

Rural Wisdom Eaglesham and Waterfoot

1 year on



What is Rural Wisdom?

Rural Wisdom is working with communities in Scotland and Wales to create opportunities for older people to shape their community. Our aim is to make communities work better for older people and the other people who live there.

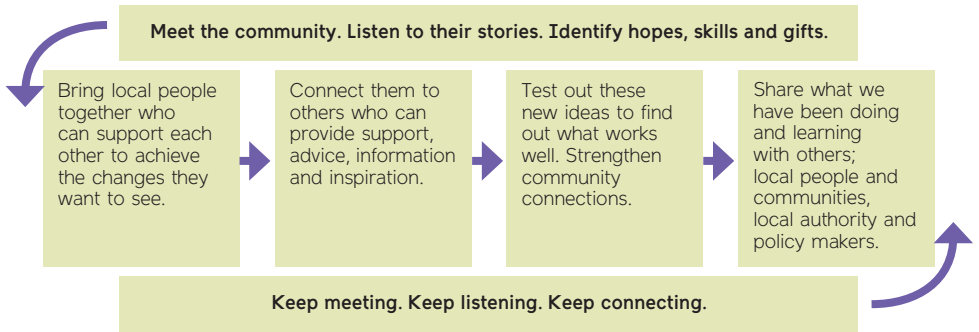
These are the outcomes we want to achieve:

- More older people, and a more diverse range of older people, have a stronger voice.
- Older people have the opportunity for more social connections in their communities.
- There are more activities that are led by older people and are co-produced in the community which older people can get support from.
- People of all ages are part of creating communities that work well for older people.
- Older people in rural areas are contributing to local and national policies and initiatives.

The project began in 2017 and we spent that summer meeting people across Eaglesham and Waterfoot. We wanted to hear about what was important to them, what changes they wanted to see and how they wanted to contribute to making these changes happen. We produced a report booklet and shared this with other people, groups and organisations. This highlighted the issues in the area and the ideas that local people had that could make things work better.

This booklet describes what has happened over the following year. There are two similar update booklets for North Angus and Highland Perthshire, which are the other 2 areas that are part of Rural Wisdom in Scotland. Our colleagues in Wales are also telling people about the issues there and the progress that is happening.

What's happened over the past year?



We've continued to talk with people across Eaglesham and Waterfoot, it's important to us that we keep these conversations going – this helps us to be flexible and make changes to what we're doing along the way. Our work usually starts with a conversation and develops as we connect with more people, other groups and organisations across East Renfrewshire and other areas in Scotland.

Here are some of the ways we've heard from people and involved them in what we have been doing:

- Visiting community groups such as the Eaglesham Community Club.
- Going along to forums and events across East Renfrewshire.
- Informal catch-ups with individuals and small groups of local people.
- Small planning discussions on specific ideas or issues.
- Events that bring people together to feed-in to national consultations.
- Share what we're hearing with local stakeholders such as Eaglesham and Waterfoot Community Council.

We have also been working on building our relationship with groups and organisations that deliver services or who can support local people to make things work better. Some of the organisations we have been speaking with are:

- Voluntary Action East Renfrewshire.
- East Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership.
- East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure (Libraries, Arts & Heritage).
- East Renfrewshire Council.
- National charities such as Living Streets and Sporting Memories.
- Community Transport Associations across Scotland.
- Local businesses such as Eglinton Arms Hotel and Lime Deli.

Issues that matter to people

In the Autumn of 2017 we brought together all the information that people had shared with us from over the summer and our Vision for Change event. This is a note on the main themes that were identified at that point.

Getting Around the Villages

Some of the biggest challenges that people raised were to do with getting around the villages, and further afield. People find themselves missing out on activities, becoming isolated or losing their independence due to the lack of good public transport. An added challenge is the hilly landscape of the villages which can make it difficult to walk around, particularly for older people or people who have mobility difficulties. People find themselves using taxis, but for many people this is not financially sustainable in the long-term.

Communications

There are lots of groups who provide great activities but as the villages don't have any fixed information hubs it can be difficult to find out what's happening. Groups and organisations outwith the area can struggle to circulate their information so rely on local people to share the information on their behalf.

Community Facilities

The village is now without a bank, a post office and a greengrocer so people must travel for these services, but this is difficult due to the transport issues. Some people can no longer access the library or other leisure activities further afield because of the challenges of getting about.

Intergenerational Connections

People said that they would like more opportunities to come together with other people – this includes people of all ages.

This is one of the themes that people have spoke to us about in more depth. Many people find that their life circumstances have changed, this can be for a variety of reasons; health, retirement, bereavement etc. People have said that it can be difficult to stay socially connected and that they miss this kind of regular interaction with other people. We are hearing that all the other issues raised; transport, difficulties getting about, not knowing what's happening and the closure of community spaces, mean that they have less opportunities to meet other people.

Actions on these issues

Over the past year we have been sharing these issues with other people who can offer support, finding possible solutions and testing out some ideas.

We have taken some ideas forward ourselves alongside local people. Other ideas and issues that have been highlighted through the project have been taken forward by other local groups and organisations; tweaking what they do to be more accessible, to give older people in the area a stronger voice or work towards creating new opportunities for local people.

Working in this way can take time but makes the changes more sustainable in the long-term as they are shaped by local people and local groups. This approach also helps the issues themselves; communication between different groups, stronger connections between individuals, sharing resources and facilities etc. Our actions tend to cover 3 things: raising awareness, finding out what's working elsewhere, and testing out ideas.

Getting Around the Villages

We are looking at what is working in other areas and have been speaking to various community transport associations who each offer different services within their local areas. We have also been in touch with Living Streets, who are a national charity that aims to improve streets for everyday walking.

We have been raising awareness about the challenges relating to transport with organisations and service providers. There have been several national consultations that we have used to share the thoughts of local people. We responded to Transport Scotland's consultation 'Local Bus Service in Scotland – Improving the Framework for Delivery' and

highlighted the impact that poor bus services have on other areas of people lives.

The Eaglesham and Waterfoot Community Council (EWCC) have also been working on the issues surrounding public transport by contacting service providers (McGills, FirstBus, SPT). They are raising the specific issues experienced by older people when they meet with stakeholders such as the Head of Roads and Transportation within East Renfrewshire Council.

The Regeneration of Eaglesham's Environment (TREE) continue to make improvements to the village which includes community clean-ups to remove overgrown shrubs and clear public walkways, particularly around the Orry.

We talked to East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure about whether they could support local people to get to services outside Eaglesham. They have provided free transport to selected shows and programmes. They have been very supportive of the project and are keen to try pilot projects to find what could work well in the future.

People involved in the overall Rural Wisdom project are working with organisations that promote community transport for people across Scotland. They will be feeding back what they find out to people in Eaglesham.

Communications

We have spent the past year exploring the various communication routes within the villages. We have tried to share our information through as many routes as possible and have appreciated the efforts of local people reaching out to us and each other.

We have found email lists, local church newsletters and other groups' Facebook pages particularly useful. We have also used posters on the Montgomerie Halls notice board and local shop windows. We understand that these methods don't work for everyone and have tried to circulate individual fliers and leaflets where possible.

Looking ahead there are several options to develop this informal communication network further based on ideas from our Rural Wisdom partners in Milford Haven, Wales.

There have been ongoing discussions around increasing the number of community noticeboards around the village. Ideas around how to maintain the information within the boards have been developing.

We have been speaking to people about hosting a local Village Gathering. This social event will bring together local people of all ages with representatives from local groups and organisations from across East Renfrewshire.

Community Facilities

When organising sessions, we tried to use a variety of settings around Eaglesham based on our understanding that different spaces work for different people. This also helped us to build our relationships with the individuals and groups that manage the spaces; the Library, Montgomerie Halls, Carswell Centre, Eaglesham Bowling Club, the Scout Hall, Eaglesham Primary School, Lime Deli and the Eglinton Arms Hotel.

In 2017 the residents of Montgomerie Court sheltered housing spoke to us about the difficulties in accessing many of the community spaces mentioned above, including the library. Since then we have been speaking with East Renfrewshire libraries department, they have applied for funding to be able to pilot a 'Home Service' in the villages.

Local people thought that 'mobile shops' or delivery vans could be a possible solution to the recent closures. We have contacted a local provider who works alongside Scottish farmers to deliver fresh fruit and vegetables to your home. They can provide smaller boxes for one or two people. If there was local interest, they would be happy to extend their services to the villages.

In 2017 people commented that they often felt forgotten by services. The local Health and Social Care Partnership have been working on improving how they deliver their services. They are developing 'Talking Points' which brings these services into the community where people can ask questions and find out their options. We will support 'Talking Points' in Eaglesham and have fed in what local people are telling us in relations to the gaps and challenges.



If you've never needed any support in the past it's hard to know what is available or how it could make things better. Having somewhere to go to in the village to find out from the people that know, that would be helpful



Intergenerational Connections

When we host sessions locally we invite a wide range of people and groups who might not usually attend events that are advertised as being for 'older people'. We know that this way of working with the whole community is helping people to make stronger connections with others.

Eaglesham Primary School has some ideas about the issues raised by the tenants of Montgomerie Court. A group of pupils worked alongside the tenants to co-produce a series of weekly activities running from April to June. Traditionally pupils would visit Montgomerie

Court however, this time the children hosted the activities in the school. It's great to see, where possible, community spaces opening-up and being accessible to people of all ages. We are now talking about how this can continue and develop further.



It's been great to get out and spend time with young ones, we chatted with the teachers and the parents too. I don't have family here, so it's been lovely for me.



People were keen to point out that there are great community groups that are working well for many people. However, people were describing a gap for those who wanted more social connections but don't want to be a part of a group or club. We are supporting some local people to test out ideas that create more informal opportunities. 'Cuppa and a Chat' is a simple idea that provides a space where people can drop-by and be in the company of others. This idea uses what's already in the community, such as space within local hotels and coffee shops. This means that it doesn't rely on extra money for hall hire. The national project 'Chatty Café Scheme' are promoting a similar idea, this will offer a network of other communities to share and learn with.



There's so much that can be done by local people working together, you don't always need a big pot of money – it'll just run out anyway. This works for us and the local businesses.



This idea of a Men's Shed was raised as a possibility in 2017. Since then some local people have visited

the Barrhead Men's Shed with the support from East Renfrewshire's Community Planning Team. Issues around suitable venues were raised so we looked at alternative ideas and found South Lanarkshire's Mobile Men's Shed. This modified van travels around South Lanarkshire communities offering Men's Shed space and support to develop new ones. South Lanarkshire Council Seniors Together project who manages the Mobile Shed have offered to host a visit for local people from Eaglesham and Waterfoot to find out more.

What else are we doing?

In August we hosted a Scottish Gathering which brought together people living or working in each of the Rural Wisdom areas. It provided an opportunity for each area to share what's worked well and what the challenges are. We also thought about how we use the project to influence change at a policy level, improving experiences for older people in rural communities across Scotland.

Following on from our Scottish Gathering we hope to be able to support local people in each area to connect with each other by offering exchange visits. These could be visits to North Angus, Highland Perthshire or joint visits elsewhere.

At the start of the summer we produced our first joint Rural Wisdom resource 'Tips for Getting People Involved'. This brought together the valuable information and tips that local people shared with us alongside case studies of local community groups. You can find a copy of this resource on our website.

Our project partner 'National Development Team for Inclusion' (NDTi) carried out a series of interviews with people who lived or worked in the villages. We hope to be able to take this a step further by creating some short case studies based on the ideas we are testing out.



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