

Target population: Independent elderly people living in the community

Care setting:

- 552 centres for the elderly (community services), in agreement with the local government (public body)
- 63 EspacioCaixas (centers for the elderly, owned by "la Caixa" Foundation)

Mission: Empower (older) people to live the lives they desire and to achieve their maximum potential

Funding: "la Caixa" Foundation

Context

Spain, like many other European countries, has an ageing population. 18.1% of the Spanish population are currently 65 years old and over; one out of twenty people are currently over 80 years old and it is estimated this will grow to be one in ten by 2040. As a result, the country is also facing the challenge of preventing exclusion and social vulnerability of older people. The project *Vivir Bien, Sentirse Mejor* (VBSM) was launched in 2014 to help tackle this problem. The programme transgresses the classic paradigms of gerontology and is based on the prevention of disability and the promotion of active aging.

VBSM recognizes that aging is a stage where personal growth and development is not only possible, but also desirable; where a person's maturation process has not yet been completed. With this in mind, VBSM offers older people the resources to achieve their highest possible potential. It was conceived and designed to take into account the enormous diversity among people.

Governance & management

Public and private bodies who work in community care converge to implement the project with the cooperation of different groups of volunteers.

This model of cooperation is adapted and tailored depending on the community care available in each of the different regions in Spain.

Values

The development of a valuable personal life project full of wellbeing, social engagement and a deep sense of meaning in life.

What this initiative is about

Using an innovative set of knowledge, strategies, competencies, experiences, skills and techniques (empirically validated), VBSM organises a series of workshops run by psychologists (a total of 38, 1 ½ hr sessions) that identifies people's intrinsic capacities and aims to increase the resources available to them for personal development. The workshops are grouped into three modules:

1. Living the way I want to live –13 sessions that aim to a) identify opportunities for change b) raise awareness of the opportunity for change c) establish psychological change enablers d) work with the idea of change and personal development

2. Living positively –13 sessions that aim to develop key personal resources to enable an individual to change a) increasing personal skills essential for personal development; b) promoting adaptation and change linked to greater well-being; c) developing personal strengths; d) deepening people's resilience capacities; e) developing skills that facilitate the understanding and management of our emotions in daily life; f) working on situations of loneliness

3. Living is discovering myself – 12 sessions that seek to train people to face situations of risk or vulnerability arising from making changes to one's life project. The main objectives are: a) to work on vulnerability as an emotion that helps us explore our own limits; b) improve the capacity for personal commitment; c) work on personal and couple relationships, d) delve into a positive vision of loneliness; e) improve engagement; f) seek free personal commitment to lead the life that everyone wants.

Through these sessions VBSM provides the tools to empower older people, maximising their personal abilities in such a way that they can adapt to the challenges and manage their daily lives, both currently and in the future. Through reflection, participation and the exchange of ideas, older people learn to adapt to the challenges they face everyday. Taking a positive and dynamic approach, the focus is on personal development, motivating older people and giving them the tools to manage their emotions, recognize their own strengths, whilst considering each person's concrete circumstances.

The program has helped promote self-care by empowering the elderly in the exercise of their autonomy and their ability to make vital decisions that revert to greater emotional well-being. The program has also facilitated the start-up of a new area of intervention in the elderly centers, providing an effective and innovative intervention design and methodology.

Evidence/ impact

During 2016 and 2017, 30,377 old people participated in the VBSM programme. A total of 2,354 workshops were carried out all over Spain.

An external evaluation was carried out by the Foundation Matia from September 2016 to June 2017. The evaluation has shown statistically significant changes between the intervention and control groups in most of the variables analyzed, particularly: perceived health, health transition, loneliness, self-efficacy, engagement, well-being, temporary orientation and management of unwanted solitude.

Insights / lessons learnt

This type of initiative requires continuous monitoring of progress made by the people who come to the program both during the realization of it, and in the following months after its completion, when people are implementing changes in their daily lives.

The future

The development of a valuable personal life project full of wellbeing, social engagement and deeply meaning of life is one of the most important challenges that western societies face in terms of aging. "la Caixa" Foundation, with the collaboration of public body and the Third Sector, aims to explore new ways to facilitate opportunities for the elderly to live a full and successful life, according to their wishes and wills.