



Cooperative Councils'
Innovation Network

COMMUNITY



Stevenage Borough Council

Building a Better Bedwell

Background and Foundation

Project Duration: December 2023 – March 2025

Funding: Police and Crime Commissioner's Safer Streets Fund

The *Building a Better Bedwell* project was a place-based community safety and development programme delivered by Stevenage Borough Council in response to ongoing antisocial behaviour (ASB), crime, and social isolation in high rise accommodation in the Bedwell area of Stevenage.

Funded through the Police and Crime Commissioner's Safer Streets Fund, the project combined visible safety improvements, multi-agency patrols, a community retail initiative, and long-term community development planning. Its holistic design was shaped by resident feedback and delivered in partnership with Hertfordshire Police, SPARX, Parkguard, and local voluntary groups.

The project began in December 2023 and concluded in March 2025, with activity centred around four integrated strands:

- **Neighbourhood Wardens (Daytime Safety & Support)**
- **Parkguard Patrols (Evening Reassurance & Visibility)**
- **SPARX Retail Initiative (Community Volunteering & Skills)**
- **Built Environment Improvements (Security & Engagement Spaces)**

Aims of the Project

The *Building a Better Bedwell* initiative aimed to reduce ASB and crime, improve local safety infrastructure, and enhance community wellbeing through a people-first approach.

Key Objectives

- Improve safety through visible patrols and upgraded security infrastructure
- Foster local leadership and engagement, particularly among isolated or underrepresented residents
- Establish a consistent, trusted presence within the tower blocks
- Create pathways for volunteering, training, and community ownership
- Build trust in services and reduce fear of crime

Set-Up

The project structure was shaped by both data and community input. ASB heatmaps and crime data from 2020–2023 informed priority interventions and resource deployment. Monthly delivery meetings ensured coordination between council services, police, and partners.

Neighbourhood Wardens were recruited and trained to conduct daytime patrols and host weekly drop-ins in the high rise accommodation.

Parkguard was contracted to deliver high-visibility evening patrols targeting peak ASB hours, with a focus on engagement, reassurance, and intelligence gathering.

SPARX, a national charity retail initiative, was brought in to deliver a community-run retail stall at Stevenage Indoor Market, providing volunteering and skills opportunities.

Built Environment works included:

- Secure entry doors and intercom upgrades in all three blocks
- Mobile CCTV units for hotspot monitoring
- Renovation of a local community room
- Improvements to nearby green spaces and communication tools (e.g. digital noticeboards)

Delivery

Neighbourhood Wardens

- 255 patrols delivered over 12 months
- Weekly drop-ins held at high rise accommodation.
- Issues logged and escalated, forming part of joint briefings with Parkguard

SPARX Community Retail Initiative

- Faced early challenges due to delayed recruitment and poor promotion
- Eventually staffed by a Bedwell resident, boosting local involvement
- Due to provide volunteering and skill-building opportunities
- Due to host outreach events and supported town-wide community activities

Parkguard Patrols

- 234 evening and weekend patrols delivered
- Covered tower blocks, nearby parks, and green spaces
- 2,300+ taskings, 941 public engagements, and 493 youth interactions
- 30 safeguarding alerts submitted, including for rough sleeping
- 1,000+ items of drug paraphernalia recovered

Built Environment Improvements

- Secure-by-design doors and intercom systems installed
- Local community room refurbished for public use
- Damaged shrubs and playground equipment in Town Centre Gardens replaced
- Plans for community gardens delayed due to building safety works

Key Outputs & Outcomes

Required Outcomes	Required Outputs	Achieved Outputs	Comments
Improved resident safety	Delivery of warden and Parkguard patrols	489 combined patrols; strong feedback from residents	Delivered within expectations
Community engagement and trust	Weekly drop-ins and event attendance	75 drop-ins, 300+ residents engaged	Delivered above expectations
Volunteering and skills development	SPARX retail stall, staffed locally	Stall operational from July 2024 with local hire	Early delivery challenges noted
Infrastructure improvements	Secure doors, CCTV, community space upgrades	All three blocks upgraded; community room reopened	Door delivery delayed due to complex system requirements
Communications and information sharing	Digital noticeboards, leaflets, newsletters	Leaflets delivered, social media used, posters displayed	SPARX-specific communication required improvement from SPARX central offices

Learning

Key lessons from the project include:

- **Local ownership is essential:** SPARX's performance improved with local staffing.
- **Coordinated delivery works:** Monthly tasking meetings ensured cross-agency alignment and responsiveness.

- **Resident input drives value:** Community feedback shaped deployment and priorities.
 - **Remote project delivery can limit impact:** National organisations must embed locally to succeed.
 - **Flexibility matters:** Being able to adapt plans mid-project was vital (e.g. responding to delays or shifting community needs).
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Next Steps

The closure of the *Building a Better Bedwell* project in March 2025 will be followed by several strategic actions to sustain momentum:

- **SPARX Transition:** Support SPARX's continued presence in the Indoor Market, improve local promotion and stock.
 - **Resident Leadership:** Continue drop-ins, support the creation of resident associations, and build on volunteer capacity.
 - **Infrastructure Oversight:** Monitor secure entry system performance; coordinate upcoming external safety works.
 - **Green Space Engagement:** Restart planning for community gardens post-construction; expand use of Town Centre Gardens.
 - **Sustainability Planning:** Embed successful elements in wider SBC strategy and share learnings with other wards.
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Conclusion

Building a Better Bedwell demonstrated how integrated, community-led approaches to safety and wellbeing can produce lasting change in high-density housing areas. Through its patrol presence, infrastructure upgrades, and people-first engagement, the project delivered clear benefits — building trust, reducing ASB visibility, and laying the foundation for longer-term community ownership.

With continued support and adaptation, this work will help shape future efforts to create safer, more connected neighbourhoods across Stevenage.

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