

Ideas Loneliness project meeting Hillcrest community centre 30.10.2018

Sue, Sarah and Lee facilitated the meeting. It was explained that this was a follow up to the community network meeting in September which had been on a theme of addressing social isolation and loneliness. The idea of this meeting was to discuss the gaps and capture thinking around of some practical things we could do to address the issue locally. As most representatives were from the Havens area, the meeting tended to concentrate on the Havens area, although Lewes was also included.

4 themes had been identified from the previous meeting to focus on and participants were asked to add other items

- **National strategy on loneliness social prescribing and how to feed into East Sussex /CCG/NHS agenda**

The government has launched a new cross departmental loneliness strategy, one of the main strands is that all GPs surgeries will have social prescribing provision- this is people to whom the clinicians can refer if they think patients need linking into social groups, companionship, exercise classes, peer support etc. rather than or as well as needing specific health interventions. East Sussex County Council will have someone leading on this strategy and locality link workers will feed issues that are relevant in their local area into ESCC. If there are specific issues you feel need to be raised within ESCC please let Sarah Gorton or Sue Dunkley know and we will feed through to relevant people. However there is no money attached to the strategy apart from the Building Connections fund which is very oversubscribed.

- **Better promotion of existing services / information especially non digital**

It was raised at the network that many people do not use online services so are excluded from, for example, East Sussex Community Information Service (ESCIS). We showed ESCIS <https://www.escis.org.uk/> and the Newhaven Town Council website <https://www.newhaventowncouncil.gov.uk/events/> which are both great resources online. There was discussion about better use of Town Council noticeboards. Sarah has been in touch with both Peacehaven and Newhaven town councils, they have about 10 noticeboards each and they are happy to put notices up A5 sized if you e mail or send notices in. They have to prioritise council business but they do usually have some space. There was also discussion about developing a big central notice board somewhere for the use of community groups. This would need to not be locked and open to the community to put up their own laminated notices. Lewes District Council owns the wall by the Railway station in Newhaven which might be a good location for a noticeboard and we could explore that possibility. Empty shops might be another possibility. Pete said they could develop one at the Hillcrest, we could talk to CAB about their window space, there are some boards that could be more used, doctors surgeries, SCDA, library, Co-op. We need to think more about how to systematically ensure posters are put up and using Newhaven Matters and Peacehaven Directory more as they go through every door. It would be great to have a small working group to take this forward, if you are interested please get in touch.

- **Getting across threshold of local groups /welcoming charter**

One issue that people brought up is that people often find groups cliquy and that it is hard to go to a new group on your own. We need to think about how to make groups welcoming and inclusive. Sue presented a welcoming charter. We discussed this and have made some adaptations following

contributions from the meeting. It was felt that discussing this with groups and encouraging adoption by community groups locally would at least raise the issue that people don't always find joining easy and that groups would have some ideas about addressing that issue. The draft charter is attached, please send in any comments by 23rd November, and then we will get it out to local groups. We could then do some publicity around the Charter to hopefully attract further organisations.

- **Volunteers Time Bank**

Nicki gave a very interesting presentation on the idea of setting up a Time Bank in Newhaven (slides attached) – they have already done a lot of work on this project. Newhaven Town Council is supportive and can provide office space and they have tested the idea in the town at e.g. the fish festival and had a positive response. They need to raise funds for a time broker and they need to establish a steering group. Any interest in being a part of the steering group would be welcome.

Contact: Nicki Day nickilday17@gmail.com

- **Volunteers Seahaven RVS Good Neighbour scheme**

Seahaven RVS Good Neighbour scheme is entirely run by volunteers. The Good Neighbours scheme has a number of long term volunteers who continue to see their befriended, some over a number of years. There is a growing elderly population in the areas, many of whom are housebound and have long term health conditions. A befriending scheme is one way of alleviating the loneliness and isolation of this group who cannot get out to clubs and groups themselves. There is a need for more volunteers in order to grow the scheme and be able to rely on it to be able to take referrals from the health service.

Any interest in volunteering contact Stefania Khan

Stefania.Khan@royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk

Other projects and ideas

Hillcrest Christmas lunch

The Hillcrest are going to have a lunch on Christmas day for people who would otherwise be alone at Christmas. We are promoting this through the GPs, Adult Social Care and other organisations that work with vulnerable people. If you know someone that would like to go the details are attached to this email and booking is through the Hillcrest.

Rotary Club Christmas party

The Rotary club have a Christmas party for the elderly who are alone every year. This event is already fully subscribed.

House of Friendship, Lewes

They will be hosting a Christmas lunch if they have enough volunteer helpers.

Getting business involved

We could be going out to local businesses and public sector and ask them to pledge their staff to do some volunteering in the local area. Any ideas of potential businesses to approach are welcome.

Volunteer centre

Increasing reliance on volunteers means a need for paid volunteer co-ordinators and effective ways of promoting volunteer opportunities and supporting regular and reliable and skilled volunteers. The DWP was mentioned as a potential source of volunteers locally. (contact Sonja Gardener)

Pen-pals

Many older people start to become hard of hearing and that is a barrier to participating in telephone befriending. Creating a pen pal network may appeal to some older people who enjoy writing and receiving letters.

Flowerpots /birdfeeders

Offering older people flowerpots or birdfeeders and a volunteer that will come and look after them, replenish the bird feeder, tend to the flowerpots is another example of how to reach out to people and offer them a regular visit for a practical purpose, while at the same time alleviating isolation. The birdfeeder idea also gives people an interest, watching the birds as they come to feed outside their window.

Volunteer gardening Project (an idea from Healthwatch following the meeting)

Newhaven EZ community could potentially fund and local gardening/horticultural groups towards reducing loneliness. Could funding be obtained for volunteers from local gardening groups to set up a scheme where they tend the garden of other local residents who are frail or vulnerable in their own homes and unable to do their own garden or afford someone to do it for them?

During recent Healthwatch listening tour walkabouts, we observed signs that the resident of a house might be frail etc. e.g. key safe, handrails, house in need of maintenance and... overgrown garden.

This could be linked to people on waiting list for allotments, if resident and volunteer could discuss and agree what was possible & desirable in the garden. E.g. someone who wants to grow vegetables could do so and share the crop with the resident; likewise if flowers are the thing, then the volunteer could grow, take cuttings for their own garden if they have one, cut flowers for both the resident to have in the house and some to take home with them.

At agreed intervals, the garden volunteer could come and tend garden, have a chat and cup of tea, (would need to think about loo situation and handwashing).

In this way, contributing to the wellbeing & social connectedness of the resident, enjoyment and feeling of contribution by the volunteer and contributing to community safety by improving appearance of property.

The Newhaven Community Garden

<http://growingtogethernewhaven.org/>

Newhaven Community Garden also has great potential to be used more by community groups in the local area. There is potential to put in a bid to encourage community groups to be able to use this beautiful space by looking at raising funds for community transport and contacting local groups who work with people that might benefit from the joys of being outdoors, growing and eating together.

If anyone is interested in helping to develop any of the ideas above please get in touch Sarah.gorton@eastsussex.gov.uk 07740 517276 (in the Havens) or sue.dunkley@eastsussex.gov.uk (in Lewes and the villages)