

**Active citizens; strong communities**  
**Active citizens; partners in reducing demand and creating better services**  
**Coventry's Asset-based working Strategy, Working and delivering together**  
**2015-16**

## **1 Background**

We want Coventry to be ambitious for itself and its citizens. As partners we are committed to making the city a globally connected city that is attractive to businesses and investors and also to improving the health and quality of life for all our residents. We recognise that the best way for this to happen is to enable and empower local people, communities and groups to use and develop their own skills and potential to take control over their own lives. This is especially true at a time when resources across the public sector are reducing, putting pressures on our ability to provide public services in the way that we have in the past. This is an opportunity to have fresh & honest conversations with residents, communities and partners to explore different ways of getting things done. In the past, public services have often helped to foster dependency – rather than recognising the skills and assets that people, their families and their communities have. This may – inadvertently – have been promoted by our own staff and ways of working which have often encouraged people to see us as having the solutions to their problems – rather than as people who can support and enable people. Asset-based working attempts to foster new relationships with local people, recognising their skills and abilities and working with them to find new solutions to intractable problems.

## **2 Aim**

We want to encourage, enable and empower residents to be active citizens, building strong, involved communities and to be partners in reducing demand and improving services for. We will work with local communities and local people to intervene before problems reach a crisis and to find solutions that reflect and build on local people's skills, experience and capability.

### **What does this mean?**

#### **In communities:**

- Active communities that can help themselves and one another, neighbourliness, befriending, looking out for each other, give each other advice and help
- Inclusive, supportive communities that don't just tolerate each other but celebrate each other's achievements and successes.
- Improving the wellbeing & resilience of communities so they can take control of their lives, contribute & achieve their ambitions and aspirations and develop empowering relationships.

#### **In services:**

- Doing things differently that leads to real change, which leads to reducing demand for services.
- Preventing problems and intervening early, before issues reach a crisis.
- Finding solutions with local people and designing services jointly

### **Why do we need to change?**

- An awareness that a 'one size fits all' approach does not work for many people

- Falling budgets across the whole of the public sector means that we have to rethink the way we provide services
- Increasing demand for local services as our population ages and the demographic make-up of the city changes

We acknowledge the concerns that this strategy could be seen as just about making cuts and getting local people to step in and replace non-statutory services. We believe this approach will be about making things work **better for everyone** - for residents, communities, service users and services.

### 3 The principles

This work will be driven by some over-arching principles:

- Getting this right will require a step-change in how we do business. This will not happen overnight and will need to be tested out in a few areas, building on the best of what is already out there, to demonstrate how it can work in practice and then industrialising this approach.
- The work has implications for how we all work and the attitudes and skills of staff across a range of organisations. It will need statutory agencies and other people who deliver services or support communities to devolve power, deepen relationships with local people and promote co-produced services.
- We need to make it possible for people to meet needs informally, looking at what people can do and want to do (an asset-based approach), rather than just what they can't do (a needs based approach).
- This work is going on already (see below) and we need to learn from the best: staff who are already co-designing services with local people, elected members' local knowledge, connections and influence and voluntary and community groups who have stepped in and found their own solutions.

### 4 What does this work look like?

There are clear examples of this work already happening across Coventry of which just some are identified below:

- Social Care - The Pod - social brokerage for people with long-standing mental health issues which supports them to take control of their own lives and identify what will help them to live healthy and fulfilled lives.
- Health - University Hospital Coventry & Warwickshire Ripple Project - connecting patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease to each other and their communities, recognising that patients often arrive at hospital because they are anxious and socially isolated.
- Voluntary and community sector – Grapevine, Coventry Law Centre, People Point who have a strong track-record in working alongside people and communities including families taking part in the Troubled Families programme in Willenhall and working with young migrants.

- The City Council's Community Development Service- adopting facilitative and enabling approaches from the beginning.
- The City Council's Parks Service in the Place Directorate that have been setting up, supporting and involving Friends Groups in the management and development of parks for a number of years.
- Community Wellbeing Project which has supported grass-roots community ideas to improve the wellbeing of their neighbours and community such as the Men's Shed programme in Spon End which is led by a community volunteer and supports men to develop healthy lifestyles. Using seed funding from the council, this scheme is now financially self-sufficient.
- Voluntary Action Coventry's Innovation and Development Fund, funded through Coventry and Rugby CCG and Public Health to support new forms of voluntary sector service delivery around screening, physical activity, HIV testing and unplanned hospital admissions. Many of these are delivered by smaller groups who have significantly developed their capacity as a result of this support. VAC is also linking new migrant communities into wider health initiatives such as how to confront and tackle Female Genital Mutilation.
- Coventry University's Neighbourhood University programme which is working with local communities to identify educational opportunities that meet their needs.
- Acting Early pilots of integrated services for children aged 0-5 and their families and carers which have been co-designed with local parents.
- Coventry's Age Friendly City which is a joint initiative between Age UK, Coventry City Council and the University of Coventry.
- Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group's (CCG) Transformation Programmes are reviewing how asset based working will be integral to a new approach to services. Some examples of how the programmes will support it through specific work-streams are:
  - Diabetes – as part of improving the approach to education and information for people with diabetes, the CCG has invested in a 'Peer-to-Peer Scheme' to be delivered by Diabetes UK. This will recruit volunteers from the community to engage with patients about their condition and sign-post to education resources that are available.
  - Children, Young People & Maternity – As part of this programme, the CCG is working with other local agencies to redesign services for children and young people with mental health issues (CAMHS). Arden Commissioning Support Unit has commissioned a national charity, 'The Young Foundation', to undertake work with partners and professionals on the co-production and development of a new model and specification for CAMHS services. This work is being carried out with local councils and 'Young Minds' – a local charity.
  - Stroke – Currently looking at how the third sector could help deliver the new pathway being developed for Stroke Services. For example, the CCG currently fund the Stroke Association to provide an Information, Advice and Support Service (IAS), which supports stroke survivors and carers to cope with the anxiety of dealing with a Stroke.

- Dementia – The CCG is a key partner in the delivery of the first Coventry-wide dementia strategy. One of the deliverables of the transformation programme is to better equip carers to be able to look after people with dementia.

## **5 Identifying priority areas – what have we done so far?**

Over the last year, we have started to grow expertise, share ideas across sectors about what this work should look like and get some practical work off the ground (see above). We have had early discussions with elected members within the City Council about what we should focus on, led by the Cabinet Member, Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise and Community and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4).

We have held a multi-agency stakeholder workshop to agree local areas for action, which has informed this draft. We have asked local people, through the Council's telephone survey, if they would like to get more involved in their local community: two in three people agreed that the Council should ask local people to do more for themselves with one in four giving the Council their contact details to find out more about how they could get more involved.

## **6 Leadership for Active Citizens, Strong Communities.**

We have established a new group, the Active Citizens, Strong Communities Group which brings together leaders from across the public sector, universities, business and voluntary sectors to develop new approaches to working with communities.

This group, which is chaired by the Police Commander for Coventry, will champion, develop and review work already under way across the city. It will provide leadership for asset based working, ensuring that new approaches to working with communities are embedded in core business.

It will report to senior strategic groups bringing together leaders from across the city, including the Local Public Service Board and Health and Well-being Board as well as through the governance processes of each organisation on the group.

## **7 Six key pillars**

Based on discussion to date, we are proposing six key pillars for this work, to be directed by the Active Citizens, Strong Communities group. This will include work that is already underway as well as new areas which need to be developed and agreed with partners.

### **7.1 Building capacity**

#### **We will:**

- Develop a voluntary sector-led local Centre of Excellence locally to take forward this work
- Continue to support the capability of the City Council's Community Development Service to build community capacity and support defined projects where we want to embed asset based working across the city (see below)
- Develop a city-wide database of community groups and resources to make it easy for people to identify community assets
- Undertake a review of how the Council engages residents and other key stakeholders in its decision-making, building on existing Coventry Partnership *informing, consulting and involving good practice standards*

## 7.2 Co-designing and co-delivering local services

### We will:

- Deliver a number of projects which will work with local people to co-design and co-deliver local services. This will include:
  - Develop new approaches to supporting older people to link into local community groups and activities, linked to the development of integrated health and social care and the Better Care Fund, to be led by the Council's Public Health Team working with Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group and Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust and the People Directorate.
  - Devolution of a park management and associated budget to local 'Friends of...' for a 1 year trial period, to be led by the Council's Place Directorate
  - Embedding co-design principles in the development of Coventry as an Age-Friendly City, to be led by Coventry University/ Public Health.
  - Support the development of new models of early intervention through two Early Action Pathfinders, to be led by Coventry Law Centre and ensure that the learning from this informs asset based approaches across the system.
  - Consider other opportunities to co-design or co-deliver services, as part of planned service redesign, including the Council's City Centre First/ suburban hub strategy and other service redesign work.
  - Develop community-led approaches to healthy weight, including developing a healthy food environment and community-led approaches to exercise (Coventry on the Move), to be led by Public Health.
  - Other projects, to be identified by partners.

## 7.3 Supporting staff to work differently

### We will

- Support a cohort of staff to develop new skills to work with local communities, including completing the multi-agency training programme 'Transforming Communities with Communities' programme.
- Identify local champions from this programme who can apply the learning to service redesign and promote the learning more widely.
- Work with the voluntary sector to identify what 'good' looks like: what are the core skills that staff need to deliver this way of working effectively.
- Bring together workforce and organisational development leads from across key partners to understand the future workforce skills to deliver this way of working across the whole workforce, drawing from learning in the voluntary sector and existing projects. Within the City Council, this will include looking at how this learning can be embedded in the Kickstart programme.
- Develop proposals to support staff to participate in voluntary activities to support the development of community led initiatives.

## 7.4 Working with local statutory and voluntary sector partners to access external funding

### We will:

Work with a range of agencies to lever in funding to support this work locally. Initially this will focus on:

- Working with Coventry Law Centre to support, and if successful, implement a bid to the Early Action Neighbourhood Fund (January 2015).
- Working with other partners to access additional funding to support projects aimed at building community capability.

## **7.5 Evaluating the impact of what we do**

### **We will:**

- Work with local universities to understand and evaluate the impact of this programme. We will do this by seeking external funding and research capability to support this evaluation, making sure that evaluation is used to support and refine the work programme as it develops.
- Use Coventry's Household Survey to measure the impact of this work against key outcomes measures, including well-being (using the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale), community cohesion and connection using baseline data collected in 2013.

## **7.6 Using technology to strengthen links between communities**

### **We will:**

- Identify way we can improve two-way engagement with local people through the use of on-line platforms to support consultation and co-decision.
- Work with key sector leaders (INLOGOV and Public-I) to explore the connectivity between strategic decision making, democratic principles and community engagement and develop proposals around civic social media use and engagement in Coventry.

