

Lewes and Havens Community Network Report

10th October 2017 Hillcrest Centre Newhaven

Aims of event

To explore what wellbeing look likes in the area in relation to five themes:

- Healthy Eating
- Getting Connected
- Volunteering
- Learning
- Exercise

We also wanted to look at what works in our community, what are the gaps and how well do we all know what's available. Following the five themes, loosely or rigidly, can we live more fulfilled and healthy lives?

Main Outcomes

The themes are all connected, being active and exercising often means individuals are joining in activities with other people. Volunteering and learning also means individuals are connecting with others. Learning can be as a result of joining in informal activities with others, for example line dancing, gardening, walking. Food and eating together is a great connector and following a healthier diet encourages exercise and vice versa.

What works in the local community

- Good range of services for older people and CTLA is a great connector, without community transport many of the activities for older people such as tea clubs, lunch club, memory café etc. could not work.
- House Project (Peacehaven) – Rendezvous provides free space for activity for groups that don't charge.
- The area has the benefit of open spaces, parks, the South Downs, and the sea front.
- Exercise can be adapted to people with any level of ability.
- WAVE leisure centres are proactive and work out in the community and offer new initiatives such as walking football and health walks.
- Setting up of Park Run in Peacehaven has been a massive success locally for juniors and adults. It offers free exercise and demonstrates positive contribution of volunteers.
- Computer drop in class at Newhaven for anybody – this is well attended.
- Libraries for learning.
- University of Third Age (U3A) - £15 per year and buddy scheme. Encourages life-long learning.

- Choir buddy scheme, and singing in care homes.
- Volunteers have improved quality of life, and get as much from volunteering as clients.
- Learning can include being better informed about one's own medical conditions which can cut down on need to see GP and on hospital admissions.
- Churches are a good example of a strong community structure which help with wellbeing.

What are the gaps and barriers?

The gaps are more for middle aged and young people who are socially isolated, or marginalised for variety of reasons. There is a need for intergenerational initiatives, and projects for particular groups e.g. Men's Shed (based on the Eastbourne model).

Barriers to exercise, learning, connecting, volunteering, and healthy eating, are:

- Ill health and disability
- Cuts in services i.e. proposed closure of Ringmer library, staff reduction in sheltered schemes.
- Not knowing what's available.
- Expense: healthy food is seen as more expensive – there are costs associated with being a volunteer. Volunteers should never be out of pocket.
- Transport: there needs to be a volunteer drivers scheme in the Havens.
- A lack of confidence, and perception of 'it's not for me'.
- Not easy to find what volunteering opportunities exist, and no central co-ordination.
- Fear of getting over involved – informal volunteering is more popular.
- Is there a need for a course 'building the confidence to be a volunteer'?
- Volunteers fear of being 'dumped on' by statutory services.

Volunteers don't come for free, they need support, training and infrastructure – there has been a rise in social prescribing, but statutory services don't check the capacity of organisations to support people, especially those with complex needs.

A perception from the event was that in general people don't know well what is available outside their own organisation or community group. A space is needed to market services and join up services, and perhaps a digital calendar, for example Newhaven Town Council's website events page.

Potential future themes

- Community mental health.
- Intergenerational issues.
- Services for young people.
- Panel to ask questions of services (this was, at the Lewes meeting, seen as good model).

We would like to offer our thanks to SCDA for their help with planning this event.