

Social Inclusion Report 2012

Introduction

The Southern Services Reform Group, Social inclusion Workgroup, embarked on a project in 2012 which took on some unexpected twists and turns. The project the group decided to work on was given the title 'Reaching the Unreachable'. It was an ambitious brief but the group was prepared to 'give it a go'. The project proposal described the strategy in some detail - a postcard and poster would be developed and distributed to reduce the stigma attached to loneliness. The aim was to promote acceptance by using suitable images and wording to help individuals feel comfortable in contacting a service provider for assistance. Key service provider contact numbers would be displayed and it was expected that the postcard / poster would reach individuals that were socially isolated by being available at targeted places (pharmacies, medical clinics) and delivered to suburban homes.

The membership of the workgroup provided a good representation of service providers in the southern region who provide social programs to older people. They included City of Holdfast Bay, Marion, Onkaparinga and Mitcham, Resthaven, ACH, COTA, St Johns, ECH, Red Cross, Baptist Care and Domiciliary Care.

The project was not designed to target younger people or youth and was not going to target specific social programs. It would aim to connect each individual to something appropriate for that person.

Project Objectives

The objectives of the project were to reduce the stigma associated with loneliness and to create a resource that would encourage individuals to contact services and engage in social programs.

Reason for the Project (taken from Project Proposal)

The project aimed to create opportunities for people to engage in life again – to ignite or continue their connection with life and feel a sense of hope for the future despite restraints or disability. Individuals need to feel they belong and that they are achieving and productive. As peoples' basic needs are often being met (particularly when there is financial security) social connections become even more important.

The project 'Alone in a Crowd: Supporting Older Australians Managing Loneliness' suggests the following: '...the research literature reports that loneliness is an increasingly pressing social and health issue that has potential to influence quality of

life of older people. Concern is further raised by the ageing of Australia's population...' (Stanley et al, 2010)

Methodology

The methodology used was based on action research principles – plan, act, lessons learned, changes made. The research question was: What would it take to design a poster and postcard that reduces the stigma attached to loneliness and creates an atmosphere of acceptance by using appropriate graphics and wording to help individuals feel comfortable in contacting a service provider for assistance? What was learnt in the first postcard distribution informed changes made in the second distribution. The process has ensured continuous improvement.

Method

- Toucan Display Systems were engaged to develop the resources, give advice and assist with forming a marketing plan.
- A small suburb was chosen for distribution in the Onkaparinga region – Christies Beach. Population = 4,833 Residents 65+ = 1,200
- The postcards were delivered to each home in the target suburb, inserted in the Messenger Press newspaper.
- An assessment form was developed for people who responded to the postcard and included the question – 'Just out of interest, what did you think about the postcard?'
- One week after the postcard distribution, posters were hand delivered to pharmacies and medical clinics in the Christies Beach shopping precinct – Beach Road.
- Five weeks after the postcard distribution, postcards, posters and feedback forms were sent out to 46 Medical Clinics in the Onkaparinga region. Self-addressed, stamped envelopes were also included.
- An enclosed letter asked clinics to give out the postcard to any interested clients and display the poster. They were also asked to fill in a feedback form to give their views about the project and the postcard. Questions asked were:
 1. Is the postcard useful?
 2. What are your thoughts about the image used?
 3. Do you think more should be done to address social isolation?
- Based on the feedback from consumers, service providers and Toucan changes were made to improve the process for the Holdfast Bay distribution. This included targeting a larger suburb, different uplifting image and refining of the activity examples.
- Finally, a second postcard distribution was organised for March 2013 in the City of Holdfast Bay region. The suburb selected was Glenelg - including East, North & South, a total of 7875 residential properties. A similar process will follow as occurred in the City of Onkaparinga.

Outcomes

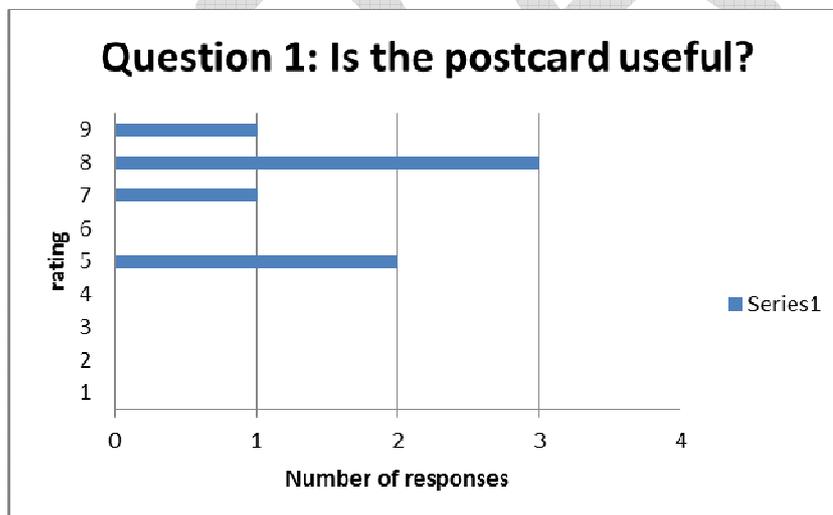
Stage 1

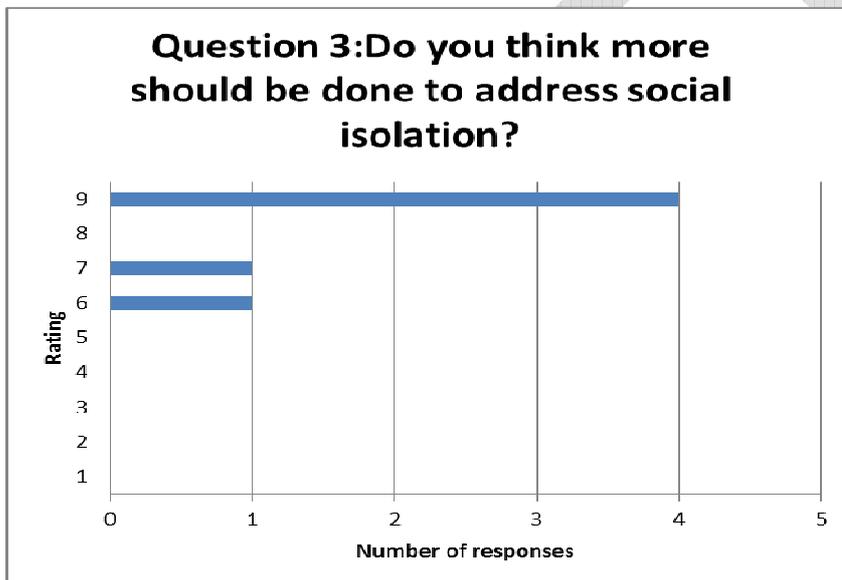
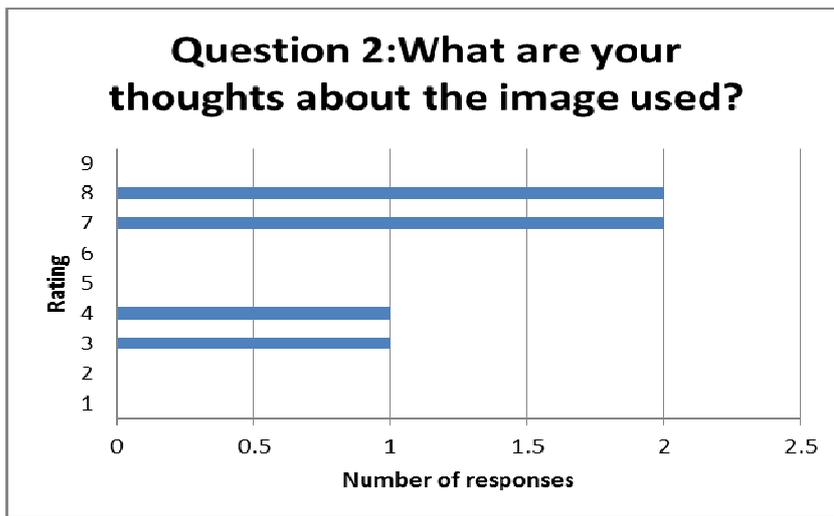
The responses to the postcard were minimal. In total, 4 residents contacted the Onkaparinga Transport and Social Program. The details are as follows:

1. 82 year old male, requiring transport to get to medical appointments, he recently hurt his knee and taxi services are expensive. The card prompted him to make contact. **Assessment of the postcard:** "Excellent, well done. Easy to understand."
2. 59 year old female, not in paid employment and 'getting bored'. The postcard prompted her to call - she would like to volunteer and be able to do something for other people. **Assessment of postcard:** "Good idea. Liked that it wasn't the same old tea and biscuits. She liked that they were out and about."
3. 82 year old male, requiring shopping and social support. **Assessment of postcard:** "Very friendly image."
4. 80 year old female wanting to meet people, get out of the house and socialise. **Assessment of postcard:** "Good – get connected, try something different. Didn't think about volunteering."

Medical Clinic Feedback Results:

1=completely disagree, 5=no opinion either way, 9=completely agree





Feedback Comments

1. Is the postcard useful?	2. What are your thoughts about the image used?	3. Do you think more should be done to address social isolation?
I have put the poster in the waiting room.	An alternative image may be useful ie something not requiring an expensive accessory.	If possible
Too early to tell, but we will display it.	Not sure, but does the sports car suggest you need some affluence to participate?	Certainly – but some people are usually isolated due to cost. Ability to access (transport) – (physical)
Will hand out postcards to	The image makes me think	

our elderly patients when having their health checks with the nurse.	two people who are quite independent, possibly newly retired, are enjoying time/drive	
Not really.		

Discussion

The workgroup explored and investigated different images because it was paramount that the illustration used would support the goal - reducing stigma attached to being socially isolated. There was much discussion and debate about the type of images that should be utilised. It was difficult to reach a consensus. People's interpretations, opinions and experiences were diverse. Finally the decision to use a more uplifting image was made – based on advice from the Steering Committee, marketing expertise and the underlying philosophy of the SSRG – innovation.

The 'thinking' behind this decision was that even when people are aged, it doesn't mean they stop wanting to encounter interesting experiences. The image was to be the trigger which would encourage people to 'turn the postcard over' and read about 'creating social connections'. The back of the postcard listed a number of different social activities and a friendly 'We look forward to hearing from you.'

Was the project a success? The results don't look impressive and perhaps mistakes were made. Arguably the target suburb was too small – there was never going to be an 'avalanche' of responses! The image – it was a compromise – it was trying for middle ground and maybe we didn't quite 'nail it'. There was a view that the image was more likely to attract the 'younger old' but not so, 3 of the 4 responses came from 80+ year olds.

It could be argued that our culture is not good at regarding elderly citizens in great esteem or approval. Unfortunately for some older people this view affects the way they live and their self-belief. Using such an uplifting image was risky, but the discussion it created was spectacular. The success of this project was not necessarily in the results – but in the way people began analyzing their assumptions about older people.

The project followed action research principles. The results assisted with informing how the second phase would be 'rolled' out – the distribution in the City of Holdfast Bay. A larger suburb will be targeted and a different image used. Indicated by the results and anecdotally, there was a lot of criticism of the sports car with a male and female in it. It was 'affluent', it gave the impression of partners or husband and wife and they weren't wearing seat belts! The second image chosen is still 'uplifting' but of one woman only – having fun and doing something different!

Summary

To be completed after data collection from second postcard distribution

Recommendations

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