



Improving employment support for over 50s in Greater Manchester

Summary Report
July 2022

ageing-better.org.uk



Background

The **Centre for Ageing Better, Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA)** and the **Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)** are partners in a project to increase the numbers of people aged between 50 and State Pension age (SPa) in work.

The project brings together GMCA's ambition to make Greater Manchester the UK's first age-friendly city region, and the Centre for Ageing Better's work to ensure equitable access to work for people in their 50s and 60s.

Humanly, an award-winning design studio specialising in human-centred design for social impact, was commissioned to develop new approaches to supporting people over 50 as part of the project.

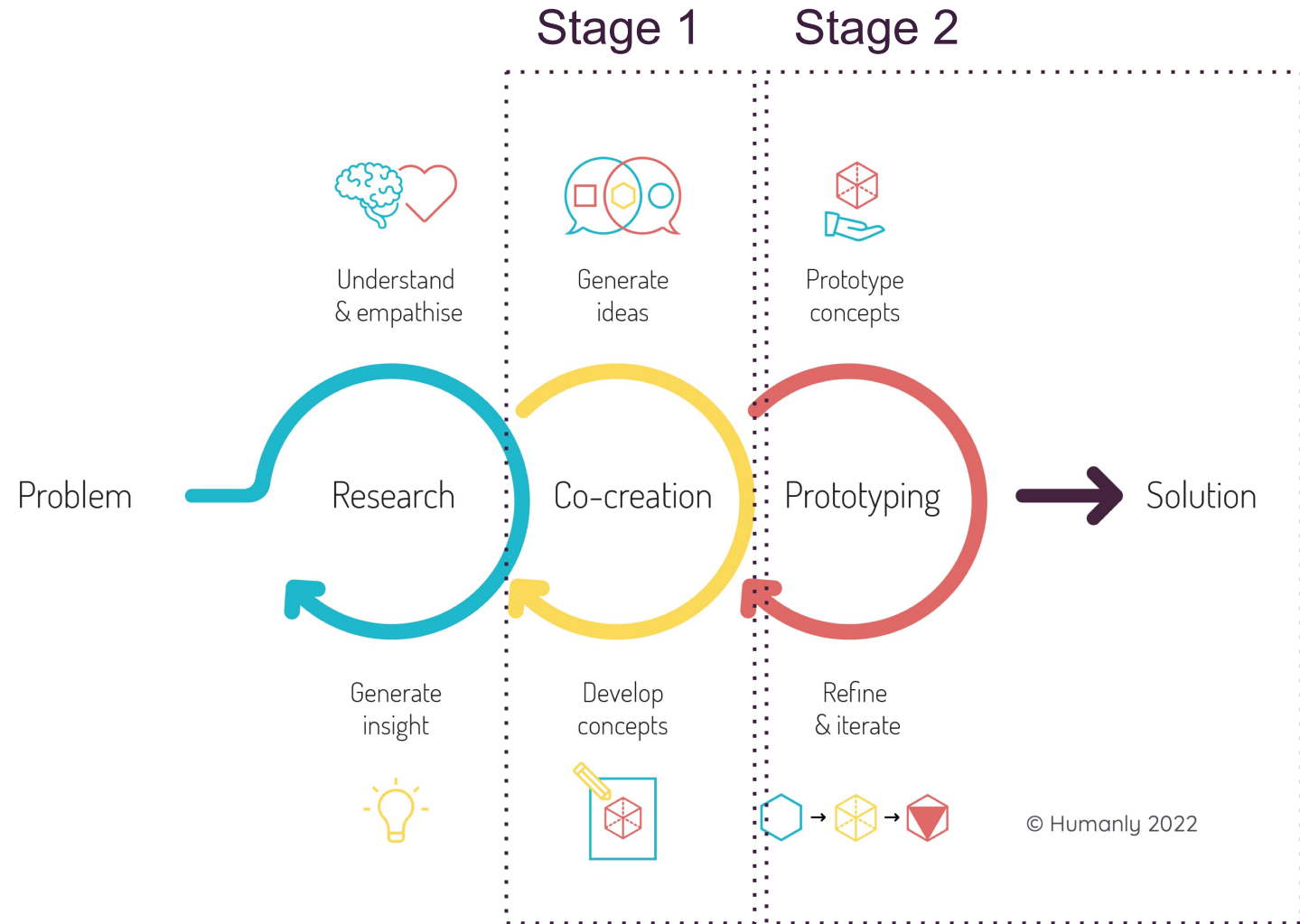


The process

The work was carried out across two stages of co-creation and prototyping.

Between July 2020 and January 2022, Humanly led the project team through an iterative process to:

- Understand users
- Challenge assumptions
- Redefine problems
- Co-create potential solutions with people over 50
- Develop innovative solutions to prototype and test

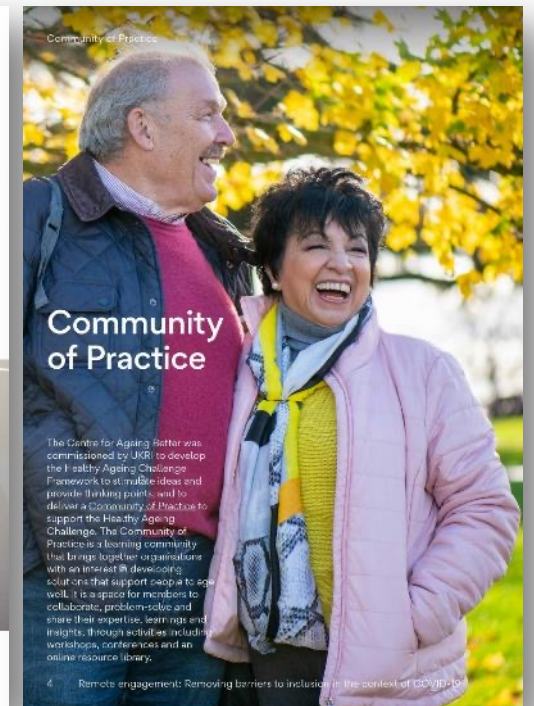
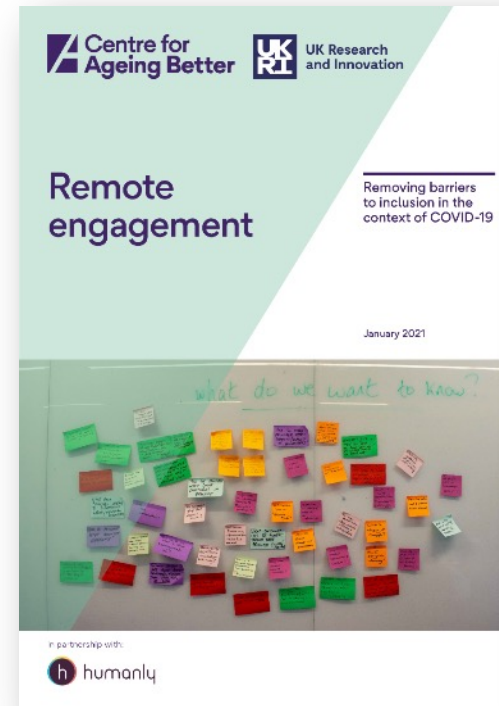


How the work was carried out

Humanly conducted activities with:

- 90 people aged over 50 with lived experience of being involuntarily out of work
- Service providers and voluntary and community sector organisations
- Commissioners
- Employers
- Experts in labour markets, economics, procurement and coaching for people aged over 50

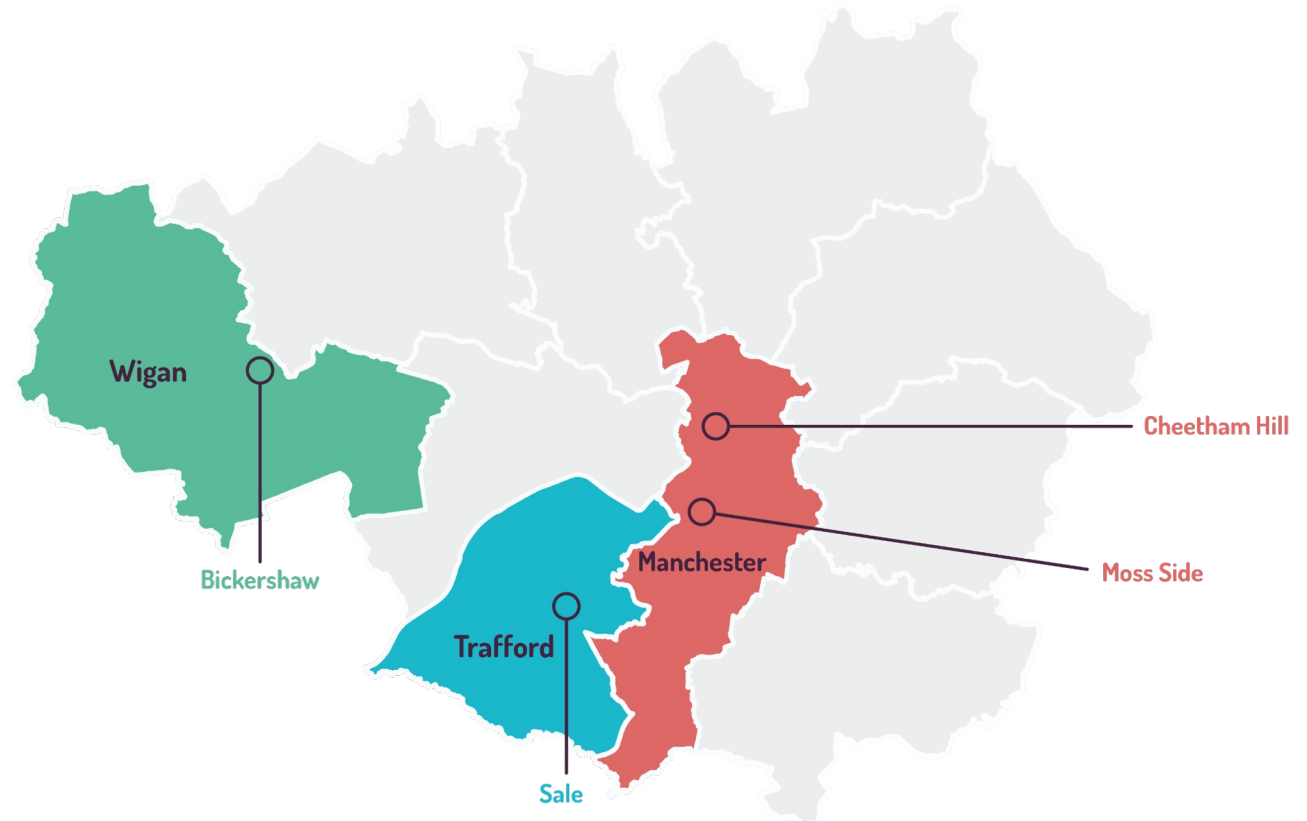
To find out more about good practice for remote user engagement and co-production, read [this report](#), co-written by the Centre for Ageing Better and Humanly.



Co-creation

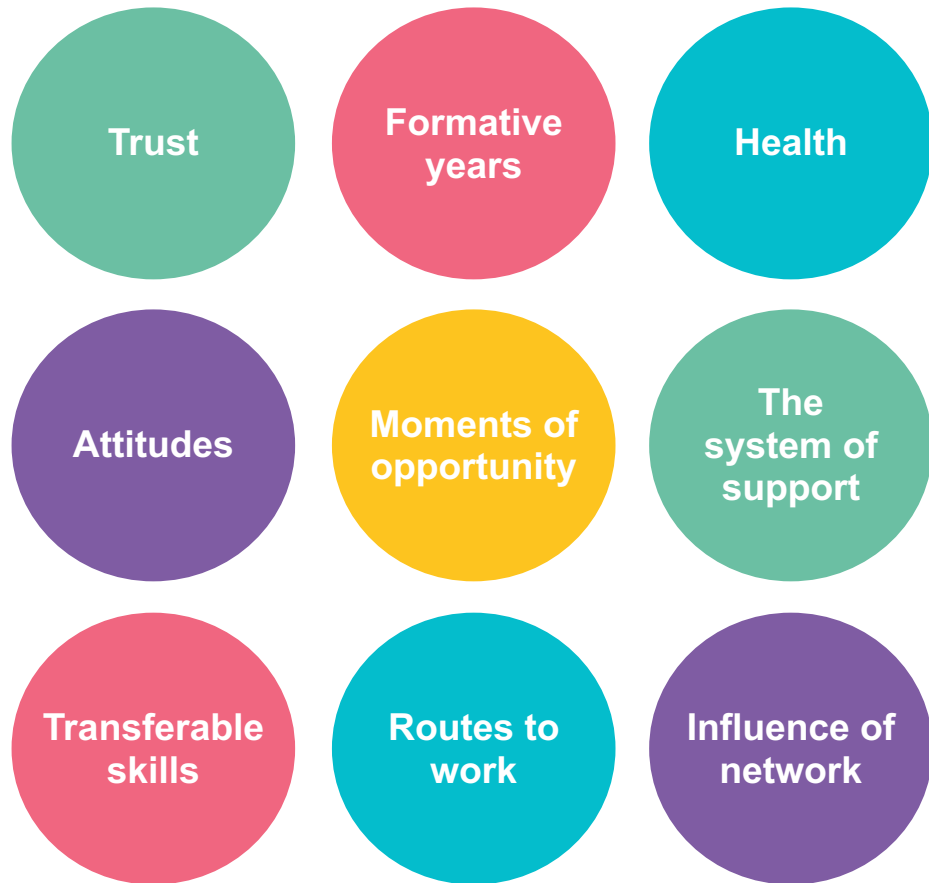
168 stakeholders were engaged in 78 co-creation activities, including interviews, postal activities, workshops and surveys.

- Locations and participants were selected to ensure diversity of ethnicity, socio-economic profiles, levels of unemployment or economic inactivity, links to industry, and experience of long-term ill health or disability.
- A key insight was that the failure of current employment support to meet the needs of people aged over 50 is a result of the way that support is commissioned.



Insights from co-creation

Nine themes emerged from insights gained from people with lived experience and employers:



People aged 50+ identified key 'ingredients for good employment support':

- Help uncovering transferable skills to improve confidence in moving into new industries
- Empathy for circumstances and a holistic view of the person's life, not just their qualifications
- Support from people who understand their needs, industry and aspirations
- Education and training information in one place
- A mix of local online and face-to-face training
- The ability to try a job before applying, to see if it is suitable for both employee and employer

Developing concepts to test

Humanly developed a number of concepts that responded to the insights, opportunities and ideas generated during co-creation. Following feedback from people aged 50+, employment support providers and stakeholders, **four concepts** were chosen to take forward to the prototyping phase.



1. Reach

A step-by-step process that helps people to identify and then work towards their goals. Personal experience, preferences and aspirations are used to provide suggestions, content and inspiration.



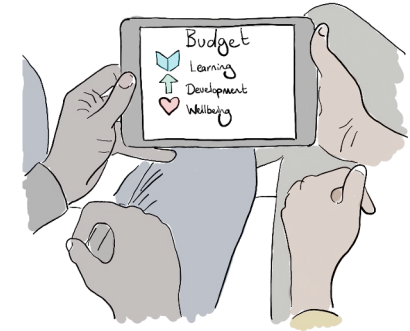
2. Give Back

A meaningful paid placement with mentoring, extra training and social elements to enhance learning and development and increase positive outcomes.



3. Person-centred Procurement

A reimagined version of the commissioning, procurement and contract management process. This is designed to promote innovative local support that helps people towards work, volunteering or training.



4. Personal Budgets

An allocated fund for a person without work or looking to change career. Everyone has access to the same maximum amount to spend in the way they feel will best support them towards work.

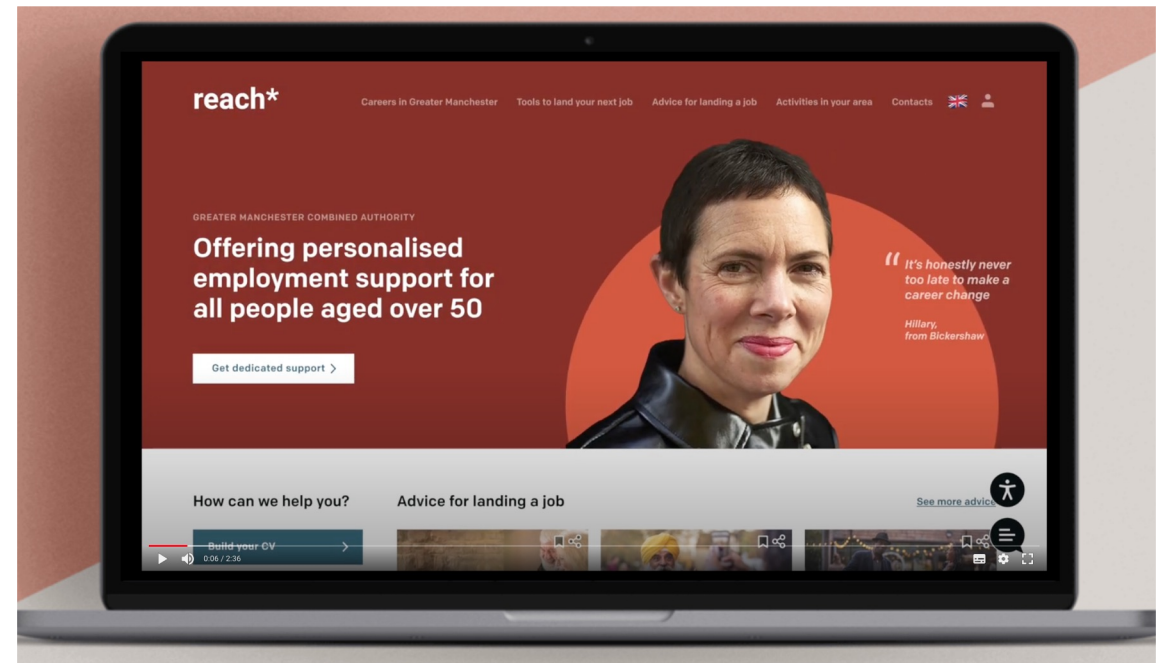
Prototyping

These concepts were prototyped at a range of fidelities to test their desirability, viability and feasibility.

This included prototyping Reach at a low, mid and high-fidelity. A final clickable prototype of Reach was tested with eight people aged 48-62 with lived experience of unemployment. The response was overwhelmingly positive:

“ I’d use it constantly.”

“ This is going to.. give a lot of opportunities to people who feel that they’re not valued in society.”



[Link to video prototype](#)

Recommendations

Humanly recommends that two interventions are taken forward into a pilot:

Reach: A largely digital service, available to all people aged over 50 in Greater Manchester.

Reach enables people to identify existing and transferable skills, with 1:1 support available to help people identify their goals and develop plans. This is tailored to each individual's preferences, giving people the autonomy to choose how much support they need, and when and how they access it.

People are supported to move towards sectors that are growing or sustainable through the use of local labour market data.

Person-centred procurement: An innovative process for commissioning, procurement and contract management that is:

- Based on local, person-centred support to help people to access good work
- Led by people with lived experience
- Designed to remove barriers for small, local organisations to bid for funding and deliver employment support

Principles that the Reach service should follow

Learning from the process identified that the Reach service should follow six key principles:

Flexible and tailored support

Holistic

Collaborative

Encourage learning from experience

Relatable

Independent

Principles for person-centred procurement

Eight principles were also identified to ensure that funding for services enables small, local organisations to deliver effective employment support to people aged 50+.

These principles are applicable to all forms of funding, including grant funding and procurement.



Next steps

Pilot

A two-stage pilot is recommended:

- 1) Commission the development of the Reach platform, tailored to people in their 50s and 60s to help them identify local activities, skills and employment opportunities.
- 2) Appoint and work with local community based organisations to deliver the coaching and outreach support linked to the Reach platform.

It is also recommended that GMCA play a 'supportive commissioner' role to ensure services are best suited to individuals and sustainable for organisations.





Thank you

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