

BARNSLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

North Area Council Meeting:

11th September 2023

Agenda Item: 7

**Report of North Area Council
Manager**

North Area Council Connecting Communities Grant Review

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update members on the delivery of the Stronger Communities Grant funded programmes.
- 1.2 Review delivery of the providers and their funded projects.
- 1.3 Evaluate if the providers are delivering good value for money
- 1.4 Deliver the priority working groups recommendation on if the grant programme should revive further investment from the Area Council.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 Members of the Connecting Communities Grant panel provide an update to the Area Council on the discussion that took place at the review workshop in the 31st August. Sections 7 & 8 of this report.**
- 2.2 The Grant Panel Representatives recommended 8.5.3. as the preferred option to help address social isolation in the community for an extension period of 12 months for two of the providers.**
- 2.3 The Grant Panel Representatives recommend a total funding of £75,000 for a period of 12 months from April 2024.**

3. Background

Having noted the success of the Stronger Communities Grant funded projects which have been delivered throughout 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21; but reviewing the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic it was agreed it was agreed at the Area Council Meeting on the 19th July 2021 that the North Area would run a new grant opportunity Connecting Communities Grant for the project delivery from December 2021 to March 2024.

The NAC Connecting Communities Grant was established as a grants programme totalling £100,000 per annum, initially for a two-year period to address loneliness and isolation in the North Area. Applicants can bid for up to £40,000 per annum.

The grant is aimed at developing the capacity of community groups and organisations, social enterprises and not for profit organisations, with a strong emphasis on legacy. This build on the Stronger Communities Grant 2021/22, where the Panel particularly welcomed bids that supported communities with recovery from Covid-19.

Aims and Objectives of the Connecting Communities Grant Fund:

- Reduce loneliness and isolation
- Increase the confidence of individuals
- Improve the physical and mental wellbeing of individuals
- Re-connect communities

Following a market engagement event that helped to shape the final grant criteria, the grant opportunity was advertised at the end of September 2021 and the final date for submission was the 22nd October 2021. A total of 9 applications were received before the deadline totalling £615,710.39.

Stage one moderation took place on the 1st November and 4 organisations were invited back to present their projects on the 8th November.

The Wards were represented by the following Councillors.

Darton East	Cllr Steve Hunt
Darton West	Cllr Trevor Cave
Old Town	Cllr Clive Pickering (no evaluation scores received)
St Helen's	Cllr Jenny Platts

4. Recommended Projects

The scoring evaluation matrix provided a robust qualitative and quantitative basis upon which to identify suitable applications. The panel was independently chaired by the Category Manager Tim Witham and Procurement Officer Kerry Dalby-Wyatt and supported by the North Area's Senior Link Officer, Area Manager and the Area Team.

3 applications were recommended for funding. At the time of writing the providers have not been notified. The total allocated amount for these 3 projects was £186,766.44.

The recommended projects are as follows (they are in no particular order):

Age UK Barnsley – North Area Social Inclusion Service - £79,600.20

Age UK Barnsley are a local charity that works only for the benefit of the people of Barnsley Borough and our Resource Centre/Head Office is based within the Town Centre. We have been providing successful, innovative, area-wide services addressing social isolation in Barnsley for more than 5 years. Age UK Barnsley work with older people with a wide range of needs and health conditions including dementia, mental health problems, physical health conditions and limited mobility.

The Team- The team will consist of 1 FTE Social Inclusion Worker, 1 day weekly of a designated, accredited Information and Advice Worker, 40 volunteers, local management, administration support, and support from a Volunteer Coordinator.

Our Aim

Our overall aim is to reduce the current level of social isolation and loneliness in people aged over 50 in the North Area. We will do this by:

- Developing and supporting personalised plans and support to enable individuals to tackle their social isolation.
- Developing community responses to provide innovative solutions to barriers to inclusion and involving local volunteers.
- Working with a wide range of partner agencies to increase the number of sustainable community activity opportunities available within the North Area
- Apply Age Friendly principles to increase involvement of older people in community development and ensuring their full social value is appreciated.

Gaps that We Will Address.

- 1:1 Person Centred Planning and support from a Social Inclusion Worker
- A range of interventions that will support socially isolated older people to overcome the barriers to involvement e.g., transport, money, confidence, health problems etc.
- Mapping, promotion and support for Community Groups and Activities
- Developing new sustainable Community Activities through consultation and partnership working post-Covid. Especially those activities where gaps have been identified such as groups for men and Digital Inclusion projects as well as those activities that promote mental and physical wellbeing e.g. Tai Chi.
- Enable older people to come together and have a voice in community developments.
- Bring Community Groups together for mutual support, clear pathways and sharing resources.

DIAL Barnsley – Connection Hubs - £66,450.00

Aim of the Connections Hub

We wish to support individuals, especially those with long term health conditions or disabilities, to recover from the longer-term impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic by re connecting them with their community through the creation of a weekly hub providing opportunities for people to meet, share and learn.

Building on the proven successful Happy Café model (both national and in the north area) the hub will deliver a varied programme of activities and events and provide opportunities for increasing social capital through volunteering and establishing a concept of membership amongst participants.

The Team- The team will consist of 1 FTE Social Inclusion Worker, and DIAL aim to recruit and train 10 new volunteers.

The gaps we will address:

Loneliness and isolation is not a new challenge for disabled people particularly for those who live in areas of deprivation.

As far back as 2016/ 2017 the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport in their Community Life Survey, identified that people at particular risk from loneliness were unmarried middle-agers with long-term health conditions.

The Community Life Survey 2018/19 found that 14% of people with a limiting long term illness (LLTI)/disability reported feelings of loneliness compared to 4% of those with no LLTI/disability.

The majority of adults whom DIAL works with have particular complex and/or challenging needs due to long-term ill health or disability including physical disability, mental ill health, sensory impairments and terminal illness.

Examples of activities and interventions to be delivered:

Based on the Happy café model the hub will run weekly across the 4 wards in the north area and offer a rolling programme of events based on past experience in the NAC Happy Café, feedback from participants and ongoing consultation.

Reds in the Community – Reds Connect - £40,716.24

Our projects help to improve wellbeing and alleviate social isolation and loneliness by providing opportunities for people to get active, make friends and connect.

Aims

- Reduce social isolation and loneliness among local people
- Increase the number of local people participating in local activities
- Improve physical and emotional wellbeing
- Increase confidence and self esteem

The Team

A dedicated Project Coordinator, Sean Margison, will be responsible for monitoring and reporting with monthly updates provided to Head of Health & Participation, Kieron Campbell.

Activities

Reds Connect will create new opportunities for local people in the North Area to get active, take part and make friends. It combines physical, recreational and wellbeing activities with peer support and group socials to help address social isolation and loneliness, engender new relationships and encourage local people to get active and involved.

We will deliver 3 sessions per week for the 2-year period. Each session will involve a different activity and be aimed at a different target audience. We will engage 60 unique users per activity (180 total) with an anticipated throughput of 3,960 attendances based on 15 participants per session (264 total sessions). Sessions will be:

- Team Talk (Men all ages) – Relaxed environment for informal conversation
- Extra Time Hub (Older People) - varied social interaction sessions for retired/semi-retired people to combat loneliness and inactivity
- Exercise Classes (open to all) – varied activities to reduce inactivity

5. Lessons Learned

5.1. The process was coordinated by BMBC Procurement colleagues. The evaluation process required panel members to complete additional information compared to the stronger communities grant paperwork. This created additional complexity and required a greater time commitment for panel member.

5.2. The inclusion of the Five Ways to Wellbeing in the scoring criteria helped the Grant Panel understand how the North Area Funding contributes to the wider determinants of health and wellbeing.

5.3. The fund was heavily oversubscribed.

5.4. This situation shows the growth financial pressures that the voluntary and community sector continue to face.

6. Grant Awards and Performance Monitoring/Management

All applicants submitted a monitoring/performance framework and quarterly payment schedule as part of their application. Where a quarterly payment is agreed the payments will only be released once the North Area Council Manager is satisfied that monitoring/performance targets for the previous quarter have been met, or if not met, a satisfactory reason is given as to why this is the case and revised targets for the following quarters agreed.

7. Provider Delivery: Outcomes, Outputs and Added Value

7.1. Overview

The grant programme has been operational since April 2022 (Age UK commenced in the January to enable the origination to maintain contact with people they had supported during Covid-19 lockdowns).

During the period total delivery period the three providers have supported 778 people who were socially isolated.

The current delivery programme includes a mixture of: brunch and lunch clubs, wellbeing group / gentle exercise, moderate exercise, games clubs, bingo and a mens' mental health support group. This totals 9 weekly support sessions in the North Area, one delivered fortnightly and one delivered once a month.

7.2. Provider Case Studies

Please refer to Appendix 1 of this report for the provider case studies which help to demonstrate the qualitative impact of this grant funded programme.

8. Grant Panel Recommendations

8.1. At the Grant Review Workshop on the 31st August 2023 the grant panel reviewed the providers delivery; their performance and considered if the North Area was receiving good value for money. The Area Manager highlighted that it would not be possible to continue to commission the whole programme currently funded by the North Area Council during 2024/25 because this would exceed the budget available. Therefore decisions are needed to reduce expenditure.

8.2. Due to a change in elected member representation the composition of the panel now includes the following members:

Darton East	Cllr Steve Hunt
Darton West	Cllr Trevor Cave
Old Town	Cllr Clive Pickering
St Helen's	Cllr Neil Wright

In addition, the following Councillors attended:

Cllr Leech (Area Chair), Cllr Newing, Cllr Lofts, Cllr Tattersall

8.3. In summary the Grant Panel expressed that they:

- Would like to see more numerical data from the monitoring reports.

- Wished to see more demographic information provided for each project.
- Requested the KPI information for the three projects
- Liked the weekly timetable which provides an overview of engagement opportunity and would like to use it to help promote the provision (the Area Manager intends to double check the information with the providers prior to wider distribution)
- Requested that a Steering Group is introduced, similar to the Anti-Poverty Steering Group.

8.4. The Grant Panel concluded that they are receiving good value for money from two providers. For one of the providers, they requested that the provider adapt their offer for the remainder of the grant period to attract additional participants.

8.5. A discussion took place regarding the continuation of the grant opportunity. Options discussed:

- 8.5.1. Discontinue the grant funding opportunity.
- 8.5.2. Extend the existing grant agreements
- 8.5.3. Extend the grant agreements of the providers who have delivered best value for money
- 8.5.4. Re-advertise the grant opportunity with existing aims and objectives.
- 8.5.5. Re-advertise the grant opportunity with revised aims and objectives.

8.6. The preferred option was option 8.5.3. The grant envelope cannot be increased at this time. Provider would need to be requested to adapt provision accordingly.

8.7. It is recommended that a commitment of £75,000 per annum is agreed to allow for a further 12 months of intervention by the two providers.

8.8. Due to the delayed start at the beginning of the programme the third provider will continue to deliver until the end of June 2024.

8.9. The Panel advised that they re-evaluate early in 2024/25 when the financial position was updated and decide if option 8.5.5 was viable dependant on the needs of the community.

9. Next steps

9.1. Members agree the recommendations proposed by the Grant Panel.

9.2. Members devolved responsibility for procuring the grant extension to the Area Council Manager to progress, with regular updates to the Grant Panel.

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Date:
01/09/2023

Appendix 1:

Connecting Communities Grant Review

Provider Case Studies

Age UK - Case Study 1

Case Study July 22 – September 22

Title – Individual case study

Date – 28/09/2022

Ward Area- North

Summary:

Ms M was referred to Age UK Barnsley in August 2022 by her daughter. She was initially referred to the service for a volunteer befriender. When social inclusion officers visited Ms M on an initial home visit, it was apparent that it would be more suitable for Ms M to be supported to get out to groups in the community for more social interaction.

Key Learning Points:

- **Ms M was undergoing assessments by the memory team when social inclusion officers made an initial visit which has since resulted in a diagnosis of dementia.**
- **Ms M was referred by her daughter who is also currently caring for her husband who has cancer.**
- **Ms M was not getting out to have social contact.**

Background:

Ms M was referred to Age UK Barnsley in August 2022 by her daughter who stated that she was not having much social interaction and would like a befriender to visit her. On the receipt of the referral a social inclusion officer called Ms M's daughter in order to gather further information about the circumstances. On this telephone call Ms M's daughter explained that Ms M was undergoing memory assessments with the memory team as there were concerns about her. Ms M's daughter said that she was providing support to her mum by helping with shopping but that she was also going through a hard time herself as her husband had cancer. A home visit was arranged at Ms M's house and her daughter also agreed to be there at the first visit.

At the first visit to Ms M two social inclusion officers attended to discuss with her what support she would like to receive from us at Age UK Barnsley. Ms M said that she was able to get out to the shops as her mobility is good but that she didn't feel confident to attend groups in the community alone and that at times she did feel lonely despite seeing her daughter for practical support.

Following this visit a social inclusion officer contacted Ms M's daughter in September to arrange another visit with Ms M to get more details and to create a personalised plan to get her involved in community groups. On this second visit the social inclusion officer spent time getting to know what hobbies Ms M has had in the past and whether there were any new hobbies she would like to take up. A plan was devised with the ultimate goal of getting Ms M to feel more confident to attend social

groups which are currently running in the community. Ms M is going to be assisted to a lunch group for the first time by a social inclusion officer.

Ms M has now received a diagnosis of dementia by the memory team. When speaking to Ms M's daughter the social inclusion officer has provided information and details about an MCST group that may be suitable for Ms M to attend alongside other social groups.

Who was involved:

2 x Social inclusion officers

Outcomes of Project:

With the support of Age UK Barnsley social inclusion officers Ms M has developed a personalised plan which will result in her getting out into more community groups. She also has the opportunity to attend MCST groups.

Any unplanned outcomes (good or bad):

None

What could have been done better:

Nothing

Next steps:

A social inclusion officer will support Ms M to a group in the next fortnight and over the coming weeks and months she will feel more confident to attend other groups.

Age UK - Case Study 2

Title- Individual Case Study

Date- 10/04/2023

Ward Area- Darton East

Summary:

Mr R was referred to Age UK Barnsley in April by his Daughter, as she felt he was isolated. He lives alone and is unable get out alone as he is registered partially sighted and has also has Parkinsons which has limited his mobility. He wanted the support of Age UK Barnsley to register to Dial a Ride and to assist him in getting out to groups.

Key Learning Points:

- **Mr R lives alone and was socially isolated.**
- **He has health issues which makes it very difficult for him to get out into the community.**
- **Mr R started attending groups with the support of the SIO.**

Background:

Mr R lives alone and was referred to Age UK Barnsley by his daughter by phoning into the office and speaking with a member of staff. During the phone call Mr R's daughter stated that he attends doesn't get out much as he has no family in the immediate vicinity.

This self-referral was passed over to one of the Social Inclusion Officers at Age UK Barnsley, who contacted Mr R to arrange a face-to-face visit at Mr R's home. During this visit, Mr R's daughter was present who was a big support for him with looking after his financial affairs and checking in on him regularly via telephone. The SIO introduced themselves and gave Mr R information about the services that are provided by Age UK Barnsley. The SIO gave information about the groups in the local area and a plan was made for Mr R to attend the Darton Darby & Joan group on Monday the following week for the first time with the SIO.

The SIO also planned to return to Mr R's house prior to the Darton group to complete the application for the Dial a Ride service, to ensure that Mr R can continue to attend the group independently in future.

On the morning of the group in Darton, the SIO picked up Mr R and assisted him to attend the group. Mr R joined in with conversation, knew lots of the existing members from the community, took part in the bingo with assistance from the SIO, and sang along to the older songs that the act on stage covered that week. He seemed to really enjoy himself. On the way back home Mr R stated that he really enjoyed the group and would like to attend again the following week. The SIO then made arrangement to assist Mr R to book transport for the following week, however this wasn't needed, as A friend of Mr R contacted him after the first group to offer him a ride there and back with him each week.

After this initial success, the SIO continued to pop in to see Mr R on a weekly basis. One week he revealed that he had received a bill from TV Licencing for over £160. After conferring with a colleague within Information and Advice, the SIO suggested a referral to I&A would be a good option to investigate any concession he may be eligible for regarding his sight issues.

Mr R was nominated and received a coronation celebration afternoon tea box, organised by the wonderful Rebecca from the social prescribing team. He was thrilled to receive the box, and happily shared it with his neighbour on coronation day.

Who was involved:

1 x SIO Information & Advice Social Prescribing & Information & Advice

Outcomes of project:

With the support of the SIO, Mr R attended a group in the community for the first time. He really enjoyed being out at a group and socialising with others and therefore the SIO supported Mr R to register and book Dial a Ride transport so that he can continue to access the group independently. This support has enabled Mr R to stay independent and access groups in the community, despite him having mobility issues and being registered partially blind.

Any unplanned outcomes (good or bad):

None.

What could have been done better:

None.

Next steps:

The Social Inclusion Officer will stay in touch with Mr R to ensure that he is able to continue attending the social groups in the local area. He will also be informed of any new groups and events closer to his home. He is on the waiting list for a befriender. The SIO will continue to visit until a befriender can be put in place.

DIAL

Case Study 1 (2022/23 Q3 Report)

Mr Z is a male in his 50's. He has mobility issues, a speech impairment, and lost his wife during the COVID- 19 pandemic. Mr Z was referred to Connect Together by his telephone befriender, as he was concerned that Mr Z had become extremely isolated since losing his wife.

We contacted Mr Z and discussed with him that since his wife had died he hadn't left his home or socialised with many people. He explained that he gets his shopping delivered to his door and that he had fallen out with other organisations that had previously been involved with him. Mr Z stated that he was feeling fed up and wanted to be more involved in the local community. We talked to him about Connect Together and invited him to come along. Mr Z agreed and sounded excited about joining.

The day before Mr Z was meant to be attending the group, he contacted us by email to say that he would not be attending as he didn't have support in getting to the venue. We discussed options with him, and he said he would think about getting a taxi. He arrived the next day in a taxi and one of our members helped him in and out of the taxi and welcomed him.

The theme of the first session that Mr Z attended was all about wellbeing and how it could be improved. This gave Mr Z the opportunity to think and discuss his own wellbeing; he concluded that his own personal wellbeing was poor. Mr Z continued to attend the group on a regular basis, until the school holidays started. Mr Z explained that he did not wish to attend during the holidays as there were children running round other parts of the venue and he did not want any of them to knock in to him while he was walking through to get to our room as he felt that this may cause him to fall. During this time, we continued to keep in touch with Mr Z via telephone so that he was kept up to date with the group. Mr Z said that he was very grateful for these calls as it made him feel like he was still being included with the group.

We have developed a trusting working relationship with Mr Z and because of this relationship Mr Z agreed to a referral to Adult Social Care for a needs assessment. Mr Z has since been referred to Occupational Therapy who are supporting him with his mobility issues.

Mr Z has now expressed an interest in volunteering as a Group Helper and continues to attend when he is able.

DIAL Case Study 2 (2022/23 – Q4 Report)

Before Connect Together

Mrs L is a 69-year-old lady who has several health conditions which she takes medication for including pain relief and steroids. Apart from going to the gym by herself on a regular basis Mrs L does not go anywhere else, leaving her feeling quite isolated. She feels that the lack of socialisation has impacted on her confidence, self-esteem, and mental well-being.

Intervention

Mrs L was referred to Connect Together by Ad Astra in September 2022. She signed up to Connect Together, attended the first of DIALs crisis support sessions and received a free slow cooker. Although Mrs L did not attend the next couple of support sessions, contact was made on a regular basis, to inform her of the up-and-coming sessions, find out why she wasn't attending, and to see what kind of activities she would like to see in the area. From these check-ins with Mrs L, we found that the reason she had not been attending support sessions was that the themes did not interest her. We also discovered that Mrs L had enjoyed playing Bingo at one of the local community centres, but it had stopped several months earlier. Knowing this, we started providing fortnightly Bingo sessions at one of our sessions.

After Connect Together

Since the Bingo started Mrs L has attended all the sessions and she has become a valuable member of the group. Not only does she enjoy winning, but she also enjoys checking the cards of other players and congratulates them when they win. Mrs L says the Bingo session gives her something exciting to look forward to.

Outcomes

Feels less isolated
Feels more connected to the community
More confident
Improved well-being
Made new friends

Reds in the Community (2022/23- Q2 report)

EXTRA TIME HUB – Mr M.

The following case study has been developed during our Extra Time Hub activity. The activity is aimed at reducing social isolation in adults across the North Area of Barnsley. The delivery model of the activity is flexible and adaptable to ensure we can accommodate the needs of all in attendance. The activity enables continuous consultation with people to direct and shape delivery with participants identifying games, exercise or themes they would like the next week to be around.

The current participants identified that they were more interested in light exercise and board games, so that is how the sessions are running at the moment.

One of our participants is Mr M lives alone and is 82 years old, with his only remaining family living abroad. This limits the number of personal connections he has on a regular basis. Due to this, Mr M identified the session as something he was interested in and over the last quarter he has attended on 11 separate occasions. Mr M has participated in a number of activities and enjoys the variety on offer. This includes taking part in badminton, bocchia, quoits and numerous board games.

Mr M had this to say about the session;

‘The games on a Thursday afternoon are a great chance to meet new friends and enjoy a good time. It has a very positive effect on my life. The games keep my brain active and make me think. Being 82 and living alone I look forward to it very much’

Due to attending the activities at Mapplewell and Staincross Village Hall, Mr M has now extended his social circle and is actively joining in with other RitC initiatives.

Sean Margison our Health & Wellbeing Officer added:

‘It has been great to see Mr M come out of his shell and engage in the activities here. You can see his confidence growing weekly and it has been fantastic to see him join further activities to widen his social circle. I think the most impactful part of the activities has been the opportunity for Mr M to communicate and find connections with others.

Mr M is now a key part of the group dynamic and is often the member of the group that begins communication, and he is someone who is very welcoming of new attendees.

Mr M will continue to attend and shape the activities on offer, and we would like to support Mr M to become a volunteer as well as a participant of the session to further support him.