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# [**AGEING WITHOUT CHILDREN**](https://awoc.org/)

FOR A POSITIVE LATER LIFE WITHOUT CHILDREN

**Piloting an AWOC aware approach in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole – Dorset - United Kingdom**

**Summary**

A 6-month project partnership between Ageing Without Children (AWOC) and the Prama Foundation to test approaches in making organisations, churches and communities AWOC aware by;

* Researching the numbers of people ageing without children in the designated areas and the issues affecting them.
* Bringing people ageing without children together to create their own support networks.
* Developing and testing key messages that resonate with organisations, churches and communities to make them AWOC aware.
* Providing training to organisations about people ageing without children and the issues affecting them.
* an end of project event to share learning.

with the aim of achieving the following outcomes

1. People ageing without children feel a sense of connection with each other and benefit from peer support.
2. People ageing without “traditional nuclear family” support are able to identify networks and services that will enable them to retain their independence and dignity, reducing costs of service provision through the building of communities.
3. Local organisations in the statutory, private and third sectors concerned with older people are aware of the issues of ageing without children and involve people ageing without children in planning and delivering local service change.
4. The wider community and local authority has a greater understanding of people ageing without children

**Ageing without children - the issue**

Public policy and social attitudes towards ageing are based on a set of deeply rooted assumptions about older people’s ability to access care, support, advice and companionship from their adult children. However, a significant minority of older people – already 1 million of those over 65, rising to 2 million by 2030 - are experiencing later life without these relationships. This trend has the potential to impact substantially on our ageing society – both in terms of the quality of later life enjoyed by such older people, and in terms of the fiscal and social implications of supporting and caring for them. But the trends and issues are not yet well understood; and, as a consequence, older people without children are not well served by networks and services - and, indeed, third sector organisations - that address their circumstances.

**The Prama Foundation – the organisation**

The Prama Foundation is a local charity, based in Dorset, with a long history of providing care to older people though it’s subsidiary charity, PramaCare. The Foundation has the vision of a world where no-one is unfairly disadvantaged or excluded due to age or infirmity and where everyone can enjoy life as they age.

**Ageing Without Children (AWOC) – the organisation**

Ageing Without Children (AWOC) exists to plug these gaps. Its vision is “Ageing well together without children” and its mission is “campaigning, information and support for people ageing without children”.

It's aims are threefold:

* **Illuminate** – to generate greater awareness and understanding of this segment of the older population and of the implications of ageing without children for public services and society more broadly.
* **Connect** – to build networks, connecting and enabling locality-based and online communities of older people without children.

* **Innovate** – through working in partnership and stimulating action by other entities, to facilitate the development and testing of new services and initiatives that meet the needs of older people without children – and, more broadly, of our ageing society.

AWOC’s intention is for these aims to be mutually reinforcing, thereby creating a virtuous circle.

Illumination (and attendant communication of key insights) boosts awareness of the phenomenon and of AWOC’s work; awareness facilitates connection, as people without children become part of the online and locality-based networks that AWOC is building; connection facilitates innovation, as the networks generate not only ideas about how to respond to the issues faced by people ageing without children but also a capability to help develop and test new initiatives and services; and greater connection and innovation strengthen illumination.

**The story so far: what AWOC has achieved, and how it's done this**

In the two years since its launch, AWOC has:

* Directed media and stakeholder attention to the phenomenon through a mixture of campaigning, publicity activity and events – with resulting coverage in national print and broadcast media
* Developed insight into the population cohort through a mixture of opinion-survey and qualitative research – captured, for example, in the organisation’s 2015 survey and its 2016 report *Our Voices*
* Created an online network (through setting up a Facebook group with over 800 members) and a series of locality-based groups (with local AWOC groups active in York, Leeds, London, Brighton, Bristol and Cambridge) – with members of these networks coming together in two Ageing Without Children conferences, held in London and Birmingham in 2015 and 2016
* Used the insights from its research to spark a series of ideas about potential innovations – and explored these internally and with potential funders and delivery partners; and
* Built relationships with a variety of national and local stakeholders across the ageing sector and in commissioning bodies – notable examples include AWOC’s connections with Age UK London, with the Prama Foundation in the South of England, and with the Beth Johnson Foundation.

AWOC’s success can be explained by:

* Its **focus and concentration of effort** on an issue that, before AWOC, had received little attention
* Its **credibility**: AWOC is led by a founder and directors who all self-identify as ageing without children – and, in consequence, these leaders bring not merely passion and commitment but also personal authority and integrity to the organisation's work
* Its **ability to build connections**: the founder and directors have strong capabilities around network building and stakeholder engagement – critical for the early success of a startup venture entering a sector with a well-established set of statutory and voluntary incumbents.

**Proposal**

AWOC would work closely in partnership with the Prama Foundation over a 6-month period to

* Research the numbers of people ageing without children in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole and the issues affecting them.
* Bring people ageing without children together to create their own support networks.
* Develop and test key messages that resonate with organisations and communities to make them AWOC aware.
* Provide training to organisations about people ageing without children and the issues affecting them.
* Deliver an end of project event to share learning.

**1. Research the numbers of people ageing without children in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole and the issues affecting them**

Using existing data, AWOC will estimate the numbers of people i) Over 50 and ii) over 65 ageing without children in each town. AWOC will create an online survey and hold 3 focus groups to further identify and discuss issues.

**2. Bring people ageing without children together to create their own support networks**

We will

* Actively seek volunteers to run an ageing without children group in each area.
* develop a range of information resources to help individuals ageing without children set up a local AWOC Network,
* establish a local on-line community for people ageing without children in the local areas.
* explore ways in which individuals ageing without children can come together offline.

**3. Develop and test key messages that resonate with organisations and communities to make them AWOCaware**

AWOC to date has identified a group of people, and had begun to identify their unmet needs, but it has not yet refined that analysis down to a set of key messages

Working with the Prama Foundation and people ageing without children, AWOC would develop and test key messages that would help organisations and communities be AWOC aware

**4. Provide workshops for organisations about people ageing without children and the issues affecting them**

AWOC has identified through previous research that organisations generally have a very low level of awareness of the numbers of people ageing without children or real understanding of the issues that they face. AWOC would run a series of workshops for organisations to help them

* Understand the extent and nature of the issues facing people ageing without children
* Discuss the reasons, assumptions and myths about why people arrive at later life without children
* Consider what services their organisation has for people ageing without children and what new solutions could be developed
* Think about ways their organisation and services can be more AWOCaware.

**5. Deliver an end of project event to share learning NB this could form the basis of the AWOC National Conference**

At the end of the 6-month period, there will be a one-day learning event bringing together people ageing without children with local planners, policy makers, and service deliverers to share learning and how it can be embedded into future work on ageing in Dorset.

**Costs**

Staff costs 19,500

Expenses 5000

Running costs 5500

Total 30,000

Assumptions

Prama will provide support with admin, venues and publicity