



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL



Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 10 July 2024

Report of Councillor Rhea Rayside,
Cabinet Member for People &
Communities

Community Engagement Update

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

To provide an overview of community engagement for 2023/24, based on activities that promote wellbeing, positive mental health and help to reduce social isolation as outlined in the Action Plan which accompanies the Community Engagement and Development Strategy – Our People, Our Place.

Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. Notes the content of the report and provides comment on the activity contained.

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Connecting communities
Which wards are impacted?	(All Wards);

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

1.1 There are no specific financial comments arising from this report.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer

Legal and Governance

1.2 There are no significant legal and governance implications arising from this report.

Completed by: Graham Watts (Monitoring Officer)

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 South Kesteven District Council recognises the importance of the network of voluntary and community groups within South Kesteven and is appreciative of their contribution and commitment to local society.
- 2.2 To fulfil the Council's commitment, a Community Engagement and Development Strategy was produced, which is included as a link for information in the background papers in paragraph 5.1 of this report. The strategy, Our People, Our Place, is supported by an accompanying action plan. An updated copy of this plan can be found at Appendix B.
- 2.3 The aim of the strategy, and the action plan which supports it, is to provide a framework to guide community engagement and development activity within South

Kesteven which complements the Council's Corporate Plan and its ambition for "Connecting Communities" by:

- Enabling opportunities for increased public dialogue and engagement to empower and connect our communities.
- Working in partnership with the voluntary, private and public sectors to deliver effective and responsive support services to meet the needs of all our communities.

2.4 As outlined in previous reports to this Committee, the Council's role in community engagement and community development is not to tell communities what they must do, rather to support and advise in the delivery of what they want and where they want it. It was vital therefore, while we were in the process of developing the strategy, that the communities of South Kesteven were given the opportunity to input via public and direct consultation.

2.5 The strategy was put in place to build on existing engagement and development activity, and this report provides an update on work carried out during 2023/2024 to support and provide community projects and events across the district that support wellbeing, positive mental health and the reduction of social isolation.

Wellbeing

2.6 The Community Engagement Team is involved in a number of ways with groups and organisations that provide mental health and wellbeing support to people in South Kesteven. It commissioned its first community mental health project in 2023/24 which focused on young people. This project came about as a response to an incredible amount of consultation with young people (nationally) about their mental health and the impact of a lack of community support for young people.

2.7 Social prescribing is an NHS approach that connects people to activities, groups, and services in their community, to meet the practical, social and emotional needs that affect their health and wellbeing. In social prescribing, local agencies such as local charities, social care and health services refer people to a link worker who then supports people to take control of their health and wellbeing. Unfortunately social prescribing support is only available to people aged 18+ at this time.

2.8 Community Engagement commissioned Inspire+ to deliver a young people's wellbeing project and mentoring scheme, which included sessions designed to build confidence, develop resilience, and positively impact on the health and wellbeing of young people. The scheme, delivered in key stage 2, 3 and 4 (aged 7-16) helped young people develop mental resilience whilst positively impacting emotional wellbeing, enabling them to feel well, be happy and help them achieve their goals and ambitions. This project was delivered summer/autumn 2023.

2.9 The wellbeing project was offered to young people from 6 local secondary schools across the district with sessions also delivered as part of the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) camps, for young people aged 5-16 during the summer holidays.

Camps were held in Bourne, Deepings, Grantham and Stamford, providing opportunities for young people from all over the district to access wellbeing activities.

- 2.10 Across the duration of the project participation by young people was:
- Secondary school session participants: 72
 - HAF programme delivery (community): 423
- 2.11 The secondary school sessions were more 'targeted', whereas the HAF sessions were to the whole group (but delivered in smaller sub groups). Young people aged 4-16 are eligible for HAF if they receive benefits-related free school meals, have a special educational need or disability, children who live locally through the Homes for Ukraine and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme and children from low income households that do not receive benefits-related free school meals.
- 2.12 A survey was completed with young people that participated in the programme:
- 98% reported an increase in confidence after attending the sessions.
 - 98% said that they found the programme to be positive and rewarding.
 - 95% said they felt better prepared to deal with mental health and wellbeing issues as they have learnt new and more positive coping mechanisms as part of the project – including the 5 Ways to Wellbeing.
 - 90% felt more comfortable talking with their peers about their worries/concerns after attending the sessions.
 - There was an increase in overall mental health and wellbeing score for all participants who completed the wellbeing programme.
 - There was an overall reduction in social isolation – giving young people the chance to talk to peers in similar situations was beneficial.
 - There was a reported increase in growth opportunities – giving young people freedom to talk and discuss, and provide them with the opportunity to support and grow.
 - There were reported improvements in attitudes, routines and life choices made by young people (parent feedback).
- 2.13 The final report for this project is available at Appendix A.
- 2.14 Shine Lincolnshire is a county-wide charity that aims to support people with poor mental health to live well through accessing a range of support services including those delivered by the voluntary and community sector. Shine also works with grass roots and community organisations to implement wellbeing support through grant administration.
- 2.15 Shine launched the next round of its Mental Health and Wellbeing Investment Fund during 2023/24 as part of the Community Mental Health Transformation Programme. The fund, which is distributed annually, is split into two parts: Innovation and Sustainability. Both funds are to support growth and innovation of Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise organisations, to deliver projects for people experiencing a mental health illness or wellbeing need.

- 2.16 The charity has a network of community connectors. These are outreach workers who support groups to initiate activities or initiatives that bring about changes in response to what is needed within a community to enable positive mental health and wellbeing. The Community Engagement Team has built a strong connection with Shine's Support and Engagement Coordinator who, along with the charity's peer support workers took part in SKDC's Funding Fair in March 2024. Our Community Grants and Funding Officer also collaborates with the Community Connectors who work across South Kesteven and this has led to meeting new community groups who need support with both finding funding opportunities and writing successful bids.
- 2.17 Shine also hosts regular working groups across the District in which members of the Community Engagement Team are actively involved. The most recent of these has included a breakfast meeting in Grantham with groups and organisations that supports people with health and wellbeing needs in the community and a meeting in Stamford which focused on the support services available to people in the south of the District.
- 2.18 Through our engagement with Shine's Community Connectors, the Community Engagement team was offered a place on the panel to review applications for annual allocations. Our Community Grants and Funding Officer participated in the panel behalf of SKDC. 12 grants were awarded to projects from across South Kesteven with a further 5 county-wide projects that will also benefit the residents of the District being granted funding.

Support to help reduce social isolation and loneliness

- 2.19 An important part of the role of the Community Engagement Team is the management of the SK Community Fund. Through this Fund we are able to support projects and events across the District that are aimed at reducing loneliness and bringing people together to help reduce social isolation.
- 2.20 Throughout 2023/24 the Fund has supported eight such projects by providing funding support totalling £33,244.00. Projects have included events such as a family fun day, a diversity festival, the set-up of a community radio station, a parent and toddler group for families who struggle to interact with others, a free community event in the grounds of a National Trust property, a literary festival, free workshops hosted by a camera club to introduce people to a new hobby and a village festival. These events and projects have taken place across the district encompassing all four towns and some rural settings.

Support for Groups

- 2.21 The Community Engagement Team works with the voluntary and community sector on a daily basis. The importance of building relationships, growing trust and generally being available to groups should not be underestimated. Information contained in the following paragraphs provides an overview of some of the support provided to local groups over the past year.
- 2.22 The Team has worked with a group that offers workshops to local people giving them the opportunity to engage with others whilst learning and sharing woodwork and craft skills. Outwood promotes positive interventions to improve mental wellbeing and gain confidence to continue their personal recovery. Their projects aim is to support people with their recovery from mental health issues and to gain support in a nonclinical way, and to continue their recovery through meaningful activity.
- 2.23 The group had outgrown its premises due to the levels of demand for this support service so the Community Engagement Team worked with them to identify funding opportunities to support their move and their work. The group had an alternative premises in mind but this was located in a residential area and it was considered that noise from their workshops could be an issue. The Team brought together representatives from the group and other service areas of the Council to determine whether the best course of action was to carry out a noise survey and seek funding for sound proofing or whether an alternative location would be need to be sought.
- 2.24 The Team has supported a local school that has a high intake of vulnerable, neurodivergent young people. To provide activity to meet the needs of their pupils the school needed a means of exploring different ways of engaging and educating, other than the mainstream curriculum. One of the projects the school provides is a successful gardening project. To expand on this provision, the school needed to purchase a greenhouse to encourage growing food/gardening but didn't have the resources to do that from within its own finances. Funding for projects in schools is limited but our Community Grants and Funding Officer carried out a comprehensive funding search and provided them with a report on the findings. The Team continues to work with the school to support them through this process.
- 2.25 Support has also been provided to a Grantham-based faith group that was working toward setting up a bespoke toddler group. Funding from the SK Community Fund has enabled the group to provide a drop in coffee morning and a signposting service for families who live within its collective catchment who are struggling with isolation and social needs. SKDC previously funded a similar project run by the same faith group in Stamford. They used the same mental health model that was used for Seedlings at the Greenhouse Stamford and some of the group's mental health champions that were recruited as part of the original project have moved to Grantham and volunteered in setting up the new provision.

- 2.26 Further support has been given to BRIC. This organisation (previously known as HomeStart Lincolnshire) works with young families to ensure parents have the support they need. For example, they will work with parents struggling emotionally when a child has been diagnosed with autism or social anxiety. They offer a variety of inter-personal support but also provide activities for families to participate in. The Community Engagement Team supported them in the development of a community garden in Grantham. They have another such facility in Stamford. Both are well established. Our involvement during the past year came about because the organisation was looking to further develop both sites so the Team worked with them to identify sources of funding and also local voluntary and community groups that can provide practical help in support of the gardens.
- 2.27 The Butterfield Centre in Bourne provides support to older people through services such as meals on wheels. This service not only provides a hot meal to people who are socially isolated and lonely but its team of volunteers also offers a befriending service to its users. The centre now also provides a community pantry and now also hosts the local foodbank. Financial support through the Council's Food Agency Support Scheme was provided to this Centre for the first time in March 2024.
- 2.28 Support needed by voluntary and community sector can be anything from the set-up of a group, arranging governance, developing required policies etc through to funding a project. The Council's Community Grants and Funding Officer has supported a further 15 groups that provide venues, events and projects across South Kesteven that support wellbeing and help to reduce social isolation during the past year. 6 of these groups have gone on to secure funding from external sources with the help of this officer amounting to £130,000.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 This report is for information therefore Members are asked to note its content.

4. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 4.1 To keep Members of Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee informed of progress of community engagement and development activity within the District.

5. Background Papers

- 5.1 [Our People, Our Place – A Community Engagement and Development Strategy for South Kesteven \(2024-2027\)](#)

6. Appendices

- 6.1 Appendix A – Young People’s Wellbeing Project Report.
- 6.2 Appendix B – Community Engagement and Development Action Plan