



Local development needs

LEADER case study Connected in the local community

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The three-year pilot project 'At home in Emlichheim' seeks to enable elderly people to maintain their independence for longer by providing regular preventative home visits.

The lead partner 'Mehrgenerationenhaus Senfkorn' is a multi-functional not-for-profit organisation that provides a range of community-based services (childcare, after-school care, social inclusion projects, senior citizens services) in the rural area of Bentheim, in Germany.

The idea for the pilot project originated from an information event about a nationally funded research project and a survey indicating that home visits have a preventative care function for older people in rural areas and tend to prolong their independence. This was picked up by staff of the Mehrgenerationenhaus Senfkorn who felt that such an initiative would fit well with the overall concept and experience of their organisation. The NGO designed the project 'At home in Emlichheim' together with the academic institution Hochschule Osnabrück.

Based on the advice of their local Mayor, LEADER was identified as the most suitable funding source for their application as the project aligns well with the Local Action Group strategy and one of its five aims, 'Lebensraum' (improving the quality of life in the rural area). The total project costs are just under € 12 900, of which LEADER funded 39% in 2017. Additional funding partners include regional and local public authorities and the project promoter.

The target group are people over 65 who live independently and are not supported by any care regime. Over a period of ten months, the project budget allows for 75 participants to receive four visits by an academically qualified care person. The themes that are addressed during the visits are comprehensive and focus on the participant's specific life situation including state of health, mobility, nutrition, sports, social activities. Each of the four visits lasts between 30 minutes and 2 hours. The main aim is to connect with the participant and offer advice on how his/her particular situation could be improved in the medium and long-term.

Depending on the specific needs of each participant, the visits aim to improve access to information about other services in the area and to encourage the participation in regional activities (sports initiatives, lunch clubs, organised shopping trips, etc.). Attention to health topics is paramount.

After each visit, the participant completes a questionnaire to track developments and satisfaction levels with their perceived quality of life.



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Following a comprehensive information campaign at the beginning of the project, the response rate was unexpectedly high with over 300 people registering their interest to participate. As the budget was limited, the 75 participants were selected randomly.

One of the key successes of the project is that in most cases, participants have taken on the advice of the care person and have changed their activity patterns accordingly. While it is hoped that this will have a positive impact on their prolonged independence, it is too soon to evidence these impacts.

Key to the success of the project is a well-networked service provider who has an in-depth knowledge about local services relating to various topical life situations. An academically educated care person is also crucial to deliver this type of service effectively. The rationale for the use of highly qualified staff is based on their complex task to identify the risk of evolving care needs (and potentially un-identified needs) of the visited persons that might not have been diagnosed yet by their medical service providers. The expertise of the care staff also facilitates that physical as well as mental suffering can be recognised early, communicated, and addressed effectively with other medical services in line with the project's key mission of delivering preventative care in the community.

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