

## **Appendix 2 – Community, Voluntary and Faith Reference Group 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.

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.

Creating asset based community foundations can contribute towards cultivating relationships of mutual understanding, trust, continuous building of relationships and support between partners and stakeholders

### **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 and 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: Bringing all the key components together in an extensive working partnership across the Wirral.**

The national debate as to how to engage and overcome unacceptable health inequalities and their equally unacceptable and sinister effects on 'left behind' groups and members of society, is reaching maturity, for which the reader is referred to the precisés of recent papers in this update.

The challenge to address health inequalities must be led by communities working in partnership with all service providers, and in turn led by those elected to serve and represent them through the local council. All service providers have a hugely significant role in the working partnerships, especially the service providers whose role is to keep residents safe and well.

The apparent confusion between neighbourhoods and community can be concluded simply because it is not either/or as they both have their importance and place. For example, neighbourhood working is easily the best approach for health services and should develop at pace. However, community, at the heart of levelling up has primacy. Community must be able to work alongside all service providers in an extensive redesign, where appropriate, informing that redesign in the local circumstance and interest.

A characteristic of 'left-behind' communities is the lack of infrastructure needed for them to be able to reverse a decline in health inequalities. They need help from all of us if the scourge of inequalities is to be overcome through internally generated design and restructuring.

Family hubs and community hubs within these 'left behind' communities enabling the residents to meet and discuss their specific needs and aspirations are essential components for their transformation recognising that all 'self-defined' communities are unique.

Direct funding, to help the transformation is of vital importance, as evidenced here by the impact on Eastham ward. In many cases need can be identified from within the community, as has often been the case with and going forward after Covid.

This is highlighted in the development and delivery of the Cost of Living funding grant secured in Eastham in late 2022 to deliver a community led "Warmer Hubs" project with partners working together in a "bottom up" approach to benefit the health and wellbeing of the residents and community in Eastham.

The failure to gain traction in Leasowe, with best endeavours, is possibly due to a lack of direct funding and the caution of the community without a clear commitment to community led 'levelling up'.

In this update a community-led redesign of services to address children's disabilities working in partnership with children's services is given prominence.

Updates are provided on community hubs, family hubs a report on children's disabilities and green and open spaces.

### **Report on a possible extended approach to meeting the needs of disabled children.**

CVF-RG colleagues are seeking to work in partnership to find and optimise designs and processes for supporting families with disabled children. We all want the same thing, better outcomes.

A working partnership, not yet fully developed, has been agreed in principle with Children's Services.

Ostensibly a good system is in place in Wirral for responding to children with disabilities but there is much room for improvement on an individual level.

The Joseph Rowntree organisation uses the term '**minus trust**' to characterise the principal barrier to meeting the challenges of levelling up and in the context of children's disability CVF-RG suggests how this can be minimised. Evidence of the potential success of a new approach can be found at Ferries Family Hub.

The recently established family hubs within the children's centres is a key development.

What is being proposed here is that family hubs and community hubs are established in each community as a necessary component of a new structure which enables community to participate and lead where appropriate.

Families, recognising their child's disabilities, are then able to turn for help to the 'local' family hub and or community hub, where trust will be at its strongest.

The local hubs can then, with the permission of the family, register the child as disabled and "hold their hands", and help them navigate the complexities of securing the appropriate support for the child working primarily with children's services.

A lot of further thought needs to be given to this approach which is essentially community-led.

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

### **Family Hubs Update**

Wirral has made significant progress in developing family hubs and has officially launched its first Family Hub pilot in Seacombe. There has been a strong effort to include voluntary sector professionals in the development of the hubs with an emphasis on working together to support local families and children, the aim being to develop into the full Annex F offer required by the Department for Education (DfE). CVF organisations were invited and attended the launch. The Family Hubs transformation team is currently managed by Jo Simpson – Interim Operations Manager – Early Childhood Services who is working hard to bring about the multi-agency on-boarding with the help of the National Centre for Family Hubs (The Anna Freud Centre). Wirral is also involved in network meetings with 10 other local authorities. Discussions are beginning to take place in Wirral to include both statutory and CVFSE organisations to engrain good practice and to roll out an effective Family Hub offer to the families of Wirral. Development of Family Hubs is also being linked with Maternity Hubs, the Wirral Health and Wellbeing Strategy and 1001 days work already established. An identified potential challenge will be how and what data can be shared.

An invitation to express interest for settings to become Family Hubs was initiated by Wirral Council and 28 applications were submitted in addition to Children's Centres. These included 9 Primary Schools, 15 Voluntary Sector organisations, 1 Special school and 3 Early Years settings. Some settings have received information to say they will become a Family Hub delivering the full offer or a Satellite Hub. These locations are yet to be made public.

The organisations that put in expressions of interest are awaiting information on the next steps.

As part of the CVF Reference Group's work programme on Family Hubs members have been liaising and partnering with Council Officers around how we can improve the services offered and provided to children with disabilities and their families. Members of the reference group have put forward 4 case studies for consideration by Council officers in Children's Services and other relevant partners and service providers. The recommendation being that the health and well-being board supports the setting up of a workshop to consider and develop how better services and systems could be provided.

Members of the CVF Reference Group also attended a partnership meeting with the Wirral Family Hubs team to discuss Family Hubs and SEND. Wirral Parent and Carer Partnership were in attendance acting on behalf of local parents. 'Keeping SEND in mind' is part of the Start for Life Programme and Family Hub transformation.

The voice of children and families is key to providing an offer that families will want to use. In October the National Centre for Family Hubs Conference had a strong focus on relational practice and Annex F refers to 'Connecting to' families.

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention states children 'have a right to be listened to'. Peer support is also a foundational practice for Family Hubs, creating communities and spaces where children/ parents listen and support each other.

The community sector is the vital link between services and families, having the necessary trust and relationships to facilitate positive change. Currently the children of Wirral are crying out to be listened to with waiting lists for CAMHS being overwhelmed and the subsequent introduction of Care Navigators seeking safe places for children and families to be heard.

Pastoral workers in schools who are allocated listeners for children are often busy teaching and listening is secondary. Wirral needs an army of safe listeners, strategically placed within communities and in online spaces such as Kooth working with experts in communication such as Speech and Language Therapists teaching us how to listen and use communication tools and techniques. Parents who are experiencing stress or who are in poverty often do not have the capacity to listen carefully to children due to having to source basic necessities or to attend meetings etc. Often there is no family support surrounding a family i.e., grandparents, aunts or uncles. Parents need to be on their phone to navigate daily life and complex systems of support. Listening is not the whole responsibility of services but of every member of our society.

We often focus on 'Stranger Danger', can we harness the 'Kindness of Strangers' in safe ways to listen to Wirral's most desperate children. UNICEF are currently running a 'Child Friendly City Initiative' where every child has the right to grow up in an environment where they feel safe and secure, have access to basic services and clean air and water, can play, learn and grow where their voice is heard and matters. The Community Voluntary and Faith Sector, Community and Family Hubs can be a vehicle to make this systemic and cultural change happen.

## **Briefing Paper - Green and Open 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.

The CVF Reference Group are aware that the Council has recently awarded a contract through the United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) administered through the

Liverpool City Region. This contract includes over £86k to deliver “green grants” in line with UKSPF priorities.

The priorities are:-

1. Greening of local communities and neighbourhoods
2. Providing opportunities for local residents – especially young people and families to become more involved in their communities
3. Focus on local /community based projects to support a greening of local neighbourhoods
4. Adding and enhancing our natural green and blue infrastructure
5. Projects related to food security(food growing, communal composting and reduction of food waste)