

Case study:

# Bristol Link Age

LinkAge has existed in Bristol since 2007. The LinkAge programme aims to promote and enhance the lives of older people (55+ years old) through a range of activities, from walking groups to coffee mornings, that are run through a number of older people-led 'hubs' across the city. A main aim of the LinkAge approach is to bring in older people that feel very isolated in their local communities.

You can learn more about their different services on [their website](#).

## What is going well?

A recent evaluation by the University of the West of England looked at one new hub in Whitehall and St George. Their baseline survey found that 75% of people using the new LinkAge hub live alone and 50% declared themselves to be "very socially isolated". Through surveys, interviews and focus groups with older people attending social activities and classes, plus other stakeholders, the evaluation found that:

- For every £1 invested in new Hub, there was a Social Return on Investment of £1.20
- There was significant improvement by beneficiaries on a 'Friendship Scale', with average scores moving from 'isolated or with a low level of social support' at the beginning of the Hub to 'very or highly socially connected' at follow up
- The number of people who said they felt connected increased from 33% to 89%
- Six months after joining, beneficiaries felt more satisfied with their lives, and happier
- 26% of beneficiaries reported that they had stopped taking some form of medication since they had started visiting

## What can we learn from Bristol LinkAge?

This evaluation demonstrated the importance of having a good Community Development Worker and volunteer team who were able to spend a considerable amount of time with older residents to design and deliver the activities from the outset. It was important that the people who got involved with the project felt like they had a say in how it was run. You can download the full evaluation report [here](#).