

Bournville Asset Build Project

Background information

The For All Healthy Living Company

“The For All Healthy Living Company aims to sustain and enhance the wellbeing of people in Weston-super-Mare, and to demonstrate the value of working in partnership with our community.”

In 1999, the existing partnership of community members and local agencies committed to improving local services seized the opportunity to develop a multi agency, “one-stop-shop” and worked to plan, design, finance and develop the For All Healthy Living Centre.

The For All Healthy Living Company is a Community Interest Company and was incorporated in 2005 to formalise the partnership of community and local agencies, run the For All Healthy Living Centre and develop its work to improve the health and wellbeing of residents of South Ward. It is a Social Enterprise, reinvesting surpluses in the local community.

We are proposing an asset-based approach to building on the strengths of local people’s experience and skills to support them to stay connected with their local communities, increasing their resilience and contributions, and working with other agencies to ensure no one is left behind.

An asset-based approach to community development is widely recognised as the most effective longer terms solution.

It is a place-based approach to strengthening resilience and connectedness in an area of high inequality. We believe from our experience, that we have to build from the ground up, balancing the requirement to ensure people’s needs are met with a longer-term commitment to creating ways in which people can flourish and still have the capacity to grow their capabilities.

It aims to directly tackle the wellbeing and health inequality by running an asset-based approach without pre-determining the activities. These will emerge from and be sustained by local people. It is likely, but not assured that it will cover mental health, physical activity, food and nutrition, and other substances misuse.

During the Covid we joined with others to become part of the Weston Helping People initiative, taking referrals from North Somerset Together, and Weston Town Council to match isolated and shielded people with volunteers to ensure people could get prescriptions, shopping and emotional support where needed.

Through this process and our other work, we recognise that there are an increasing number of people in who have become more isolated and removed from their usual forms of support and connection. This has been a multi-faceted process which has included the

physical isolation of shielding, which for many has been confounded by a psychological fear of exposure to potential contagion, which spirals into increased low mood and further isolation. As is recognised the move to online services, particularly in health and primary care has created even more barriers for people who have not been used to or interested in digital activities and devices.

From our continuing contact with people who are experiencing isolation we know there is a need to provide light touch support and encouragement for people to recognise the life experiences they have, and to start to build back new and different connections and skills. We also know that there are some people falling through the net of existing service provision through pride, lack of family support and pressures on service, to deal with high threshold 'cases'.

Our experience from taking a similar approach across Weston and Villages to working with older people is that the activities that people develop tend to be low cost and often self-sustaining and self-funding. What is required is the catalyst and scaffolding of a skilled worker.

The Our Neighbourhood Network project, a lottery funded project has been working in a similar way in the area and because of Covid they were limited in their capacity to reach a wider range of the population. We know the For All Healthy Living Centre is seen as a trusted place with trusted people, we do not have staffing capacity to respond to ideas which are emerging from local people.

The project will initially use existing links, both from other organisations and individuals we have contact with, to build a picture of what people are wanting, what is available and perhaps most importantly what they may be able to offer to increase connections, grow skills and support one another. We will be holding some conversation opportunities to find out from local people what matters to me about my wellbeing and health.

By strengthening the local community and providing opportunities for people to empower themselves we believe a more long term, embedded impact will be established. There is a growing body of academic evidence exists. One example is:

Asset-Based Community Development: Narratives, Practice, and Conditions of Possibility—A Qualitative Study With Community Practitioners

Rebecca Harrison, Christian Blickem, Jonathan Lamb,

First Published January 17, 2019

It is difficult to map out the exact details of the project as it will be dependent on what emerges from this process. However, to give an example; our recent experience of developing Repair Shops has enabled people to use their dormant skills or interests to help other local people to repair anything from teddy bears to bicycles. Using people's own motivation to take part can open up new ways of learning and access to a wider world.

Based on similar work of part time older people's worker over 1 year, we would estimate working directly with 80 individuals, setting up 12 groups involving over 240 people. Indirect beneficiaries of other organisations we would work with would approximately over 150 people

We have recently recruited 2 sessional community researchers to evaluate the impact of the Our Neighbourhood Network project. We are using the 6 community outcomes as adopted by North Somerset Council as the framework. This is a pilot evaluation process and we could use the learning to evaluate this programme as well.