



Coventry City Council

Briefing note

To: Coventry Health and Wellbeing Board
From: Ruth Tennant, Deputy Director of Public Health
Date: 23rd February 2015

Subject: Active Citizens, Strong Communities Strategy

1 Purpose of the Note

1.1 This note outlines a multi-agency approach to improving the way we engage and involve local communities and encourage 'asset based' working across the city. This is set out in the 'Active Citizens, Strong Communities Strategy' (appendix 1). The delivery of this strategy will be supported by a detailed implementation plan to which all local agencies are invited to contribute (appendix 2).

2 Recommendations

2.1 Health and Well-being Board is asked to:

- Note and endorse the Active Citizens, Strong Communities Strategy
- Provide systems-level leadership for this work across Coventry
- Propose additional contributions from their own organisations to the implementation plan
- Receive an update on the implementation of the Strategy in September 2014

3 Background

3.1 What is 'asset based working'?

Asset based working is an approach which seeks to recognise and work actively with the skills, capabilities and resources that exist within communities. This is in contrast to the traditional 'deficit' models that have been traditionally used by the public sector. This is based on identifying needs or problems which services then respond to. Asset based working does not replace this approach but it recognises that by working with local people – either through more effective consultation & engagement, in co-designing or co-delivering local services or volunteering in their local areas – we may improve the impact and effectiveness of what we do.

Unlike previous community development approaches which have often emphasised specialist community development workers or teams to work with local communities, asset based working stresses the importance of main-streaming this way of working as part of core business. Some of the most successful examples of asset based working – such as UHCW's RIPPLE project which works with patients with COPD to reduce social isolation and improve self-management of their condition or the city council-run POD which works with adults with long-term mental health issues, have received national recognition and are well-established.

Much of the innovative work that has going on to promote and develop asset based working locally has been led by voluntary organisations, including Grapevine, Coventry Law Centre and smaller organisations and community groups. Coventry University has also been leading a number of initiatives to empower local communities through its City Initiative. This includes a number of projects including its Neighbourhood University scheme which is being piloted in Hillfields to work with local people to identify what skills and training they would like to be able to get jobs or higher-level training. In addition, schemes such as Coventry4Good, led by Voluntary Action Coventry, which has been set up to expand volunteering in the city are helping to grow local capability.

The asset based working strategy aims to build, share and learn from existing local best practice, to significantly expand our capability to grow this way of working locally and to embed the learning from this in how core services are delivered.

3.2 National and local policy drivers

The asset based working strategy aims to support the delivery of some key national and local policy drivers. The **NHS Five-year Forward Vision** emphasises the importance of improving the engagement and involvement of local people in planning health and social care services. It also stresses the value of building on the energy and compassion in communities to expand volunteering and encourage community-led models of care. The **Care Act**, which comes into force on the 1st April 2015 also places new statutory duties on Councils to promote individual well-being and to ensure the provision of preventative services: These services are aimed at helping to prevent, reduce or delay the need for care and support, or reduce care and support needs. A key element of this approach locally is to work with people and communities so that they can do more to support themselves and reduce demand on public sector services.

3.3 Local feedback

In April 2014 the Council Telephone Survey, a survey conducted under the Local Government Association's 'Are you being served' guidance on benchmarking residents' satisfaction, asked 1,000 randomly selected local people if they would like to get more involved in their local community. 2 in 3 people agreed that the Council should ask local people to do more for themselves. 1 in 4 gave the Council their contact details to find out more about how they could get more involved. When asked about how residents might help get involved in their local communities, around 25% said residents could do more to help older or vulnerable people and 20% suggested that residents could help keep streets clean and safe. In addition, the City Council's budget consultation process, which has asked for organisations, groups and individuals to come forward to get involved in delivering some local services, has identified significant opportunities to work more closely with residents, community organisations, faith organisation and others to develop alternative forms of service delivery.

3.4 The economic benefits of asset based working

National research shows that asset based working can achieve significant cost-savings. Basildon's Connected Care scheme, funded by Essex County Council and the local NHS, worked with local people to identify improvements to local health and social care services. This has claimed impacts of over £1,000 per client, and a total of over £500,000 in savings across the town. In another case, peer-led support schemes for people with mental health problems saved were £80 cheaper per day than usual care. However, making these savings requires organisations to radically change the way they provide services.

4 Active Citizens, Strong Communities – summary

- 4.1 The **Active Citizens, Strong Communities Strategy** is built around six key areas which are described in more detail in appendix 1:
- 4.1.1 **Building capacity and leadership to support asset based working:** we will do this by seeking to develop a local Centre for Excellence for this work, to be led by an external partner. We will also be developing city-wide resources, including an on-line directory of community organisations to make it easier for staff across a range of organisations to tap into local community resources. The Council's Community Development Service is providing in-house capability to build capacity in communities and to support the implementation of asset based working in some key services.
- 4.1.2 **Co-designing and co-delivering local services:** we will seek to grow the number of services which are co-designed or co-delivered with local communities. A number of key programmes are already taking this approach, including the new Acting Early 0-5 children's services that are operating in Foleshill, Moat House, Bell Green, Middle Ride, Hillfields, the Age-Friendly City programme (a partnership between Age UK, Coventry University and Coventry City Council) and the Early Action Pathfinders, being led by Coventry Law Centre, for housing and early years, due to go live in March.
- 4.1.3 **Supporting staff to work differently:** effectively delivering this type of work will require a skilled workforce that is able to work differently with communities, identifying opportunities where local people could be enabled to support each other better as well as new ways to engage communities to shape local services. A cohort of staff are currently being supported to develop new skills to work with local communities, including completing the multi-agency training programme 'Transforming Communities with Communities' programme. A practitioners' network is also being established to enable staff to share skills. Plans are also under development to look at how public sector organisations can encourage volunteering in their own workforces, linked to the Coventry4Good programme.
- 4.1.4 **Working with local statutory and voluntary sector partners to access external funding:** work has been going on to access nationally-available funding from sources such as the Department for Communities and Local Government to support the growth of this work locally.
- 4.1.5 **Using technology to strengthen engagement with communities:** plans are being developed to further explore how technology platforms can be used to improve engagement and communication with local people. A pilot, supported by INLOGOV and Public-I will be starting in April to explore how social media is used locally and to identify digital champions who could be engaged more actively in decision-making. Work is also underway to investigate the development of an on-line Citizen's Panel for Coventry.
- 4.1.6 **Evaluation:** a set of key indicators are being identified from the Coventry Household Survey, including well-being indicators and measures of social cohesion which will be used to measure the impact of this work programme. Specific evaluation of individual components of the programme will also be developed.

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