

# Review of the Improving Life Chances Community Pilots

# Background

- The Improving Life Chances Strategy aims to provide support to move families out of poverty.
- Bidston St James, Beechwood and Seacombe were identified as key areas experiencing high levels of child poverty alongside other aspects of deprivation.
- Community Pilots (CPs) were developed in these areas - operating from the St James Centre, Gautby Road Play & Community Centre, Beechwood Little Centre and a range of venues in Seacombe (including the Social Club, Children's Centre and Library).
- The CPs aimed to identify local families in need and refer to existing agencies for support including food and fuel poverty, debt advice, employment and learning. In addition, each of the areas identified local priorities for improvement, including environment (litter, dog-fouling, appearance) and anti-social behaviour.
- Data collection and case study forms were developed to monitor referrals and capture impact.

# CP's – St James Centre

- Centre well-established with excellent engagement and reach into local community
- Activities well supported by regular team of committed volunteers
- Funding frequently sourced to contribute both towards sustainability of the Centre and towards interest groups requested by local residents

CP Priority – St James Centre	Support available
Support parents into sustainable employment	Job club, lifelong learning courses, volunteering opportunities, library service
Support families to become financially resilient	Welfare advice, Ask Us Wirral, Warm Homes event, referrals to Birkenhead Relief in Sickness fund
Tackle the immediate effects of poverty	Food hub, fuel poverty fund, hot food hub Christmas hamper scheme, crisis food bags, community meals
Environment	'In bloom'

# Impact - St James Centre

Support available	Impact
Food hub	699 people supported (Feb '16 - Dec '17) - 458 adults & 241 children. 349 vouchers presented.
Fuel (gas/electricity) poverty	316 adults also provided with fuel vouchers (Feb '16 - Dec '17) .
Lifelong learning	296 adults accessed courses (2015/2016 – Dec 2017). Majority female; around half considered themselves to have a learning disability; around half currently unemployed.
Ask us Wirral (across all CP areas)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Benefits &amp; Tax credits (2,509 enquiries) – Personal independence payment, employment support allowance</li> <li>2) Debt (1,183 enquiries) – Council tax arrears, other (gambling debts, business rate debts), debt relief order</li> <li>3) Housing (436 enquiries) – private sector rented property, housing association property, environmental &amp; neighbour issues</li> </ol>

# Case Study - St James Centre

## Presenting Issue(s)

Client visited the Centre for a supervised contact (mum of 6 children). Whilst on a contact visit client had a chat with a member of the team and disclosed challenges with her housing conditions, benefit claim and general mental wellbeing.

## Support Provided

Client was supported with toys for the family via a donation from Birkenhead Lions, plus crisis fuel via Wirral Foodbank and Christmas hamper from NBDT. Client was also referred for welfare advice support.

## Impact/Outcomes

The client said that our support had reduced her anxiety just before Christmas because she was struggling heating her home as well as preparing for Christmas. The family continue to use the Centre's resources regularly.

*"Couldn't have got through the last few months without you guys"*

*"When there's too much month before pay day and no money I rely on the cheap activities that include a meal for my kids...It would be a tremendous loss if these activities and the library weren't available"*

*"Fantastic place...fab events, loads of great courses (for me and for my sister who has special needs)...Brilliant community resource, couldn't do without it"*

# Review of CP's - St James Centre

- The St James Centre is well-established and community engagement is strong. Funding is often sourced; although salary costs are becoming increasingly difficult to cover.
- Community Pilot has:
  - Helped raise the profile of other local organisations working to support children and families,
  - Increased partnership working, towards shared priorities, and resulted in wider opportunities for the Centre.
- Impact on families is evident via feedback and long-term attendance at Centre by families in need.
- Future priorities include developing the offer in relation to 0 to 5's, healthy weight, physical activity and mental health support.
- Stronger communications from the Local Authority and CCG in relation to wider work and opportunities for further partnerships to be developed.

# CP's – Gautby Road Community Centre

- Gautby Road operates as a smaller hub within a specific locality of Bidston & St James. Specific priority around reducing youth anti-social behaviour.
- Led by a strong team who have worked hard to engage and build trust amongst young people and families in local community. However funding is limited and the continuation of two key roles is at risk – significant impact on provision for families.
- Strong partnerships with Police and Sports Development Team.
- Volunteers include mums of young people accessing youth provision.

CP Priority – Gautby Road	Support available
<b>Reduce anti-social behaviour by increasing youth provision</b>	Youth clubs, playscheme, fit and fed activities, Birkenhead North Youth Project, Pathfinder Project
<b>Support parents into sustainable employment</b>	Computer hub, lifelong learning courses, volunteering opportunities
<b>Support families to become financially resilient</b>	Signposting to support via St James Centre
<b>Tackle the immediate effects of poverty</b>	Food hub, emergency fuel poverty assistance (ad-hoc)

# Impact - Gautby Road

Support available	Impact
Food hub	Different families each week, approx. 19 families regularly visiting
Youth Clubs	More than 100 young people regularly attending youth club and receiving free hot meal
Birkenhead North Youth Project	Calls to Merseyside Police relating to ASB reduced from 155 to 15 calls per month
Pathfinder Project	Workshops around employability, diversionary activities including sport and physical activity, develop skills around nutrition, healthy eating and cookery.
Lifelong learning	82 adults accessed courses (2016/17). Majority female; 39% considered themselves to have a learning disability, two-thirds currently unemployed.

- Strong focus on food provision, nutrition and healthy eating
- 'Niche' - supporting older young people, reducing anti social behaviour
- Commitment to building trust and engaging local families

# Case Study - Gautby Road

## Presenting Issue(s)

“One evening we had a mum crying in the Centre. She regularly comes in for support via the social supermarket but she was crying because she had -£4 in her energy fuel account and had no money to top up her gas and electricity for that night”.

## Support Provided

“Usually we signpost to the St James Centre but it was closed. We didn’t have any spare funds at Gautby Road either; on occasion we do and are able to help but unfortunately not this time. Luckily, because of the Community Pilot’s we have been working in partnership with the Beechwood Little Centre, so I rang them and they were able to provide emergency assistance for the mum”.

## Impact/Outcomes

“Mum received emergency assistance with fuel. She was signposted to the St James Centre where she presented for fuel poverty support from the Trussell Trust. She was also able to access the food hub there, and attend the welfare advice drop in. Her children now also attend the playscheme”.

*“My children used the playscheme...they were safe and not hanging round the streets”*

*“Gautby Road has helped me have peace of mind...it’s kept kids off the streets”*

*“The cheap shop has helped a lot of people”*

*“My children love every minute of the playscheme and attend while I’m at work which helps me”*

*“My children were taught to cook...and be responsible”*

# Review of CP's – Gautby Road

- Gautby Road is a small local Community Centre. Team well-respected and trusted in local community. Work hard to identify need and drive available support.
- Strong focus on:
  - Activities for children and young people, including diversionary activities for older young people to reduce anti-social behaviour
  - Food and nutrition, including via social supermarket, provision of hot meal at all activities, development of outdoor classroom and vegetable patch
  - Engaging local community and supporting families, reducing social isolation, providing advice and support (e.g., job searches)
- Strong partnership with Sports Development Team and Police
- Community Pilot has:
  - Helped identify wider opportunities e.g., Police and Crime Commissioner Pathfinder Project
  - Strengthened relationships with other Community Centres (St James Centre and Beechwood Little Centre)
- Immediate priority to source funding to continue two key posts
- Upskilling of staff would also be beneficial (e.g., bid writing, evaluating impact)

# CP's – Beechwood Little Centre

- CP model supported by investment from Big Local scheme - £1 million over 10 years (until 2024). Funded significant refurbishment of the Little Centre to ensure future sustainability.
- Strong team, including volunteers, deeply committed to supporting local families, children and young people. Ongoing development of partnerships with clear vision and action plans from Big Local.
- Range of activities and support continues to be developed; opportunities available to residents (e.g., via Bright Ideas fund; strong partnerships with local organisations).

CP Priority – Beechwood	Support available
Support parents into sustainable employment	Training academy, volunteering opportunities, apprenticeships, business start ups, Gingerbread Project, lifelong learning
Support families to become financially resilient	Welfare advice, Ask Us Wirral, Energy Projects Plus (via referral)
Tackle the immediate effects of poverty	Food hub, breakfast club, Christmas hamper scheme, emergency assistance fund (fuel poverty)
Environment	'In bloom'

# Impact - Beechwood

*“I want to be very clear from the outset. Without the Neighbourhood Manager in Beechwood, the activities, the engagement with the community, the work Big Local are doing, would not be successful”.*

Support available	Impact
Big Local apprenticeships, business start ups, Gingerbread Project	1 single mum awarded apprenticeship in Hairdressing. x4 business start-ups awarded. 8 parents now in regular employment following support.
Ask us Wirral (across all CP areas)	1) Benefits & Tax credits (2,509 enquiries) – Personal independence payment, employment support allowance 2) Debt (1,183 enquiries) – Council tax arrears, other (gambling debts, business rate debts), debt relief order 3) Housing (436 enquiries) – private sector rented property, housing association property, environmental & neighbour issues
Lifelong Learning	39 adults accessed courses (2015/2016 – Dec 2017). Majority female; around a third considered themselves to have a learning disability; more than half currently unemployed.
Food hub, Christmas hamper scheme	No data is yet available for the food larder . 629 local residents including children and young people benefited from hamper scheme.

# Case Study - Beechwood

## Presenting Issue(s)

Client A needed help with supporting her family after having children. She was unemployed and also struggling to cope with being a new parent. She attended workshops at the Centre on topics such as healthy eating where she met likeminded young mothers like herself. This encouraged her to create the 'Beechwood Babies' forum which were a group of mothers who met regularly to discuss ways of improving the lives of children on the estate. This involved creating dance groups and different leisure opportunities for children and families nearby.

## Support Provided

Whilst using the community centre as a base for the forum, client A was given the opportunity to volunteer in the office there. She gained a wealth of experience in office administration and finance. She was also given the opportunity to gain NVQ's and other qualifications in accounting and auditing.

## Impact/Outcomes

Client A is now the lead auditor at a local organisation and works in the office there full time. She is able to fully support her family and has been given access to the right education to be a role model. In her spare time she continues to advocate community activity and regularly helps plan events. She also supports new projects within the Centre to help people who are in a similar position to what she used to be.

# Review of CP's – Beechwood

- The CP in Beechwood is supported by £1 million investment from the Big Local programme.
- This funded a refurbishment of The Little Centre, providing a new food larder, café with soft play area, large activity rooms and small meeting rooms available for hire.
- Other activities delivered by a strong partnership including: Beechwood Social Club, Nursery and Beechwood Chapel (led by Beechwood Community Trust and Beechwood Community Association).
  - *“Community Pilots are absolutely ideal for bringing people together... usually everyone works in isolation”*
- Future priorities including building volunteering opportunities, increasing activities for healthy lifestyles and self-care, and mental health and wellbeing.
- Continue to develop links with Public Health, CCG and Primary Care in relation to wider opportunities for partnership working.

# CP's – Seacombe

- CP led by Seacombe Community Association, with delivery from Seacombe Social Club, Seacombe Children's Centre and Seacombe Library.
- Strong partnership support from local organisations including Community Spirit Wirral, Allandale Centre and Boxing Club, 4 local Rotary Club's, Wirral Environmental Network, St Paul's Church and St Luke's Church.
- However there is a sense that *“Without a central venue it is difficult to bring local groups together to develop a comprehensive strategy and hence the area lacks leadership and the ability to work in partnership to access funding”*.

CP Priority – Seacombe	Support available
Support parents into sustainable employment	Lifelong learning, free computer and wifi access
Support families to become financially resilient	Energy Projects Plus, Ask Us Wirral, welfare advice (Involve North West)
Tackle the immediate effects of poverty	Food hub, breakfast bags, holiday food provision, Christmas hamper scheme
Environment	'In bloom', clean-up days

# Impact - Seacombe

Support available	Impact
Food hub	32 boxes of food are distributed weekly to families in need. (Funded for 1 year)
Food bags (via Community Spirit Wirral)	Currently feeding over 170 families a week with food bags to take away. They also do breakfast & lunch for anyone needing a meal and unlimited tea, coffee, biscuits and cake.
Lifelong learning	42 adults accessed courses (2015/2016 – Dec 2017). Majority female; around a fifth considered themselves to have a learning disability; just under half currently unemployed.
Ask us Wirral (across all CP areas)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Benefits &amp; Tax credits (2,509 enquiries) – Personal independence payment, employment support allowance</li> <li>2) Debt (1,183 enquiries) – Council tax arrears, other (gambling debts, business rate debts), debt relief order</li> <li>3) Housing (436 enquiries) – private sector rented property, housing association property, environmental &amp; neighbour issues</li> </ol>
Christmas hamper scheme	206 hampers were distributed to families.

*“There was massive relief. People cried and hugged us when receiving the hampers. They felt that they are part of a community, that people care. People wrote cards of thanks, many phone calls were received. A great example of partnership working”*

# Case Study - Seacombe

## Presenting Issue(s)

Client needed help to fix his broken 20 year old boiler. He was using portable electric heaters and the electric immersion heater for hot water, which were costing him a lot to run. The client is a single parent to an 8 year old, works full time and struggles to pay his bills after a lengthy custody case left him with a lot of debt problems and loans to repay. He built up a gas debt of £875 and electricity debt of £1,030 as he stopped paying some bills in order to pay the mortgage and bank loans.

## Support Provided

The fuel debt advisor met with client and established that he was in financial hardship and needed to provide his daughter with basic hot water and heat in the home, and was in fuel debt. The advisor applied to the British Gas Energy Trust for a boiler and help towards the fuel debt.

## Impact/Outcomes

The client was successfully awarded £2,730 for a replacement boiler and two additional radiators, and his £1,905 fuel debt was cleared. This has removed a huge burden from client and has relieved some of the stress he has experienced. With a new more efficient boiler, his gas bills will also be lower and help him to manage paying them in the future. The client was over the moon and said it has changed his life, being able to provide hot water and heating for his daughter after such a turbulent year.

# Review of CP's – Beechwood

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  - *“Community Pilots are absolutely ideal for bringing people together... usually everyone works in isolation”*
- Future priorities including building volunteering opportunities, increasing activities for healthy lifestyles and self-care, and mental health and wellbeing.
- Continue to develop links with Public Health, CCG and Primary Care in relation to wider opportunities for partnership working.

# Review of CP's – Seacombe

- The CP in Seacombe is supported by *“A dedicated and passionate team working to establish further partnerships and drive improvements for local families, children and young people”*.
- *“The Community Pilot has catalysed lots of ideas and discussions, there are more initiatives and people are working together like they haven't before”*.
- However it is felt that the development of the CP in Seacombe is slower than other areas and *“There is a strong sense of disconnect. Of being left behind”*.
- Immediate priorities include:
  - fundraising and identifying funding sources to continue the food hub
  - developing a volunteering agenda to support sustainability of activities
- It is felt that Seacombe would benefit from an investment similar to the Big Local programme.

*“Seacombe gets forgotten. Because we lie between Birkenhead and New Brighton we fall down the middle and everyone forgets about us”*

# Reflections

- **Development and progression** of the CP's has differed across each of the areas.
  - Gautby Road, Beechwood and Seacombe continue to need support from the Community Asset Officer.
  - Gautby Road and Seacombe are prioritising the identification of funding to continue delivery.
  - The St James Centre operates independently. A wide range of activities and support is available, although these are sometimes limited in terms of provision due to the availability of funding.
- All areas have benefited from increased **partnership working** as a result of the CP umbrella.
- Impact on individual children, young people and families is evident from case studies and anecdotal feedback. **Robust data collection** is needed to evidence improving life chances strategy outcomes.

Any questions?

# Define population outcome

- Our ambition is to ensure that no child in Wirral lives in poverty. We will start by supporting 1000 Wirral families to move out of poverty by 2018. This would mean we could reduce child poverty to 20.1% in those we currently know fall into our definition of child poverty. In addition to a range of activity across the borough, we will pilot a radical new approach in our communities where there are particularly high levels of poverty.

# Five key factors which make it harder for families to work their way out of **poverty**

- Long-term worklessness
- Having low qualifications
- Raising children on your own
- Having 3 or more children to care for
- Experiencing ill-health

# Priorities

- Supporting people into sustainable employment
- Improving life chances for children and young people (early years development, health, education and skills)
- Helping families to become more financially resilient
- Tackling the immediate impacts of poverty

# How are we doing?

- Child poverty 19.9% (2015 figures)
- 2587 jobs created or safeguarded
- Children at good level of development 69.4%
- Increasing quality of housing through selective licensing
  
- Still very real challenges
  - Impact of austerity
  - Are we increasing jobs in most deprived areas?
  - Significant numbers of children in care

# Do we understand the story

- What's going on here
- What factors are causing the problems
- Why is the situation so much worse in some communities than others
- What information is missing?

# What Works?

What would it take to turn the curve?

What works elsewhere? Is it right for our communities?

Come up with specific ideas/proposals

Who needs to take ownership of this work?

How do we ensure this Pledge is sustained?