

Session Plans:

Top Tip! These plans are based from our own experience. Every community is different, so don't hesitate to make changes to suit the programme to your group!

Session 1

Structure: Extended Saturday session lasting 4 hours with lunch.

Aim: to get to know one another and develop course themes through facilitated activities.

In this session, you'll introduce the programme and facilitators, and support participants to get to know one another. The aim is to explore the transition from work to retirement in order to collaboratively develop themes for the course.

Introduction:

On arrival participants should be offered tea and coffee and asked to write their name on a label and walk around the room and talk to one another. The group should then be brought together, and the facilitator/s introduce themselves and give an overview of the session and programme.

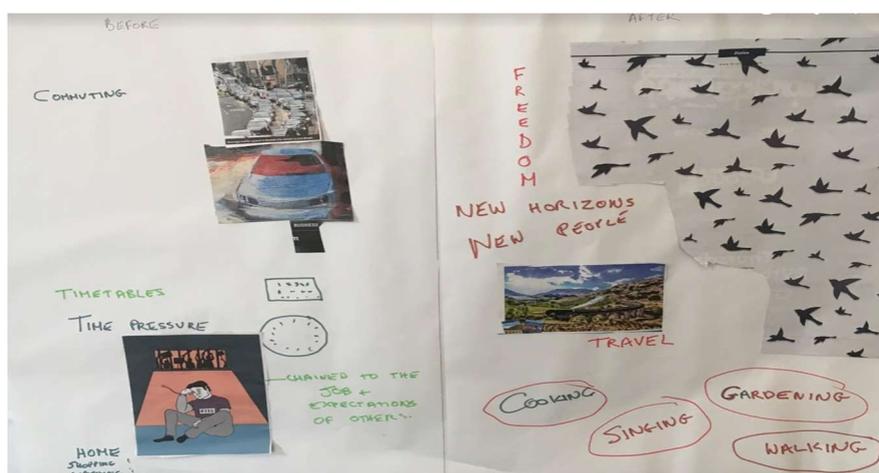
Top Tip! It's important to discuss ground rules with participants and develop an agreed ethical framework and come back to this regularly. They need to take responsibility for how and with whom they share their inner thoughts. Be sure to discuss confidentiality - the programme should be a space where people can be open and honest and expect anything they say to stay in the room. The only exception to this is if facilitators are concerned for someone's safety, so it's important to explain that should this occur the facilitator/s will pass concerns on to a relevant authority. It's also important to be clear that this is not a counselling service and that people are provided with avenues for professional support if needed.

Activity 1:

The first activity explores 'life before and after retirement'. In this activity participants are asked to take a sheet of A3 paper, draw a line down the middle and on one half of the page represent 'life before retirement' and on the other 'life after retirement'. This could be in words, drawings or pictures cut out from magazines (see example below). Participants are then asked to share and discuss their work; the facilitators ask questions and prompt participants to consider the examples they had chosen and to reflect on the difference between the two halves of the piece of paper. This should be followed by lunch and a continuing discussion of the first activity.

Before Retirement

After Retirement



Activity 2:

Participants are asked to divide into pairs and complete an A3 sheet reflecting on each other's experiences and expectations of retirement, with four boxes to complete as in the example below:

<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Drawbacks</i>
<i>Hopes</i>	<i>Concerns</i>

One person talks about items that occur to them under each heading while their partner scribes into the four boxes, asks questions and clarifies answers. Then the pair swap over roles.

Four large pieces of paper are then placed on the wall, each corresponding to the headings on the grid. Participants are asked to write individual points from their grid onto post-it notes and share these on the wall. Ensure that they use one post-it note for each point so that they can be individually recognised and categorised. Ideally, they should be offered four different coloured types of post-it notes to easily identify whether a point refers to a perceived Advantage, Drawback etc.

The group are then asked to work together in small groups to pull the post-it notes together into themes.

Activity 3:

Following this, the facilitators discuss and define the themes with the group and come up with a plan for future sessions. It may be clear at this point exactly what subsequent themes will be or it may be they are broadly defined and refined by facilitators after the session. Participants fed back to us that they would have valued having an idea of the topics to be covered in the remaining sessions before the second session. We therefore suggest that following the first session the facilitators share a rough outline of topics to be covered in sessions 2-4 with the group. To enable this, it is probably best to have at least a week between sessions 1 and 2 to allow for this communication.

Sessions 2-4

Structure: 3 x 2 hour evening sessions

Aim: To explore 3 chosen topics through group discussions, activities and writing tasks

The themes for these sessions will be determined by the discussions and feedback from Session 1. In our trial run the three themes that were very clear from the activity in session 1 were *Connections*, *Health and Wellbeing*, *Ongoing Life Purpose*, but other areas may include *finance*, *employment*, *homes*, *family and services*. Below you will find session plans for the three topics we chose, but everyone's programme will look different!

Connections	
Aims: To explore and think about the different relationships and connections we have and whether these do/need to change as we retire	
Time	Content
6pm	Introduction to today's topic and recap of last session, ask for any thoughts or reflections since last week.
6.15	Facilitated group discussion: Connections: what does that word mean to you? Facilitator captures ideas and thoughts on a flip chart, encourage people to think broadly, not just intimate partner/immediate family but any connections.
6.45	Move on to how/does the stage of your life affect the connections that we've written up on the flip chart? Group discussion.
7.15	In pairs consider whether there are any connections you'd like to change or think might change (for yourself or others)? Be prepared to feedback 1 or 2 thoughts. Sharing of last discussion in pairs with wider group.
7.45	Facilitator sums up session.

Health and Wellbeing in retirement (physical, mental and emotional)	
Aims: To explore individual concerns and identify ways to live healthily	
Time	Activity
6pm	Introduction to today's topic and recap of last session, ask for any thoughts or reflections since last week.
6.15	Facilitator discusses what we might mean by 'health' highlights that in this context we're thinking of health in terms of the physical, mental and the emotional (NB our group also suggested this should include spiritual).
6.30	Participants divide into groups of 3 and each person takes a turn to discuss a health-related concern this could be one they are experiencing or a potential concern in the future and could relate to themselves or another person.
6.50	The group are asked, "Bearing in mind the conversations that have just taken place-what is wellbeing?" Facilitator uses flip chart paper to start to develop a group definition, or thoughts about essential ingredients of wellbeing in retirement.
7.20	In pairs (10 mins each) identify something you could change regarding your general wellbeing and think about what steps you might take to change that (group are told this is for themselves and won't be shared).
7.40	Group are asked: What do you do now that is good for your wellbeing? Large piece of paper is provided, and all asked to write answers on a post-it note and share-list is later collated and shared with the group at the next session.

Ongoing Life Purpose	
Aims: To consider purpose and changes in purpose in retirement	
Time	Content
6.00	Introduction to today's topic and recap of last session, ask for any thoughts or reflections since last week.
6.15	What is 'purpose'? This term was used a lot in exercises in the first session-what do you think we mean by that? What words come into your head that you would you associate with the idea of purpose in life?

	Facilitator to lead and write words on flip chart.
6.30	<p>In pairs: What gives you a sense of purpose in your life now? Split into pairs, talk to other person about things that come to mind. Ask people to be prepared to feedback 1 or 2 points.</p> <p>Facilitator gets feedback and group discusses answers</p>
7.00	<p>Facilitator asks the group to think about what they have done well in their work and/or personal life and what skills did they need to be able to do that? Participants walk around room talk to everyone-tell them a different skill each time.</p> <p>Facilitator brings people back together-asks for thoughts on this exercise.</p>
7.15	In pairs: What is the one thing that you would wish to experience or accomplish? Imagine that you have the wherewithal and freedom to do that.
7.30	Facilitated discussion: Who heard something they didn't expect to hear? Who said something they didn't expect to say?

Session 5

Structure: 2 hour evening session

Aim: To expand and develop ideas around the chosen topics from sessions 2 - 4

In this session, the facilitator will think about how to expand on the previous themes and activities. One way of doing this is for the facilitator to invite guest speakers to talk about things in the local area that they believe are particularly relevant. For example, if your group are interested in local courses you may invite in a local adult education provider, or someone from the local gym

Top Tip! The idea here is to build on the groups' interests and be a bit imaginative. Ideally invite 3-4 people and ask them to speak for 15 mins each maximum and allow for questions and discussions.

The aim of the remainder of the session is to decide on the content of the final session. At this point all participants should be given a copy of their combined answers from the *advantages, disadvantages, hopes and concerns* activity that they did in session 1 (see below). Using this as a prompt the group discuss what they would like to explore in the final session.

Advantages Freedom; more time for things I like Contentment, live in the moment Money-things are cheaper	drawbacks Loss of structure and purpose Money-income dropping Loneliness
Hopes Learn new skills and make new friends Family-closer links and time for people To stay healthy Travel	Concerns lower physical and mental wellbeing Serious illness and dementia (self or others) Keeping financial assets Having enough money to live on

Session 6

Structure: 2 hour evening session

Aim: Discuss final topic (as decided in session 5) and bring the course to its conclusion

The aim is to spend the first part of the session covering the topic decided upon in session 5. In the second half of the session the facilitator places the A3 sheets made in session 1 (*life before and after retirement*) around the room. Participants are asked to look at these and come back together to reflect on if/how the programme has changed their thoughts on retirement. Following this, participants are asked for general feedback regarding the programme. See our **evaluation section** on how to do this!

Top Tip! It may be good to suggest meeting up again in few weeks after the last session - several of our participants suggested this.

Top Tip! As our trial run was part of a research project we asked participants to complete a form about their expectations of the programme at the first session and then gave out and collected in weekly evaluation forms at the end of sessions. These proved useful to the facilitators in planning sessions and thinking about next steps.