



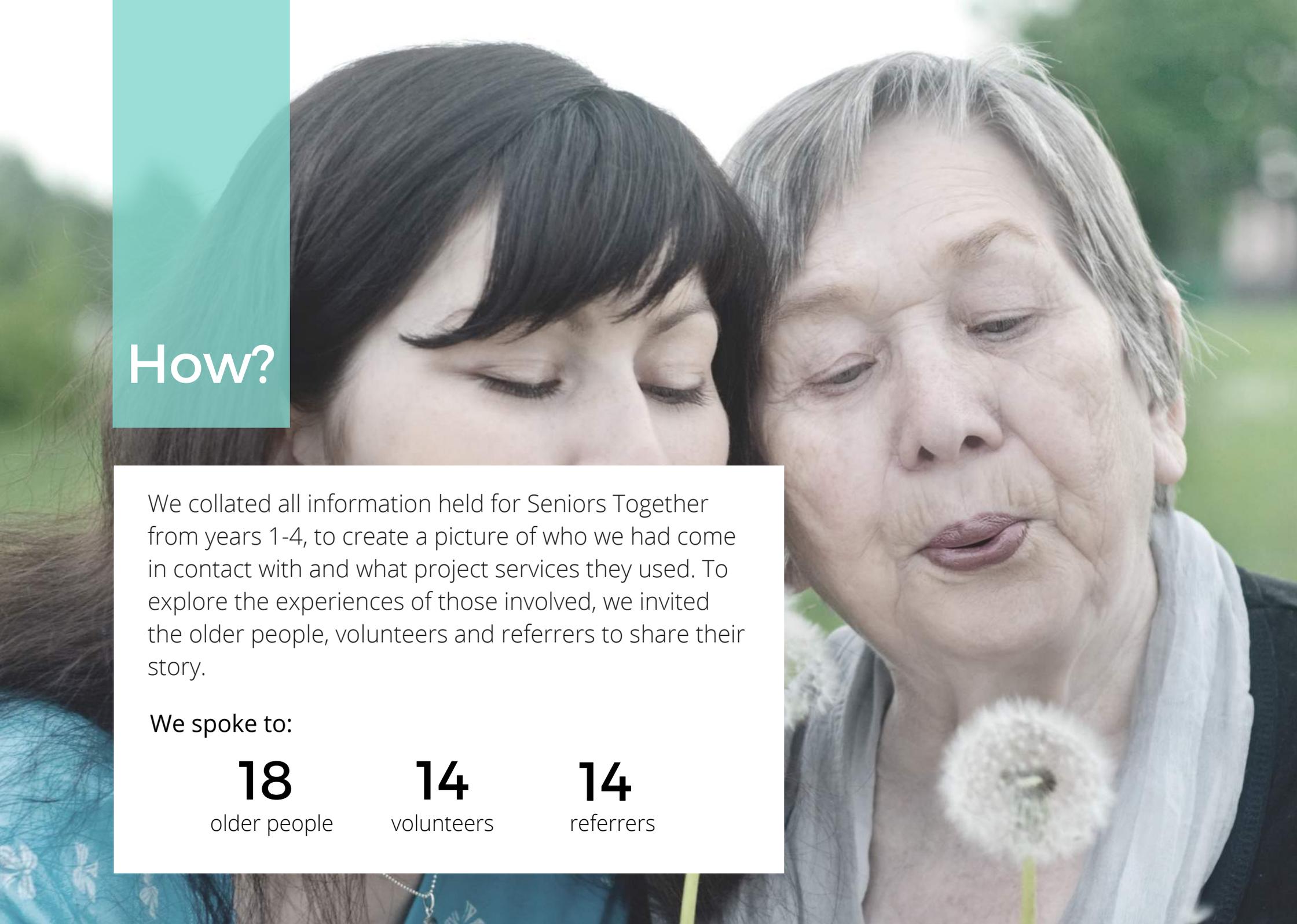
Seniors Together
Evaluation

Why Evaluate?

Seniors Together is a BIG Lottery funded service established in 2013 by Voluntary Action East Renfrewshire. This **ambitious** project was designed to provide befriending services and group events for isolated older adults in East Renfrewshire; all supported by volunteers (predominantly aged over 50). A key outcome was to increase social connectivity for both the older people and volunteers involved.

The project has proven to be a **vital resource**; meeting all agreed 5 year targets in the first year. To understand its successes in more depth, we considered it imperative to complete a full evaluation. We wanted to know the **impact** the project had on those involved, the role of the project in the landscape of services in East Renfrewshire and crucially what **gaps and challenges** exist.

Our aim? Use this learning in a wider community context to design a collective and sustainable approach to older people's services; encouraging greater **social connectivity** throughout East Renfrewshire.



How?

We collated all information held for Seniors Together from years 1-4, to create a picture of who we had come in contact with and what project services they used. To explore the experiences of those involved, we invited the older people, volunteers and referrers to share their story.

We spoke to:

18

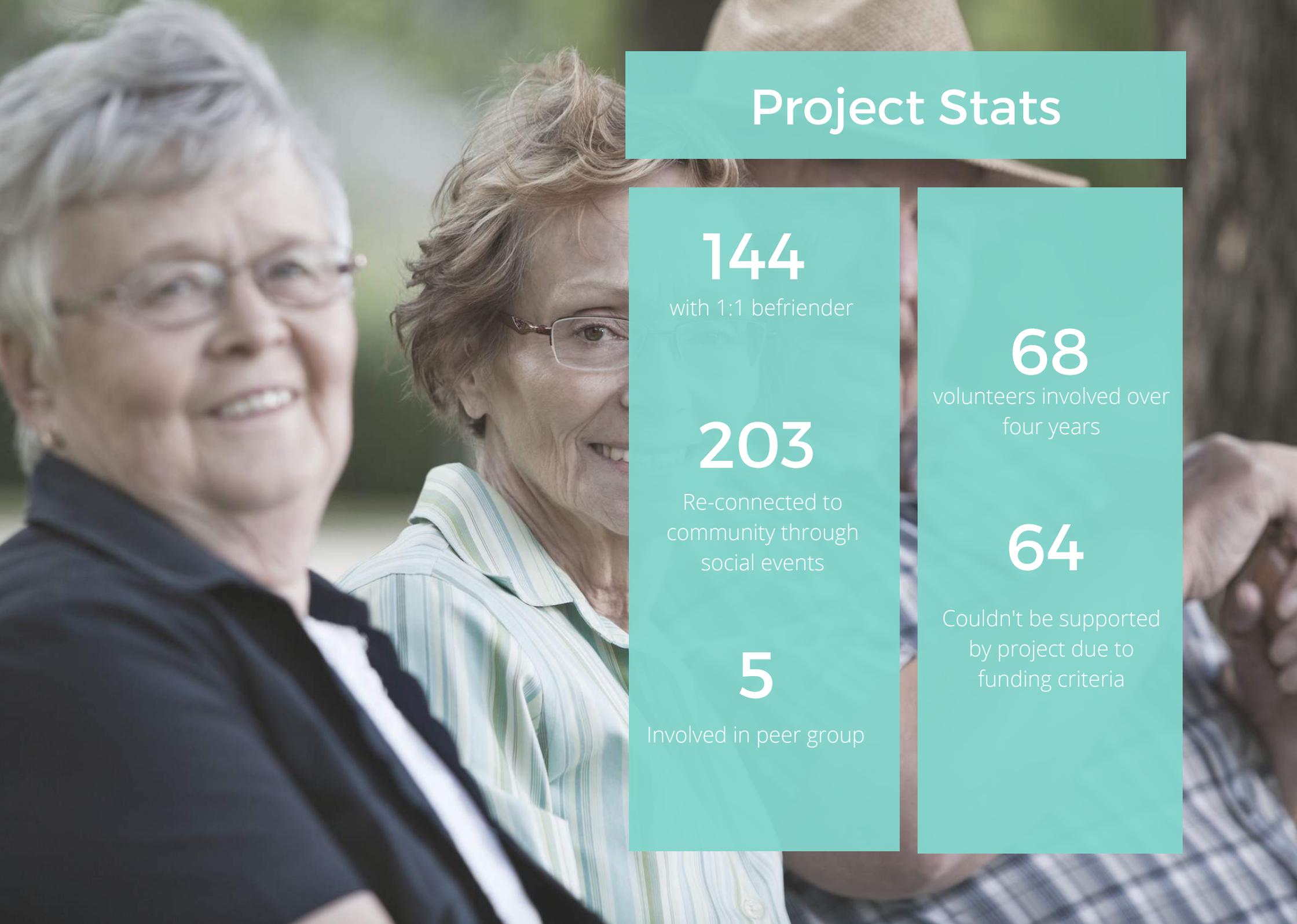
older people

14

volunteers

14

referrers



Project Stats

144

with 1:1 befriender

203

Re-connected to
community through
social events

5

Involved in peer group

68

volunteers involved over
four years

64

Couldn't be supported
by project due to
funding criteria

Our Findings

We found that the project had an overwhelmingly positive impact on those involved. It brought people together and nurtured friendships. It gave people feelings of purpose and belonging, this was particularly evident with the volunteers.

However we also recognised that the reach of the project was restricted due to criteria set by the funder. 64 referrals could not be offered a service due to this. We also know from experiences shared that people often wanted other ways to connect with people, more opportunities to meet people and other supports to help with practical things.

Overall, the findings suggested the project acted as a catalyst for social connectivity but that there is great potential to do more.



Impact on Older people

Companionship

"I think she keeps me in touch because you look forward to that door going on a Monday night and she has always got a wee snash of something to tell you"

Someone to confide in

"I love her coming to visit because we have a good old chat and I feel there's not a lot of people I can open up to, to speak to about personal things but I just feel, I really feel comfortable especially if I haven't seen anybody, you know?"

Connectedness

"I used to be very isolated. That's where I found the groups helped. It's just getting in touch and talking to somebody, and it's leading to other things as well."





Impact on Volunteers

Satisfaction

"I think solving the person's problem gives me a lot of satisfaction, job satisfaction if you like. So you know, if I can solve a wee problem that's been in their head. That gives me satisfaction."

Purpose

"I'm getting, to sit and chat to somebody as well. Yes I've got a lot out of it. I feel as if I am doing some good. Rather than sitting in the house watching some telly. I feel as if I am helping people."

Increased social networks

"I've taken on the befriending service, taken on Community Transport, joined the University of the Third Age. All are new things that I never did before...now there's so many things that fill my time, I'm never bored"

Next Steps

As we have evidenced, the Seniors Together Project was influential in creating new social connections. Additionally, there is strong evidence to suggest that social isolation and loneliness can result in poorer physical and mental health. Therefore, it makes sense to grow opportunities for people to connect with others and prevent people becoming socially isolated or lonely.

Our vision is to take the learning from Seniors Together into the community; ensuring that people in East Renfrewshire can meet with others, connect, make friends and be involved. One person or organisation cannot do this alone and so we plan to facilitate conversations with others about how this could be achieved. This activity will happen as part of organised engagement events and community involvement.

This has great potential. We hope you want to be part of it.



Get in Touch

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