Words of wisdom
We care

Enablers notes

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Realising the need in our community

Why this session is important

To help your group to:

- Explore the different needs and issues facing older people in their local community
- Realise they can play an important part in addressing these needs and making their community a better place
- Understand how best to make older people SMILE and the benefits of 'giving back' through positive social action
- Highlight the importance of learning from the Words of Wisdom offered by older people
- Agree an action to work on

What you will need

- Copy of We Care Activity for each group
- We Care Resources
- Words of Wisdom Slide Presentation
- Access to information on older people's needs in your local community
- Paper/pens
- 30 mins (depending on time availability)

How to do it

Welcome the group and highlight that by getting involved in this challenge they have an opportunity to create a SMILE on an older person's face through a positive act of kindness.

In exchange they will ask the older people they meet for their Words of Wisdom about their life experiences to help with their own lives.

Introduce the SMILE Challenge. Show the **Words of Wisdom Slide Presentation** (Resources)

Open up the conversation by asking:

- What did they enjoy and learn from the slide show?
- Which groups of older people in your local community would love a SMILE?
- How can you make an older person SMILE?

Divide individuals into groups of 4 – 6 (although you can also deliver SMILE as a whole group or class) and ask them to create a team name.

Explain that the SMILE challenge will run over several weeks and it will be a fun, engaging and fulfilling opportunity for everyone involved.

We care

Engage the whole group in a creative exercise to map out what they believe the needs and issues are that older people are facing in their local community. Generate as big a list as possible using the prompts if required:

- What groups of older people are most at need in your local community?
- Why would they be sad?
- What problems or issues are older people you know facing?
- Which local charities support older people's needs?

Encourage individuals to LOOK around their local community and think about the people, place and environment they live in and the sorts of worries or concerns older people may have as they wake up each morning.

You may find it useful to do some research yourself, maybe contacting your local CVS (Council for Voluntary Service), making links with local care homes, older people's groups, charities, businesses, community and faith groups.

To help add to the list of needs, talk through the different things older people may have on their plates each day using the **Plate Images** (Resources).

Now ask each group to identify one or two plates or needs they care about most. This may be because someone close to them is facing a particular challenge, or they feel strongly and passionately about a particular issue.

Trying to encourage individuals and groups to take action and be responsible for their challenge themselves helps build independence, resilience, creativity and commitment; however the process can be enabled by:

- Involving parents, community volunteers, school governors and local charities as facilitators for each group
- Utilising existing links and building on previous community connections
- Piggy backing on activities that are already planned
- Focusing on one issue or need as a whole group

What other questions to ask/points to make

Be prepared to share your story - how have you made older people SMILE, what are your experiences of volunteering with older people, what needs do you feel passionate about?

Explain the benefits that 'giving back' can bring to our own confidence, sense of fulfilment, positive mental health, belonging and skills for life.

Make the point that when working with a group that they can all be supporters for one another, adding help, encouragement, and guidance when needed.

As the session draws to a close discuss:

- What they may have learned, or what has surprised or puzzled them about doing these activities
- Help them to identify one key action they may personally wish to take as a result of doing these activities