

## **Appendix 1 – Community, Voluntary and Faith Reference Group Update**

### **Next Steps Update: Building Community Infrastructure to improve the health and well being of Communities and Residents on Wirral**

#### **Context**

Every resident is unique, as also is the environment and the community in which they live.

All individuals, their families, and their communities from time to time need help, some most of the time and some only rarely.

This help is provided through government and its agencies at national, regional, and local level. It is however, increasingly recognised that help from within the community, if structured and readily available, is of considerable value.

It is also known that help within the community, because of its proximity, knowledge and sensitivity, can forestall a worsening of the need and a much speedier response to it. This help can be fully developed through Community Hubs and Family Hubs.

The health of a community, but not of individuals within a community is often determined by the average life expectancy and average healthy life expectancy of its residents.

An unacceptable and growing difference in these measures is found between 'well off' communities and deprived communities. To address this difference government has committed to a levelling up programme and has brought forward a new Health and Care Bill with the specific aim of reducing health inequalities, see below.

In Wirral there are a several deprived communities where the level of life expectancy and healthy life expectancy is unacceptably low.

#### **What is Local Community Infrastructure?**

Current systems to deal with Individual, family and community needs, and the effectiveness of structures to ensure collective need is met, were put to the severest test by the Covid pandemic.

In response to the virus communities and their residents using their local knowledge, came together and looked after each other with the support of the health sector, government at all levels, the CVSE sector, and many other partners.

It is widely accepted that local knowledge minimised the impact of the virus and continues to do so.

The virus has also shone a strong light on the lack of knowledge at the most local level held by local authorities and health providers, a deficit which, unless addressed, is likely to continue to limit the effective delivery of services to those most in need in more normal circumstances with the impact of the virus minimised.

The Health and Care Bill introduced in July 2022 legislates for communities and their residents and the CVSE sector to fully participate in the design of new systems addressing the limitations of current systems identified by the pandemic. NHS guidance documents also fully emphasise this requirement and more specifically NHS guidance B1762 Working in Partnership with People and communities published on 4<sup>th</sup> August.

A precis of B1762, prepared by Community Voice and previously put forward to the Health and Wellbeing Board by the CVF Reference Group, illustrates the case very strongly, almost mandatory, for people and communities to be involved in the full extent of change programmes being developed by ICP's, ICB's the NHS and key partners. Programmes and plans developed in partnership to harness the local knowledge through the provision of simple and effective systems to address need quickly and effectively and through which communities and residents can make their strongest contribution, leads to a discussion of how best this may be developed and brought forward at the local level.

This discussion will be greatly assisted by recent publications from Locality, New local and the Fuller Report, all of which have been added to the list of key publications.

The term Local Infrastructure attempts to describe in general terms what needs to be considered alongside the key elements and features associated with successful approaches adopted in England.

It is a collective term for the agreed system approach taken by each community and its residents working in partnership and in codesign in deciding what is appropriate for them.

### **The challenge of codesign from the community and resident perspective**

Implicit in the Health and Care Bill 2022 is the assumption that communities 'know who they are' and are ready to rise to the challenge of contributing to the codesign of a 'place-based' new approach to improving health and wellbeing and which can help address local need.

Two fundamental points for consideration would seem to arise at the outset, have the boundaries of the community been established and accepted and has the willingness of community and residents, to play a key role in improving health and wellbeing, through representation also been established.

For the purposes of local government, here in Wirral and in most local authorities, place is divided into wards. Within each ward individuals are elected to be the ward's representatives in local government. In Wirral this is currently three per ward. The number is subject to review.

The ward boundaries established for local government are, by and large, acceptable for local government and should represent a start point for discussions about 'place' in the context of a codesigned programme relating to improvements in health and wellbeing. There is also potential for these boundaries to be reviewed.

Subsets of community do exist within wards and their identity needs to be understood. Where possible subsets need to be considered.

To be able to play a key role communities and residents will, within each place, need to find a way to ensure health and wellbeing need, for individual residents, for families, for groups of residents and even for the whole community, is recognised, understood, appreciated, and then addressed.

### **Next steps**

In many cases need can be identified from within the community, as has often been the case with Covid.

Where services need to be involved, then best practice is found in the establishment of link and help organisations, referred to as community hubs and family hubs. A link organisation

is able to provide advice, help to coordinate dialogue and support through efficient signposting, assist with the use of digital systems, and in many other ways.

- Establishment of prototype community link organisations.

It was suggested and agreed that four communities, one in each constituency, be established for the prototypes, with oversight from the Health and Wellbeing Board.

- A possible phased approach is outlined below with progress to date.
- This approach should be seen as being under constant review by all partners and participants as brought forward from an initial thoughts document which has been accepted by the HWBB.

### **First phase. Establishing commitment and consensus.**

Step 1. Submit for approval to the Health and Wellbeing Board on 9<sup>th</sup> February the Reference Group's proposal for the establishment of community hubs and family hubs as link organisations within Wirral's communities – Completed.

Step 2a. Engage with elected members of each political party to secure their approval for discussions with Elected Members of each ward and then secure ward EM's support for discussions to begin with each community they represent and the extent to which they wish to participate in the discussions. – Ongoing

Other wards wishing to start exploratory discussions will be warmly welcomed. Four wards, one from each political party were put forward and are Rock Ferry, conservative ward yet to be nominated (possibly West Kirby and Thurstaston), Birkenhead and Tranmere and Eastham. Initial meetings and discussions have been held with elected members in 3 of the wards with a positive response to work with the CVF Reference Group going forward to further develop community hubs within their wards. Due to a change of elected members in Rock Ferry following the May local elections a letter has been drafted and sent to the new members to determine whether they wish to be involved in the approved pilot project.

Step 2b. Engage with all key partners providing services to determine their approval, support, and level of involvement in and for discussions with communities within each ward. Meetings have taken place with the Director of Place, the WBC Chair and the PCN Chair.

Further meetings will be arranged as soon as possible to update key personnel and CVF Sector Groups of progress to date. Consideration is being given to establishing regular meetings at an appropriate frequency through 2023.

A member of the CVF Reference Group has been elected to serve on the Wirral Place Strategy and Transformation sub group.

The CVF Reference Group has actively participated in the development of the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy as requested by the Health and Wellbeing Board and is a member of the Working Group to continue with its development and delivery.

The CVF Reference Group will continue to focus on its work with elected members and communities identified in the 4 prototype wards and input into the TPSG as and when required and requested.

The CVF Reference Group has been strengthened with a number of new members with complementary skills and knowledge, who will introduce themselves to the HWBB in due course.

Step 3. Engage with local organisations, in the prototype communities and with individuals active in supporting their communities and health and wellbeing of each community. Contact and discussions are ongoing with CVF volunteers and local organisations in addition through the Community of Practice (COP), Strategic Leaders Network Group (SLNG) and Wirral Council CVF Group (formerly the Humanitarian Cell) meetings who wish to be part of the Reference Group and actively participate in the ongoing work programme.

Step 4. Bring all the interests established above together with the aim of developing a best practice plan appropriate to each prototype community with the specific aim of forming a community hub organisation.

Step 5. Form a community development team (CDT) from within the prototype of the CVF Reference Group community to lead discussions for the community.

### **Updates from CVF-RG members**

#### **Briefing Paper - Green Spaces Group - CVF - Reference Group**

The CVF-RG proposal for the establishment of a local environmental Green Space Infrastructure plan to improve the quality of and access to local green spaces in Wirral, was approved at the Wirral Health and Wellbeing Board in February 2022. A multi-agency Green Spaces Group has been formed to progress the aim of developing a framework of infrastructure and support that will enable residents' groups across Wirral to develop community garden initiatives in under-utilised green spaces, for the enhancement of their health and wellbeing.

Access to green spaces is important for health and wellbeing. A longitudinal study from Scotland found that children living in homes with gardens had better social, emotional and behavioural scores (Richardson, 2017). Residential green space during one's childhood has also been found to lead to a lower risk of psychiatric disorder in adolescence and childhood (Engemann et al., 2019). On average, one in eight British households has no garden (ONS, 2020), whilst many Wirral wards do not have a minimum standard of green space (Green Space Index 2022).

The recent Public Health England report (2020) identifies 'new evidence and actions to help local areas consider how good-quality greenspace can support the delivery of health, social, environmental and economic priorities, at a relatively low cost.' The wellbeing value associated with frequent use of local parks and green spaces has been valued at £34.2 billion per year, whilst saving the NHS £111m per year (Fields in Trust, 2018).

The new or enhanced community gardens will provide a range of green social prescribing interventions which can improve mental health outcomes; reduce health inequalities and reduce demand on the health and social care system. These may include gardening, walking, creative health and wellbeing activities that can help prevent or address social isolation, mental and physical health issues and food poverty. The success of this will depend on excellent referral pathway structures, collaborating with local GP's surgeries and PCN's.

The community gardens will provide opportunities for growing, , social interaction, volunteering, training and employment, and collective food production. They can support residents through the demonstration of healthy cooking with home grown or surplus produce, vital during the current cost-of-living crisis. The development of a joined-up co-operative food strategy across the borough (linking with the Liverpool Food Growers Network) can increase local urban food production for the benefit of local residents, and reduce food waste.

Additionally, this proposal for improving access to green spaces can sustain improvements in nature connectedness that can help address global calls for a new relationship with nature required for a sustainable future (Richardson, 2019). This will support Wirral Council's commitment to action following the declaration of Environment and Climate Emergency in July 2019, achieving biodiversity net gain and contributing to the UN SDG's.

One of the most significant issues for local communities, particularly those without resources or a track record, is the acquisition of land for community engagement and activities. The Green Spaces Group has recently agreed to create a Community Land Trust to help overcome those barriers, providing a legal entity for the acquisition and protection of green space assets from Council, Health, Church, housing associations, etc. for the benefit of local communities.

Within the framework of the Wirral Green Spaces CLT, the aim would be to empower local residents' groups to take ownership of local community garden greenspaces, though more established CVF organisations may be appointed as interim stewards. They will be supported by the CLT through the services of member organisations who can offer assistance with community engagement; horticultural advice, practice and training; in addition to support with organisational management and fundraising.

Grow-Wellbeing CIC is lead member for environmental issues in the CVF-RG, and has brought together a diverse range of public and CVF sector organisations and elected members, who can contribute to a partnership approach to transform urban community

greenspaces for health and wellbeing. The founder has recently been elected to represent the CVFSE sector on the Wirral Place Strategy and Transformation Group.

Grow-Wellbeing CIC aims to support healthy communities through nature connection via Forest School, community gardening and nature wellbeing activities. Since its inception, Grow-Wellbeing has collaborated with partners in health, education, social care, environment and the CVF sector in Wirral, Merseyside and Cheshire. It has created employment opportunities, including traineeships for young people, and is an accredited provider of Forest School Leader Training. Grow-Wellbeing is well placed to assist the co-ordination of the development of the Wirral Green Spaces CLT, collaborating with partners and empowering communities.

Duane Chong, Grow-Wellbeing CIC

### **Family Hubs Update**

Wirral has made significant progress towards the implementation of Family Hubs across the borough. A Steering group is now in place with representation from the CVF sector including the Family Toolbox Alliance and the Reference Group to the Health and Well-being board. This work is being led under the supervision of Elizabeth Hartley – Assistant Director: Early help and Prevention.

Transformation funding from the government has begun to be used by the creation of a Family hubs staff team. This is made up of Jean Edwards – Project support Officer, Michelle Richards – Parenting Co-ordinator and Barathi Inbara – 1001 days Co-Ordinator. A Family Hubs Programme Manager has yet to be appointed and alternative approaches are under consideration.

Work has begun on the data requirements for Family Hubs with the aim to link up data, so it feeds into the requirements of the supporting families dataset (Old Troubled Families Programme).

The work ahead to make the roll out of Family Hubs across Wirral is considerable and care needs to be taken not to set expectations as to what constitutes a Family Hub without the voice of the community in full participation.

The National Family Hubs Network lays out different types of Family Hubs including Community led, Expanded Civic Buildings, Repurposed Children's Centres, Health Settings, School Based and virtual hubs. The model being, 'rather than a costly outlay on new infrastructure, a family hub model makes use of existing facilities wherever possible and extends and adapts buildings where necessary' and may include GP surgeries, church and faith communities, local libraries, shops etc. This makes access less daunting for families as it is buildings, they are familiar with and people they have built relationships and trust with. ([www.familyhubsnetwork.com](http://www.familyhubsnetwork.com))

At the recent, Annual Anna Freud National Conference on inclusion within family hubs it was Church Street Family Hub, Westminster that was held up as an example of what could be achieved. It is impressive and based on three stories with a roof garden and includes a wide range of health services as well as community activities. This is one type of hub and not necessarily suitable or preferable for all families which is why variety of options for families is crucial as one type does not fit all.

Many schools are now acting as family hubs providing extended services and working with CVF organisations and services including food pantries, uniform support, community liaison workers and mental health services e.g., Place to be and ELSA support, bereavement support and so on.

Wirral now have a virtual Family Hub [www.familytoolbox.co.uk](http://www.familytoolbox.co.uk) which is supported by the early help Family Toolbox Alliance made up of 7 VCFS organisations with a growing membership adding in their websites, social media links and other content.

### **Community Family Hubs on Wirral**

Interest is building within the Wirral community about how organisations and place-based projects can become Family Hubs with discussions and questions arising within the sector as to how the work will be progressed. There is still a lot to be done around keeping families at the centre of the process and finding out how we bring our community assets, including the people of Wirral, together for the well-being of families in the most cohesive, cost effective and accessible ways. How do we work together, with families, creatively, using Family Hubs of all types, sizes and forms to improve health inequalities within our borough, providing the help that families and children need at the time they need it and are ready to access it or want it?

Nationally the Gather Movement (a movement of churches and charities committed to community transformation) have also been sharing good practice on how faith-based organisations can develop the work they do to be most effective in supporting families by providing Family hubs and services. A short presentation was given by the C.E.O. of Ferries Family Groups, belonging to the National

Family Hubs Network, representing Wirral as a community-based Family Hub. Liverpool Catalyst similarly have been sharing information to help equip faith-based organisations to develop and support statutory provision across Liverpool City Region (Liverpool were among the first 75 local authorities in the country to receive funding to enable the rollout of Family Hubs).

### **Progress of the Reference Group Family Hubs Subgroup**

The Family Hubs Team is growing but has not met recently as we were waiting for information around the Wirral Family Hubs Staff and Steering Group teams so we could see how the community, voluntary and faith family hubs might work alongside/ in partnership in an informed way and to the benefit of Wirral families. Now that things are beginning to take shape, we should be able to continue to move forward. The most important thing is, we keep the voice of Wirral families at the centre of the discussions.

Helen Wade – Ferries Family Group

## **COMMUNITY SAFETY AND ENGAGEMENT**

The CVF Reference Group were requested to assist in providing a coordinated response to youth anti-social behaviour, on the Leasowe housing estate and is in the process of being planned. This behaviour was brought to the attention of the CVF-RG by a member of our group and older members of the estate seeking help.

Several meetings have taken place to discuss the severity of the anti-social behaviour and how it might be addressed working in partnership with all key stakeholders.

Meetings to discuss how to address the behaviour working with WBC Officers and Ward Elected Members are still being discussed and arranged further. A verbal update will be given to the HWBB meeting.

In due course arrangements will be made to meet with the youths to discuss their behaviour, its impact on the community, their grievances and factors giving rise to the resident's concerns and the CVF Reference Group will only become more proactive following the requested support from local elected members, council officers and the local community representatives.

It was felt appropriate to invite WBC youth workers from East Moreton to join the discussions to ensure a ward approach could be considered.

A significant contribution to these meetings/discussions will be provided by Emily Harding who is a new member of the Reference Group as the youth lead. The Reference Group is pleased to have Emily join the team and are sure she will make strong contribution to this work programme. Emily and Barry Fox presented to the members of the HWBB on community safety and young people.

Matters associated with the development of the community infrastructure needs of the estate will form an integral part of these discussions.