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COMMUNITY



Social Partnership



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social value

Stroud District Council

Supporting the development of a Community Hub Network in Stroud District

Community Hubs are places that act as a central point of contact and support for their communities. Hubs are connectors of people, communities, local groups and voluntary sector organisations and a place where people can find friendship, positive things to do, acquire new skills and share their expertise, and get help and advice on food, housing, finances, health and wellbeing.

In Stroud District, there are a number of Community Hubs already established and a great network of voluntary and statutory organisations working together alongside parish, town and district councils.

At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, communities came together to play an active role in responding to the emergency with countless acts of kindness and solidarity. Informal networks sprung up all over the district, helping to reach people in need of support and ensure everyone knew where and how to get help. This enhanced the response on the ground and demonstrated how important it is to understand, value and support the strengths, capacities and skills held within communities in order to be better prepared for future emergencies.

The Community Hubs Development project aims to ensure learning from the pandemic is used to inform a plan that seeks to build community resilience through the development of a network of Community Hubs across Stroud district. It is at the centre of a new partnership between Gloucestershire County Council, Stroud District Council and Creative Sustainability CIC plan will look at how to:



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- ensure there is coverage across the whole of the district and appropriate distribution of resources and responsibilities
- reduce the strain of responsibility on volunteers in supporting the most vulnerable people in their local area
- share knowledge, training and skills between the Hubs
- ensure best practice around inclusion, diversity, safeguarding and volunteer management
- improve cross sector working and collaboration

Community Hub Support

Communities will be supported in a number of different ways: Community groups who want to do more to support their places, will be supported to grow sustainably, making sure they have the resources and training they need before taking on more responsibilities. They will be helped to manage expectations of what they can do with what they've got and making realistic plans for their next steps. Some communities have more 'social capital' than others, they have resources and know how to use them but some do not. Part of this project is about supporting communities who don't have the resources or confidence to use them. Relationships can be built between community groups and other agencies to encourage cross sector working, making it easier for people to reach the support they need. This also means volunteers don't have to feel that they must hold all the answers.



Community Hubs Development Lead Role

The partnership has funded a Community Hubs Development Lead role for the project. This role is hosted within the voluntary and community sector with strong links across the VCS network for the Stroud District. The role is guided by a Steering Group made of the host organisation, County, District and Town Councils, Clinical Commissioning Group, a leading Community Development charity and established Community Hubs. This well-rounded Steering Group has helped spread the learning from the project across sectors in the county, influencing change in how the public sector works with the community sector.

In addition to the 'systems change' work with the Steering Group, the Development Lead role works with community groups who are looking to grow into more formalised Hubs. The Lead role also works in areas where no Hub exists to explore how partnerships between community groups could be evolved in functioning Hubs. The ambition for the project is that every locality has a well-functioning, properly resourced Hub.

Funding for Hub managers and project workers has been provided by the District Council's Community Wellbeing Grant. In the first year of the project four new Hubs have been funded in addition to the 3 existing Hubs in the District. The Steering Group has also leveraged in funding for the emerging Community Hubs from the CCG.

The next steps for the project are to:

1. Create a map of established and emerging Community Hubs for the District
2. Develop a 'check list' guided to help Hubs prioritise their plans
3. Continue to support the peer network of Community Hubs to share good practice and resources.
4. Develop a costed plan for what it takes to set up a Community Hub

The Hubs project is becoming a key platform for joint work around food poverty, digital inclusion and support for families in the cost of living crisis. By working with Hubs on the ground in the estates and villages across the District, the council is able to reach into areas of need and enable stronger communities better than ever before.

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