



Co-operative Councils

Innovation Network

COVID-19

Stevenage Borough Council

Healthy Stevenage Partnership

The Healthy Stevenage Partnership designed a range of initiatives with communities to drive community wellbeing, for children, families and those isolated as part of recovery efforts

Context

Covid-19 heightened existing awareness of health inequalities in Stevenage. These concerns included people suffering domestic abuse, those in poverty, those with multiple and complex needs and those experiencing social isolation. Stevenage Borough Council and its partners recognised their collaborative role and contributions that would make a difference and reduce demand for services during this time. The Council had already taken a lead in facilitating a Healthy Stevenage Partnership, as a collaborative space for communities, with the Health Service, Borough Council and County Council coming together to tackle challenges. Covid-19 provided an impetus for a targeted focus.

Development

Early in the pandemic the Council started to talk to partners through the Healthy Stevenage Partnership in relation to emerging health and wellbeing needs among the population. The Healthy Stevenage Partnership trialled its first Zoom session bringing organisations, community representatives and voluntary groups together to create a plan of action to support the needs of vulnerable residents. A total of 22 partners attended – one of the highest recorded attendance rates for the partnership. Between March and May 2020 the Council shared weekly Covid-19 updates containing funding opportunities, headline news and resources and increased its social media presence. It also carried out a Covid-19 impact assessment on partners and the communities they serve. This highlighted the need for more support and guidance with joint funding bids and an increased focus on health and wellbeing interventions. This particularly targeted families as a number of hardship and safeguarding concerns were beginning to emerge. Through a series of partner consultations based on community contact the council started to consider the best way to work to support health and wellbeing. Healthy Stevenage Partnership was able to share findings from a wide range of partner engagement exercises to help inform this work.

Implementation

With increasing concerns regarding physical inactivity and mental wellbeing, particularly among vulnerable residents, the partnership swiftly launched the So Active Project. This delivered physical activities online and outdoors to help support the physical and mental health of residents targeting key workers, older people, children and young people, and adults. Between July and September 2020 over 30 sessions were delivered with over 300 residents participating. To ensure families were targeted, 60 Pop-up Play sessions focused on mental wellbeing and isolation were delivered in 12 parks and open spaces over a five-week period. Over 1,000 activity packs were distributed to all participating families and over 900 picnics to families and households experiencing food poverty, funded through donations and councillor budgets. Healthy Stevenage and Hertfordshire Sports Partnership hosted a joint webinar to bring groups and organisations together to target activities in the neighbourhood with greatest health inequalities. With support from the Community Development Officer, four community organisations devised a summer holiday programme for 2020 incorporating sport and physical activity following social distancing conventions. Through the partnership Stevenage Football Foundation, Stevenage Helps, Stevenage Community Careline, HomeStart, The Family Centre, The Living Room and Mind connected befrienders to those in need of food, prescriptions and someone to talk to. Collectively they made over 8,000 calls and completed almost 3,400 home visits to vulnerable residents.



Stevenage Cycling Festival

Review

The early challenges of the work related to capturing the impact of Covid-19 on wider wellbeing measures and then tracking the appropriate responses. Creating a pandemic response dashboard for partners to update fortnightly would have improved quantitative data to assess reach. The immediate response efforts focused on those medically shielded and self-isolating. Discussion at the Healthy Stevenage Partnership quickly broadened this assessment to other groups, to address wider health concerns and plan activities to support the recovery as pandemic restrictions eased. The Healthy Stevenage Partnership has gained momentum as a collaborative space to support communities to feel safe and well with a growing focus on building resilience and working with volunteers.

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