

July 2020



DEVON COUNTY
COUNCIL GRANT
FUNDING AGREEMENT

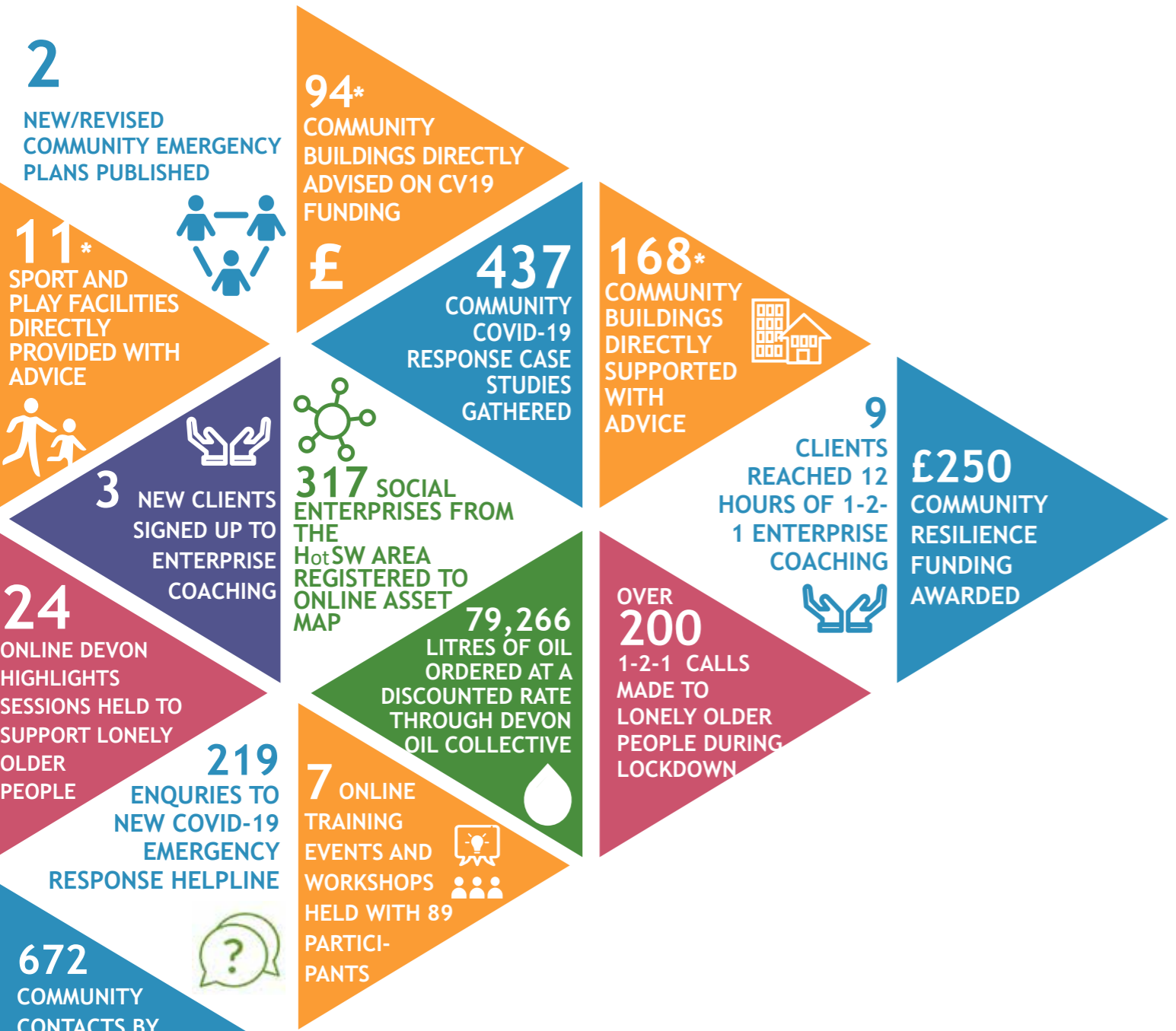
Q1 REPORT
2020/21

OUR VISION is of dynamic communities shaping their own futures.

OUR MISSION is to inspire and support communities to be thriving, resilient and inclusive.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

* These figures represent where we have had direct, personal contact. Support and funding advice was provided in all e-bulletins, so many more will have had the opportunity to benefit from our advice.



KEY

DEVON COMMUNITIES OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK:

- Understanding Community Needs
- Brokering Relationships
- Capability Building Within Communities
- Support for Community Resilience
- Opportunities for Individuals to Become Active Citizens

COVID-19 RESPONSE DURING Q1

0808 196 3390
Covid-19 Helpline
Mon-Fri 9-5

Need advice about what the changing restrictions mean for your community?

Call us now for specialist advice for Parish and Town Councils, Parish Meetings, Community Buildings, Sport and Play Organisations, Community Support Groups, Emergency Planning Teams

DCT'S COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Having launched our Covid-19 support services during March 2020, thanks to funding from Devon County Council, throughout Q1 we continued to adapt and evolve the package of support as the national situation rapidly developed. Alongside all the adaptations we made to our ongoing projects and services, DCT provided a dedicated COVID-19 community support package, providing advice and support to Town and Parish Councils and the Devon Community Buildings and Village Hall Networks, in the form of a dedicated helpline, regular e-bulletins and a programme of knowledge sharing.

31 e-newsletters issued to 2,500+ people
62 social media posts shared

672 contacts with communities to provide advice during the past three months, through the helpline and proactive offers of support.

From the end of March to the end of June this community support package covered the initial emergency response, through lockdown and into the easing of measures and the tentative steps towards recovery. Advice, regulations and guidance was ever changing and our challenge was to stay one step ahead so that we could continue to help Devon's communities to help themselves; remaining safe, resilient and ready to adapt to the 'new normal'.

[Read in more detail about our Covid-19 response activities throughout this report ...](#)

Online surveys: We ran two online surveys from March - June 2020, one for Town and Parish Councils and the other for Community Buildings. We wanted to better understand the challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic and related lockdown, and how we as a rural community council can support them during this time.

Key findings: Town and Parish Councils

- 40% of the participating councils have a community emergency plan and 72% have developed a Covid-19 response plan, providing a platform for further community emergency planning
- They've been involved in community COVID-19 support in a variety of different ways and working with different local organisations e.g. shops, pubs, health centres, and churches.
- Key challenges centre around ageing populations, dispersed rural areas, discouraging visitors, and top-down support and communication being confusing, conflicting, or lacking.

Key findings: Community buildings

- Community buildings vary greatly in their size and ability to deal with the impacts of Covid-19, with a large degree of variability in normal income and overheads.
- For 27 halls, their community building would be at the point of failure within the next 12 months were lockdown to continue.
- Access to funding is vital for many community buildings to enable their sustainability through the pandemic.
- Community buildings are supporting services related to COVID-19 support.

DCT OBJECTIVE

COMMUNITIES HAVE INCREASED CAPABILITY, SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE IN ADDRESSING LOCAL ISSUES



DEVON COMMUNITY LEARNING ACADEMY: TAKING LEARNING AND NETWORKING ONLINE

With the suspension of face-to-face learning until further notice due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we have been working hard to continue to offer opportunities to connect and share learning online.

Examples of this include two online seminars as part of our Enhance Social Enterprise Network and New Start Devon Enterprise Coaching projects: The Resilience of Social Enterprises and The Value of Social Impact. 22 social enterprises registered for these events and benefitted from new strategies and techniques to implement as well as invaluable peer-to-peer networking with other enterprises.

We also hosted the first in a summer series of online workshops on 'Introduction to Character Strengths', which aim to support business owners, social entrepreneurs and start-ups to understand how their own character traits can help them to achieve their business and personal goals.

With DCT staff having undergone our own training sessions to further develop our knowledge on online software platforms Zoom and Teams, plans are underway to expand our programme of online learning opportunities to ensure we can keep supporting community learning in the absence of face-to-face training.

IMPACT

During a challenging and uncertain time, businesses, enterprises and entrepreneurs have been provided with a safe space in which to connect, learn and share best practice about how to navigate their way through the pandemic.



DCT OBJECTIVE

COMMUNITIES ARE SUPPORTED TO DEVELOP STRATEGIES TO PROTECT AND REGENERATE THEIR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



NET ZERO TASK FORCE

DCT is pleased to be a part of Devon's Net Zero Task Force (NZTF), which has been established to support the county of Devon become carbon neutral by 2050.

In order to work towards this end goal, we have been working to gather evidence from experts and the public relating to five key areas: **Mobility; Food, Land and Sea; Energy and Waste; Built Environment; and Cross Cutting Themes**. The interactions between these themes needed to be viewed from a whole systems perspective.

Using our experience of facilitating complex community settings, DCT contributed to planning a systems thinking workshop for the Task Force. We contacted known facilitators in this area and arranged three planning meetings between these experts and the NZTF. These meetings shaped the brief and desired outcomes of a whole Task Force workshop, which was held in May 2020.

IMPACT

The Net Zero Task Force is made up of experts who are distinct in their field and may not understand the technicalities and rationale of actions proposed by other members. The members, via this workshop, now better understand key overlapping actions. This will contribute to the final prioritisation of actions for Devon's Net Zero Carbon Plan and move towards the county becoming carbon neutral.



Picture credit: Roger Cornfoot, reproduced under creative commons licence



EMPOWERING ENTERPRISE: MEASURING THE IMPACT

DCT works as the external Evaluation Partner for Empowering Enterprise, a large Devon-wide partnership project that exists to support 18-24 year-olds who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) towards a positive outcome.

With the project ending in December 2020, and delivery ending this summer, during Q1 the team at DCT has been developing its strategy and planning for the end of project impact measurement. We have also been working hard to create and produce 'Partner Profiles' for the nine delivery partners which work directly with young people on the project.

Through data analysis, story-telling, and identification of key strengths, successes, challenges and learnings, we're working to present their time on the project back to them. Our aim is to support their own reflection, understanding and development of their organisations' capacity, and encourage them to exhibit their successes from this project as they move forward with their organisational goals.

It's a privilege to examine and present the hard work of grassroots youth organisations across Devon and we're looking forward to reporting back to them in the coming months.

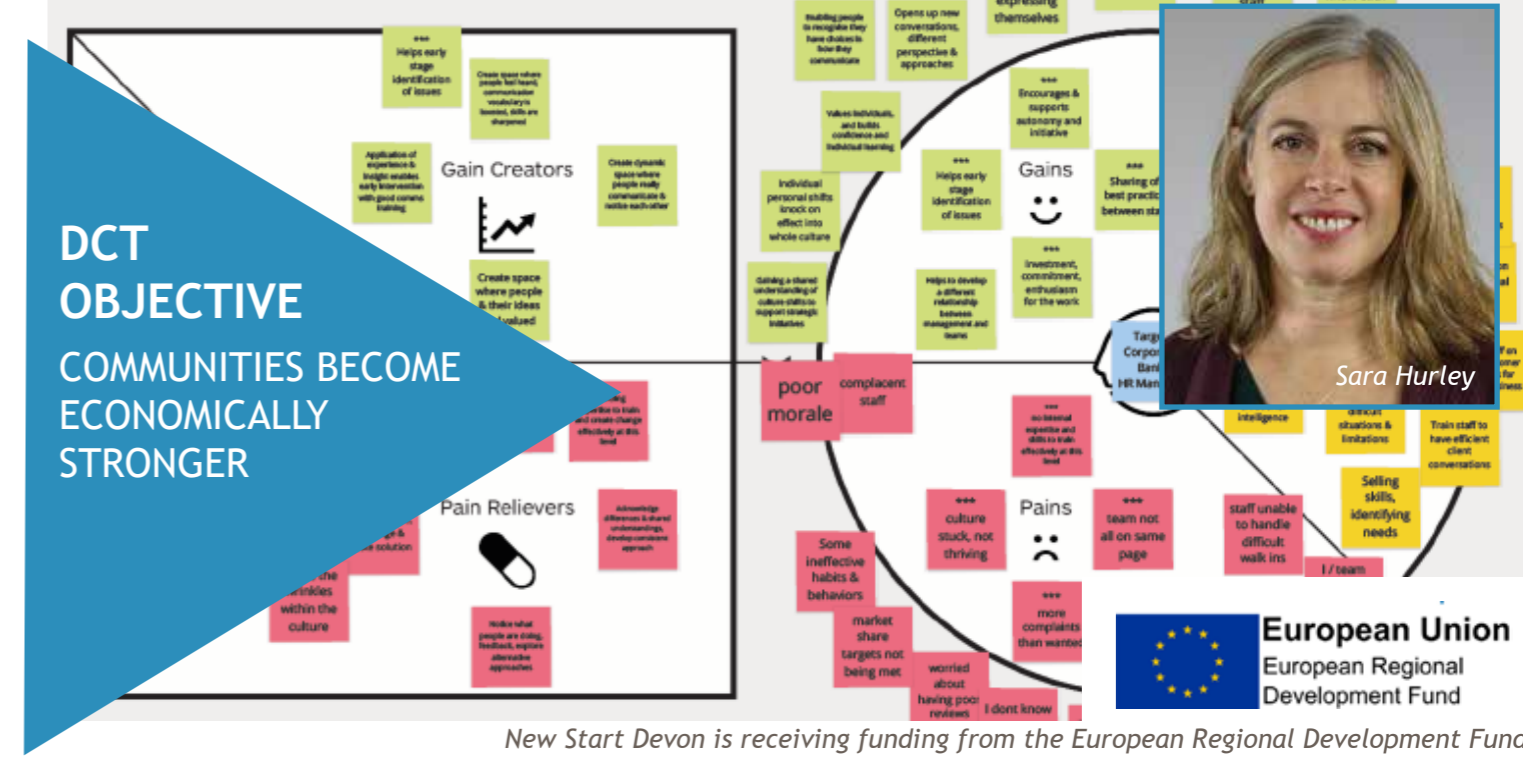


IMPACT

As the project delivery comes to an end, to best understand the impact that this it has had on the lives of so many young people in Devon, we strongly recommend watching some of the video case studies on the Empowering Enterprise YouTube channel here: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdEhJapqQnrZaQNudwiGxQ/videos>

These films, created by DCT, demonstrate the positive changes the young people have made to their lives with the support of their mentors - not only in terms of working towards employment and contributing to their local economies, but also to their sense of self and wellbeing.

The work DCT is currently undertaking around producing Partner Profiles will support the mentors themselves to reflect on the impact their work has had on both the young people and on their personal and professional journeys.



NEW START DEVON: FORUM COMMUNICATION COACHING

New Start Devon is an enterprise coaching project, providing up to 12 hours' free business coaching to new businesses and start-ups. During Q1, our enterprise coach Matthew Porter has been working with Sara Hurley, who is starting a new business in a 'for profit' environment, having been used to working in the creative and community sector. She felt she had a lack of knowledge in marketing and sales in a business environment and was unsure of how to present and get through the door to new clients in this new sector.

Through 1-2-1 coaching sessions on Zoom, Matthew and Sara worked through the best practice structures of Balanced Horizon Canvas,

Value Proposition Design and Business Model Design. By working through these models, Sara was able to process and refine thinking. She identified three key areas of work, and working through the value proposition to identify pains and gains for each one gave her a better understanding for each one and the differences between them.

The outputs from this have strongly influenced Sara and her partner's approach to their new business; it has been used in text for their new website and in meetings and communications with a client. They've adjusted their approach based on the coaching and their foundations have been strengthened at a critical time of development.

"I'm an experienced 55-year-old social entrepreneur and Matthew's coaching sessions proved enlightening for me. Showing me new ways of thinking that I can immediately put into practise... I've found the sessions extremely useful at a great time for launching a new business. It will stand me in good stead personally and gives me and my business partner a shared experience to draw on."

IMPACT

The work in developing a scalable business model succeeded in upskilling, training, supporting and advising the founders to start to make changes and give the business the best opportunity to achieve positive results, as they aim to go on to deliver communication training work in the South West and beyond. They were also able to address the reality of the impacts of Covid-19 on the business - attitudes changed from week one where there was a reluctance to explore online delivery to week 5 where it was actively being explored.

DCT OBJECTIVE

COMMUNITIES BECOME MORE RESOURCEFUL AND RESILIENT



Photo credit: Tony Atkin, reproduced under Creative Commons licence.

CORONAVIRUS: FOCUS GROUPS TO SHARE KNOWLEDGE AND BEST PRACTICE

DCT ran a series of four online focus groups for town and parish councils to gather data for Devon County Council on community Covid-19 responses, facilitate knowledge sharing during lockdown and support learning around community resilience.

Group discussion allowed participants to reflect and share experiences on topics including community emergency planning and pandemic response; community support and resilience actions; local challenges; and best practice. 50 people attended the focus groups, with lots of peer support and learning taking place. Attendees discussed with each other how they were approaching various evolving challenges including:

- Identification of the hidden vulnerable
- Continuing with parish meetings
- Volunteer management
- Dealing with the reopening of high streets

- Finding new working relationships with local businesses and rapid adaption to lockdown trading
- Dealing with lockdown easing, in particular, the reopening of public services, and visitor overcrowding

Participants also discussed learning around developing their community emergency plans.

“ It is somewhat reassuring how so many of us, in large and small communities, are doing very similar things and experiencing similar concerns and challenges. ”

The focus groups allowed the identification of two previously unknown community emergency plans, and follow up community emergency planning support was provided to everyone who had signed up to the groups.

IMPACT

The sharing of ideas and best practice provided opportunities to strengthen community resilience throughout Devon, particularly around the Covid-19 response but also in a broader way in terms of community emergency plans. The data we gathered will help to inform Devon's Covid-19 response and support packages as we move into the recovery phase.

Community relationships around businesses in the community have been bought into focus as a result of the pandemic and can be sustained as a legacy of local economic strengthening.

CORONAVIRUS: SUPPORTING COMMUNITY BUILDINGS

Community buildings are at the heart of rural communities and during the lockdown period they have faced huge uncertainty, from closures to maintaining a social distanced management committee and, of course, loss of income. DCT has been providing focused, practical support to village halls across the county to ensure that these important community assets are maintained throughout this challenging period.

£ Accessing funding ...

We were pleased to receive feedback from a village hall Chairman, who has credited our e-newsletters and helpline for helping them secure £10,000 in grant funding that they otherwise would not have had.

The Chairman had received a communication from their District Council offering a Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Covid Business Support Grant. Deciding that the village hall wasn't involved in any of these activities, the offer was declined.

Later, the hall's Treasurer was reading our Covid-19 e-newsletters and became curious as to why were repeatedly encouraging halls to apply for a grant they had thought they were ineligible for. A call to our helpline was made and we explained the eligibility for the grant and had a conversation with the Council to help back-track on the original rejection. Now the hall has £10,000 to help them through their closure and recovery.

🚶 Beginning to reopen ...

When the Government announced that pre-schools and primary schools were to re-open, we received many calls to our helpline from community buildings that were unsure about what the new guidance meant for them and the roles they play in providing accommodation for local pre-schools and space for school activities.



IMPACT

Community buildings are now in receipt of grants that can support them during the period where their income has been severely impacted. Where re-opening is possible, we have supported committees to do so safely and compliantly.

We combed through the guidance that was being given to schools, alerted halls and provided a brief on what they needed to do to facilitate the return. This wasn't easy as many committee members were isolating and halls had been closed for a long time. However, we're pleased to report that we supported all those who asked for our help to re-open successfully.

COMMUNITY CASE HISTORIES

Communities have rapidly responded to COVID-19 and lockdown but with each community responding at a time when contact is limited, opportunities to share best practice and learn from these new initiatives have been limited.

DCT's regular Covid-19 support newsletters asked communities to share case studies of their response to Covid-19 and lockdown.

10 case studies were collated online, creating a repository of response approaches. They were also shared in regular bulletin-style emails, each going out to over 2,500 community contacts in Devon.



www.devoncommunities.org.uk/case-studies-0

DCT OBJECTIVE
COMMUNITIES BECOME HEALTHIER, MORE VIBRANT AND INCLUSIVE WITH IMPROVED WELLBEING

DEVON HIGHLIGHTS: PREVENTING LONELINESS DURING LOCKDOWN

Our Devon Highlights project supports people in later life who are at risk of loneliness and social isolation. Following on from the suspension of our face-to-face groups, we have been continuing to build our two weekly online Zoom groups, which are facilitated by two of our Community Project Officers. We have welcomed 30 new faces to our groups, with a total of 124 attendances from participants from all over Devon who enjoyed discussions and activities, from mindfulness to mad libs! Recordings of these sessions can be watched here:

www.devoncommunities.org.uk/using-zoom-keep-you-connected

As well as these ‘virtually social’ groups, we have been supporting people on a 1-2-1 basis, making over 200 regular phone calls to vulnerable people to make sure they have someone to talk to, and to signpost them to other avenues of support, where appropriate.

We also distributed 39 Active at Home booklets in conjunction with Active Devon, to support people to remain active during lockdown.



IMPACT

People in later life have had the opportunity to engage with other people, access support and take part in fun, inspiring, social activities during what has been a hugely uncertain and isolating time during lockdown.

Both our groups and our 1-2-1 calls (as evidenced by Vanessa’s story, pg.11) have had a positive impact both on participants’ wellbeing as well as their practical circumstances, for example receiving support with food deliveries and medicine collections.

Vanessa’s story

Vanessa*, who was referred to us by a Social Prescriber during lockdown, has been a very complex case, with lots of issues and complex needs, including health and emotional issues. She has anxiety as part of her condition, and so was very scared of catching Coronavirus.

She had lots of paperwork and other things to sort out in her flat but was finding it very hard to do anything due to her anxiety.

As well as the challenges from her health conditions, she had only just moved in to the area from somewhere else in the country and didn’t know anyone.

Since she was put in touch with us at the beginning of April, we have been in touch in many ways - firstly through 1-2-1 phone calls. Vanessa spoke to us about feeling worthless and not having achieved anything in her life. We spent a lot of time comforting her and listening to her emotional stresses, supporting her through her panic attacks. We helped her arrange a regular food delivery and to organise her house - all over the phone - and helped to find volunteers who could collect her medication. We signposted her to local mental health support service and were regularly in touch with the Social Prescriber to ensure we worked together to help meet her needs in the most suitable ways.

After some time, Vanessa felt willing to try joining the weekly Zoom calls. With our support via a tutorial over the phone, she set up Zoom on her tablet. She has since joined the Zoom calls and is a very active and vocal on them.

Vanessa has regularly said that she would have been much, much worse without our support. She says the sessions give her purpose for her week; she looks forward to them as it helps



*Not her real name

her to have something to prepare for. They make her feel much happier, and she says that she doesn’t know what her life would be like without our groups.

“ She doesn’t know what her life would be like without our groups. ”

We have been doing a ‘jar of hope’ activity, where Vanessa puts something positive she has done or seen that day into a jar, and look back at it at the end of the week. This exercise reminds her that she has been doing something and helps to change her thoughts about herself. It helps her believe in herself and recognise she is achieving things - it gives her purpose and meaning, and helps to combat her self-confessed feelings of worthlessness.

Vanessa has also now started volunteering at a local park activity, which is a massive step for her because she was previously very anxious. Now she is more active and open, and feels she is starting to get to know people in the area.

Ageing Without Children events

During Q1 we also planned and began to market two free events with Ageing Without Children, to take place in July. The first is for service providers who work with people in later life, and the second is for people in later life themselves. Both events are designed to create a safe space in which to explore how people who have not had children, experience ageing.

We created social media graphics, videos and flyers to promote the events to our target audiences. We’re looking forward to reporting on these events in our Q2 report.



www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2XpnyDrmsE

OUR ACTIVITIES

Community and parish plans

Advice & training for parish & town councils

Helping communities mobilise their assets

Supporting social enterprise and community businesses

Enterprise start up and small business support

Supporting communities to prepare for an emergency

COMMUNITIES BECOME HEALTHIER, MORE VIBRANT AND INCLUSIVE WITH IMPROVED WELLBEING

Providing training and skills opportunities for young people

Reducing fuel poverty

COMMUNITIES BECOME ECONOMICALLY STRONGER

OUR OBJECTIVES

COMMUNITIES HAVE INCREASED CAPABILITY, SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE IN ADDRESSING LOCAL ISSUES

Tackling rural isolation and loneliness

COMMUNITIES BECOME MORE RESOURCEFUL AND RESILIENT

COMMUNITIES ARE SUPPORTED TO DEVELOP STRATEGIES TO PROTECT AND REGENERATE THEIR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Providing a wide range of training opportunities

Supporting village halls and other community buildings

Enabling affordable housing

Helping with sport and play facilities

Improving health and wellbeing for people

Influencing development through neighbourhood planning

DCT has adopted five social objectives.

All of our key activities are measured against one or more of the objectives to enable us to assess impact and to share the evidence with funders, stakeholders, policy makers and commissioners.

