



## **HIGHER WEALDEN COMMUNITY NETWORK**

The first Higher Wealden Community Network meeting was held on 11th July 2017 at Mayfield memorial Hall. The meeting was hosted by MAYFACS

25 people attended the meeting. There was representation from voluntary and community groups, public services and businesses supporting the local community.

This first meeting focussed on people getting to know each other and what we do. There was a lively and purposeful speed networking session.

Finding volunteers and funding for local projects and services were key concerns for participants. 3VA presented the Building Stronger Communities funding and support available to apply. The Locality Link worker an outline of local data sources and how these can help community organisations to apply for funding support.

We split into groups to discuss four topics:

1. Building a Thriving Volunteer Network
2. Ideas for Engaging Individuals and Groups
3. Helping People in Need, Navigating Assistance Pathways
4. Building and Maintaining Relationships with Statutory Partners

Table Discussions – participants asked to record 5 top tips on the following themes:

## Building a Thriving Volunteer Network

1. Do more of work works currently -word of mouth; website appeals in local literature/ newsletters; via clients
2. Working with students; colleges; schools (DOE) experience for future careers
3. Volunteers from job centres; local companies
4. More use of social media
5. Future events invite organisations that have a good volunteer base to share ideas even if from outside Wealden
6. Volunteer centres
7. Distribution of information packs; welcome packs via estate agents to capture new people
8. Volunteers from church communities/libraries
9. Advertise for volunteers from outside your immediate village/area as people have to travel outside to shop
10. “your County magazine”

## Ideas for Engaging Individuals and Groups

1. Book Bag Drops (notes in school bags and use of school newsletters)
2. Build Relationships with GPs and Patient Participant Groups
3. Use local parish/council newsletters
4. Leaflet Drop/local advertising/beer mats
5. Social media snapchat & instagram

## Helping People in Need, Navigating Assistance Pathways

1. TIMING. Information ready when person able to take it all in. (Armed Services Pathway contributed that they allow families 2 weeks to process event before team goes in to offer help.)
2. AMOUNT OF INFO. Proportionate and written in plain English
3. LISTENING. Understanding the need not working through the manual
4. NETWORKING. Working with other groups to provide wrap around service and supporters of person in need.
5. PERSON CENTRED. Dignity, respect, focussing on strengths rather than deficits.

## Building and Maintaining Relationships with Statutory Partners

1. Utilise face to face contacts e.g. Engagement events – but lots of events to attend ESBT/C4Y/3xCCGs/Council/Districts/Town and others. Named “right people”
2. Need to be ACTION focussed not a talking shop (Buxted Golden ticket)

3. Involve Community and Voluntary Sector as partners in the planning process
4. Flexibility from statutory partnerships response to communities and community organisations
5. Focused on Client Outcomes NOT System outcomes

Over lunch we also asked people to comment on how we want to use these networks?

Finding out about other groups/services and how we might relate to/work with them

Giving info about our own groups

Topic: Food and gardening, Co-ordinating in the Community. Accessing Funders, keeping Projects sustainable, collaborating and working together

Sustainability of existing services when in need of funding and support and where to go

Learning from what others do/plenary speakers e.g. Armed Forces Network

Using the Arts to engage community ie. Dance, singing, life stories, film, music

Localised data identifying needs

Long term funding streams – how do we get the support from local charities and other grant making bodies

Sharing tips for sustaining activities and services

Supporting people to want to work specifically with mental health clients

Sharing best practice in operating schemes (ADMIN)

### **Feedback from participants**

20 forms completed

**100% found it a useful event.**

**100% particularly liked** the speed networking exercise and there were helpful comments on how to improve it for future events

**100% would like to attend future events**

Table discussions were found to be very helpful as was learning about how MAYFACS developed.

**Dislikes** – too many bits of paper to fill in, got confusing. Too much /not enough plenary.

**Suggestions:**

- Speed networking do more of it so have a chance to speak to members of the same circle, consider the needs of people with hearing difficulties ie space chairs out more, bigger venues in future, build in comfort breaks, a long time to talk, break it up more, ask people to bring cards/provide notepaper to make notes as too much info to remember
- Future topics – Working together, funding workshop, successful case studies

**Comments:**

- learned how to engage other groups in our project
- limit on the number of events a small group like ours can attend

**Quotes**

“brilliant networking”

“several ideas came to mind in the areas of working together as well as funding”

“brilliant idea, well facilitated”

“I came away with ideas about how we could link up”

“running a small group can be isolating....so networking like this is great”

“extremely though provoking and given me lots of ideas to work on”

“definitely worth it...a good use of my time...enjoyed the practical focus”

**Offers** space to use after 4 :30 in Uckfield for networking events