

Adult Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee

Report from the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Public Health

9th November 2021 – Prevention and early intervention in collaboration with the Voluntary and Community Sector

Introduction

The purposes of this report are:

- to outline how we work collaboratively with voluntary sector organisations and communities to support people's independence;
- to describe the impact and benefits on social care practice and for the people of Gloucestershire;
- to describe the next stages of our plans for continued collaborative working with communities to promote independence and wellbeing

Key Messages

- The voluntary and community sector are a vital and valued part of Gloucestershire's care and support market
- Strong relationships rooted in trust and mutual understanding are key to the success of our preventive approach
- People are choosing to live independently in their own homes for as long as possible, making the provision of vibrant and varied community offers an essential part of our care market
- A foundation of community or placed based activities is essential to delivering our Adult Single Programme objective of enabling people to live independent lives, in their own homes and communities
- GCC can work collaboratively with the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and community groups to strengthen connections and invest in the areas where there are gaps or increasing demand
- Investing in our communities to create the conditions for individuals and communities to take more responsibility for their wellbeing and health will contribute towards reduced health inequalities and shared responsibility
- Annually, the Adult Single Programme invests over £800k in directly supporting VCS services
- Working with the VCS enables us to meet our Care Act duties to prevent, reduce and delay needs.

Background

Gloucestershire County Council's model of social care practice, known as the 3 Conversation model, works with people's strengths and those of their family and community to enable them to remain as independent as possible for as long as possible. This approach means that we can see people more quickly, we build a relationship with the individual, their carers and family, we are able to explain where social care can help them and how the system works.

The foundation of this model is Tier 1 in which information, advice and guidance and universal services combine to provide very local support for people. The VCS is uniquely positioned to support this approach as they will have much greater knowledge about people's situation which helps prevent escalating needs and enable us to intervene early and before people reach crisis point.

In July 2017, Adult Social Care (ASC) carried out a survey amongst social care practitioners, the VCS and individuals. We wanted to find out what people value and why and how they found out about the services and support that are available to them. We were also keen to find out where people go for information and advice and find out about activities in their community which help them to remain independent and living in their own home. The survey found that people valued spending time with friends and families and spending time doing the things they loved. However, often it was difficult for individuals and practitioners to find out what was on offer in their community. The survey gave a strong picture of a wide range of activities already taking place but it did reveal some gaps. Most frequently reported were support for low level mental health issues, support for those living with dementia and their Carers, loneliness and social isolation and access to affordable transport.

During 2018, ASC hosted a series of locality workshops across the county to set out the challenges social care was facing and the ambition to work differently by introducing a new model for fieldwork known as the 3 conversation model. In order for this model to work social care staff would need to be given the tools to find out about local activities and build relationships with these local agencies. The workshops were well attended by the VCS, practitioners across health and care and district council staff who all recognised the need for closer collaboration across the system to better support people to remain independent.

The feedback from the community wellbeing survey and the locality workshops identified the need for:

1. A cross sector network for practitioners, VCS and community groups to get to know one another , share intelligence , work together to address gaps and barriers

2. An information portal for health and care and community information that could be used by practitioners, the VCS, families and individuals that was dynamic and updated regularly
3. Small grants to invest in more activities in communities where there are gaps or increased demand

To respond to these needs identified at the workshops we have developed the following to support the health and care system and build community capacity.

1. Know Your Patch Networks

The Know Your Patch (KYP) Networks¹ were created in 2018 based in each district of Gloucestershire and are hosted by local VCS organisations who with have a service level agreement with GCC to cover the administration costs.

They were established with the belief that thriving communities are key to good lives. Connecting with local people, places and things that can help will in turn help people live well and worry less. KYP believes that people prefer to find their own solutions. When we get better at helping those people, we reduce pressure on services.

KYP is built of a network of organisations in each district in Gloucestershire. These networks meet quarterly for networking and discussion and communicate through email bulletins and updates. All the ASC locality teams are part of the KYP networks and have built strong and trusted relationships with the KYP host agencies.

During the pandemic the KYP networks swiftly switched to meeting on Zoom which has meant the membership grew to 1800 by September 2021. This is made up of VCS, public sector practitioners and volunteers. A recent review of the KYP networks with the host agencies reported that:

“KYP has become the backbone to much of the meaningful work that we facilitate. Whether it is supporting a collaboration of groups to apply for funding, sourcing volunteers, co-designing health services, supporting holiday hunger provision, or simply sourcing potatoes for the local foodbank, the FoD KYP network plays a crucial part in identifying and addressing an incredible variety of gaps and needs in the District.”

A survey of members of the KYP Networks in May 2021 about the impact of the networks reported that 98% of organisations that completed the survey experienced a positive impact from attending the KYP meetings. Some of the comments were: with other organisations and the community

- “It’s been a lifesaver during lockdown, a great way to stay in touch. Also good to have zoom meetings, I’ve come to many more.”

¹ Find the details for the Know Your Patch Networks here www.knowyourpatch.org.uk

- “It has enabled us to improve and expand our services.”
Allows me to provide a more holistic service for

2. Your Circle

As part of Conversation 1, ASC practitioners use the information on Your Circle² to identify local activities and support that may be of interest to the individuals they are assessing. It ensures that people have the information, advice and guidance they need at their fingertips.

Timely, up-to-date and reliable information is essential in enabling people to make good choices about care and support, and to find the community support they need when they need it, whether it's a practitioner, a carer, an individual or a family member

Your Circle is resourced by ASC as a dynamic portal that can be updated by the Your Circle team or by organisations themselves. KYP Members are encouraged to update their entries and the team regularly attend the network meetings

3. Thriving Communities Grants

During the consultation phase in 2018 it was acknowledged that as well as increasing demands on ASC there were increasing demands on the voluntary sector and community groups to provide more activities and support for people. The Thriving Communities Grant Programme is designed to invest in these organisations and their activities which promote social connections and maintaining independence at home. The Thriving Communities Grants are promoted through the KYP networks, the Gloucestershire VCS Alliance Bulletin and on Your Circle.

In 2018/19, 30 Thriving Community grant applications were awarded. In 2021 we have received 72 grant applications for the fund which are currently being scored by the grant panels consisting of a locality social worker, the KYP lead, a community engagement worker, a District Council officer, a GCC Lead Commissioner and a member of the ASP team. This demonstrates both the success of the fund and the need for investment in local agencies.

Since 2018, the Adult Single Programme has awarded £1,075,189 in grants to 145 community or voluntary sector organisations, which has meant an additional 3,214 people have been supported.

Digital Innovation Fund

In 2020, we also introduced the Digital Innovation Fund (DIF). This £200k annual fund is targeted at community organisations which aim to support people's independence through the use of technology. Since its inception, the DIF has funded 33 projects and supported more than 2,000 people. Projects range from teaching

² Your Circle is Gloucestershire County Council's online care and support directory www.yourcircle.org.uk

people digital skills which help them use video platforms to keep in touch with family during the pandemic, to purchasing health and exercise monitoring devices to support virtual fitness and wellbeing classes. By helping people connect with their communities, or through borrowing and trying new technologies, we have been able to support accessibility and improve health and wellbeing.

This year, we will be focussing our money on supporting schemes which improve digital literacy, prevent a decline in health, wellbeing or independence, work with BAME communities and/or provide equipment and support to people with disabilities and sensory impairments.

Community Response during the Pandemic

The community response during the pandemic was co-ordinated by the County Council, the six District Councils and Health working closely with local voluntary and community groups. The established KYP networks were key to this approach as they were able to rapidly convene virtual meetings to bring together VCS organisations, community groups and newly created mutual aid groups. The networks were the 'ears' on the ground about what was happening in our communities and were able to pass requests, feedback and comments to the Community Resilience Cell for consideration and action. An example of this was the creation of the Community Resilience Grants Fund in April 2020 to get money as out as quickly as possible to community groups for items such as floats, food supplies mobile phones, freezers and children's activity packs.

The feedback collected by the KYP networks allowed us to understand what the needs were and put the processes in place to provide food, prescriptions and social contact for those who needed it. The networks increased the frequency of their meetings by moving to Zoom and created a space for problem solving about the practical challenges vulnerable individuals were facing such as buying food without access to the internet,

The number of voluntary sector members of the KYP networks has doubled during the pandemic as Zoom meetings are more accessible and time efficient. The trust and mutual understanding across the networks has deepened as a result of the collective social action to support our communities.

What impact has it had?

Throughout the lifetime of the KYP Networks, Thriving Community Grants and the DIF we have gathered people's feedback so that we understand the impacts of this way of working as well as gathering information about where gaps may remain.

This feedback has shown us that that working with the VCS provides our social care system with flexibility, with the ability to respond rapidly without compromising personal choices, and delivers excellent value for money. The VCS are uniquely placed to understand communities, to deliver support on a very local scale, and to

genuinely link people together, thereby supporting independence and improving lives.

Here are some of the comments and feedback that were given by individuals who were supported through our Tier One provision.

“A lady whose daughter has moved to Gloucester and does not enjoy meeting new people, has joined Knit & Natter and the Walking for Health Group and states that these activities have given her a new circle of friends and she feels confident to come into the Community Café for a drink.”
Organisation receiving Thriving Community Grant

“Residents are over the moon to be connecting for family and friends”
GL Communities Impact Survey (DIF)

“I came for information... I’ve gained confidence and friendship and we get a decent cooked meal.”
Individual accessing Thriving Community Grant funded activity

“To date [we] have supported 113 individuals to get online and make the most of their tech, and 333 people have joined our Facebook Springboard groups. The impact on individuals is dramatic.”
Age UK (DIF)

“The training and technological equipment not only helped [them] to live independently, but also assisted [them] to feel less socially isolated”
Insight Glos (DIF)

Next steps

As feedback and monitoring to date show us that working hand in hand with the VCS is hugely beneficial for the Council and for the people we support, we want to continue building on these successes. We have therefore committed Care Act budget at the same level for the next financial year.

We are also actively working across the Integrated Care System to share and extend the demonstrable power of this style of working. This has enabled us to attract a further £200k from Gloucestershire CCG to explore the rollout of a successful pilot project which will create hubs of ‘digital buddies’ in every district. These hubs will be co-ordinated, run and sustained in the community sector, enabling us to reach all parts of the county and to include people who we might usually find hard to connect with our preventative services. The aim of the hubs will be to teach people the digital skills and confidence vital for modern independent living, using a peer support model.

Our next steps will be to consider how we best support the VCS to sustain and develop their work so that we can deliver our shared ambitions to enable more people to lead independent lives, and to consider how to further embed and extend VCS work in an integrated care system governed by new Care Act reforms.