?
- Helps to break down barriers within communities increasing opportunities for building social connections and friendships. Staying connected to other people (and places) can be a crucial factor for our wellbeing as we age.
- Effective practice is mutually beneficial to all involved, regardless of age – it can broaden our horizons and introduce us to new possibilities.

### Challenges

- Ensuring that the opportunities provide long-term engagement as this is what creates lasting, meaningful relationships.
- Transport can provide issues when trying to bring people or groups together, particularly in rural areas.
- Getting information out to those who may be interested – different methods work for different people.

### What's Working Well?

- NAE (No Age Excluded) is a new intergenerational project supported by East Ayrshire Volunteer Centre. Email: [volunteer@eav.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@eav.org.uk)
- Intergenerational National Network provides an informal network across Scotland for anyone with an interest in intergenerational practice. They meet approx. 4 times a year and welcome individuals as well as organisations and community groups. Email: [patscrutton247@gmail.com](mailto:patscrutton247@gmail.com)
- Generations Working Together provide information, support and encourage involvement in intergenerational activity across Scotland. Visit: [www.generationsworkingtogether.org](http://www.generationsworkingtogether.org)

## Social Connections

Social connections and friendships are themes that ran through all our conversations at our Get-Together. We understand that maintaining our existing key relationships, as well as having opportunities to develop new ones are crucial for our wellbeing. The group considered what's currently working well and what would support more social connections in future.

### What strengthens social connections?

- Community Groups – Men's Shed's, 'Book and Bun', 'Knit and Natter' groups are working well in many communities providing specific space for people to come together. They usually have a paid member of staff or a key volunteer who supports the coordination. Clubs and activity groups can also strengthen connections – many have specific time in their session for a cuppa and chatting.
- Bumping Spaces – these offer informal opportunities for people to socialise in their own communities. Benches and seating areas, libraries, bus stops, hairdressers, post-office, shops, pubs, cafe's. How can we support more bumping spaces? As well as social connections these quite often boost our rural economies and offer employment opportunities.
- Technology – This enables people to stay connected when other options aren't possible. Intergenerational opportunities. Barriers around rural broadband connections.
- Volunteering – Offers a range of connections from regular, formal to drop-in or as and when. Support is available to find the right opportunity with options.
- Self-Directed Support – Options 1 and 2 should give people more choice and provide opportunities for social connections. Is this happening well?
- Carers – advocates, formal, non-formal, befriending roles provide social connections themselves as well as supporting links to other people/places.

### Challenges

- The first steps - support to make initial introductions can be helpful; buddies, travel companions and connectors.
- Access – some venues and locations can cause additional barriers. Local access panels can offer good information and support.
- Transport – Accessibility, affordability, infrastructure. Volunteer schemes can be helpful but require resources and coordinators.
- Service Provision – Local authorities / National Government need to take into consideration how their policies/strategies impact social connections. Those making decisions often live out with the area and lack local understanding.
- Funding – this can impact sustainability as well as ownership. Are there other ways that social activities can be resourced?
- Culture Shift – communities need to lead the changes in their communities with workers taking a 'doing with, not doing to' attitude. Particularly when it relates to building meaningful relationships.

## Living with dementia in rural areas

We are hearing about the great work around creating dementia friendly communities. Many town and cities are working towards being 'dementia friendly', which tends to work well for everyone. Our remote and rural communities are home to people who want to live well with dementia too, what is it like for them?

### Challenges

- Rural isolation – those who live in rural locations may have less social interaction with others. Could early signs and symptoms be getting missed? Community members may pick up on these subtle changes before there is any health or social care involvement.
- Attitudes – stigma and lack of understanding around ageing and dementia impacts on quality of life, diminishing people's choices and rights.
- Local services/provision – local shops/businesses may not fully understand how to best support people to use their services. These local services are crucial in maintaining social connections, independence and economy.
- Care Provision – lack of carers for rural areas. Information and supports for carers are also lacking. Many carers working alongside people living with dementia have not had sufficient specific dementia training. Financial restrictions and reduced resources means that carers have less time with people and care packages lack continuity.
- Information – communication difficulties means that people are losing out on information that is available elsewhere. This is compounded by a lack of transport to get to events/ training/ networks.

### Improvements

- Training – specific training for rural care professionals.
- Community supports – local people offering caring supports to each other.
- "Gin Events" – social events that offer information e.g. how to live well and balance medication with alcohol intake.
- Rural carers network – peer support as well as professional advice/info.
- 'Place-based' information – relevant advice and contacts that is specific to that village. This information would help people support their neighbours as they would know where/who to turn to.
- Community Awareness – information sessions that are targeted to those who may not traditionally attend a dementia awareness session; scouts/guides groups, schools, local shops. Reach out to these groups to create dementia friendly 'villages/streets/neighbourhoods'.
- Check-In's – District nurse periodic check-ins to those living on the outskirts of rural communities, to those who may be particularly isolated.

### What's working well?

- Dementia Friendly Communities Helmsdale is a great example of a supportive rural community developing innovative solutions.  
[www.adementiafriendlycommunity.com](http://www.adementiafriendlycommunity.com)



## Our Rural Wisdom resources

We have recently launched our first Rural Wisdom resource:

### “Tips for Getting People Involved”

Our resources bring together the invaluable information that has been shared with us through our Get-Togethers, our work alongside local communities, and our work with partner organisations across Scotland and Wales.

The booklet will be available to download from the resources section on our website

[www.otbds.org](http://www.otbds.org)



## Connect with Rural Wisdom

These are just a few of the points raised on the day. If you are interested in any of the issues mentioned or have any examples that you could share with us, please get in touch.

If you would like to receive any of our Scottish Get-Together notes, attend future events or receive our e-newsletter that covers Rural Wisdom in Scotland and Wales please email us on: [hello@ruralwisdom.org](mailto:hello@ruralwisdom.org) or call: 0141 419 0451

We are busy planning our next Get-Togethers. Our next event will be in Nairn this Autumn. If you would like to attend, or host a 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/>

