

## **Appendix (a)**

### **Dudley, a story of stories – community resilience**

Our Forging a Future Vision includes an aspiration for Dudley to be a place of healthy safe resilient communities with high aspirations and the ability to shape our own future. We know that many of our communities and people are already resilient, but we also know that too many people are lonely, afraid, turning to gangs, have poor wellbeing, are unemployed and are unable to fully enjoy their lives or reach their potential, so we want to ensure that everyone can benefit from community resilience.

I thought it would be useful to share what the People Directorate has been doing to work in ways that develops community resilience. We are learning as we go, trying things out and seeing if they work. Doing more to empower people and communities is also one of the ways we have committed to work differently in our refreshed health and wellbeing strategy.

The Council had to make difficult decisions in 2015/16 to disinvest from some voluntary sector contracts that were not delivering the value for money and outcomes we needed. Despite this, we maintained our commitment to support the local voluntary and community sector, and last year, we identified £3 million to stimulate innovation in the voluntary and community sector over 3 years. This is the Voluntary Sector Innovation Fund

To help decide how get the most from this money, we wanted to reach into our communities and hear stories about things that enable people and communities to be resilient. We commissioned the Ideas Alliance to work with us to gather stories. We launched the storytelling at an 'Ideas Fair' in November 2017 and over the next 6 months had conversations with people and groups from all walks of life in community venues, cafes and pop-up living rooms in towns and neighbourhoods. We also held workshops with local people and workers to help develop skills in appreciative enquiry, so they could also gather stories.

We heard from people we have never heard from before and the stories gave powerful examples of the contribution that people and groups make to local communities. They gave us 'golden nuggets' of information that challenged the way we do things in Dudley.

For example, we heard that one of the things most important to people at risk of loneliness, is to get out of the house, but our services to tackle isolation visit people in their homes.

I was especially inspired when I heard the story of the Queens Cross network of people with disabilities that when you visit, you don't know who are employees and who are service users. That rather than asking you to talk about your problems, you are asked about your aspirations for the future.

By telling us what is important for communities to be resilient, the stories highlighted the outcomes that our services, projects and programmes should deliver. These are:

1. Opportunities to learn
2. A sense of autonomy and control
3. A sense of purpose
4. Relationships and connections with others
5. Being active
6. A sense of belonging and community
7. Opportunities to contribute and give back

We held a storytelling showcase event, where some of the people we heard from told their stories to stakeholders from across the borough. The richness of the stories we heard informed what we want to achieve from the innovation fund.

We promoted the fund widely and held drop in sessions to support potential projects. We encouraged groups to make use of local assets and connect with each other to share ideas and foster collaboration, rather than create competition between applicants. Projects completed 'ideas canvases' rather than application forms, to help them get their innovative ideas across, and to try to provide a level playing field for groups applying. In the first phase of the innovation fund, we received 60 applications from a broad range of projects, including from a number of groups we have never heard from before.

Panels assessing the projects included elected members, community members (adults and young people) and council officers. Projects were assessed against the 7 outcomes and the three criteria for the use of the fund: innovation, community involvement and sustainability.

To really embed the learning in the council we have matched a council officer as sponsor for each project, whether or not the project was funded.

The projects and sponsors have formed a community of practice, learning together and from each other, co-designing and collaborating to help make the projects a success and explore new ways of working such as co-production, asset based community development and co-designing ways of measuring success. This is helping to change the relationship between the officers and the community, and will shape the way in which we work together in the future.

The outcomes from the storytelling have been adopted by the Health and Wellbeing Board and can be used as the social outcomes by partners through the community wealth building commission that is being developed.

Twenty nine projects were successful and a total of £1.37 million granted in the fund's first year. The projects vary and support people right across the life course. They are helping people from all walks of life, including people with learning and physical disabilities and mental health problems, people recovering from substance misuse as well as those with long term health problems. Together they are providing a range of activities including community food growing, self-help, support with getting work and housing, tackling domestic abuse and anti social behaviour and providing opportunities for people to learn new skills and be creative.

We are applying this learning to the way we commission so we can maximise the contribution the services we commission make to community resilience. Examples include the integrated voluntary sector advice, support and advocacy project and our re-commissioning of domiciliary care.

We are testing these approaches with the most vulnerable in our communities. Children's services are pioneering restorative practice, which is an important way that we can contribute to the resilience of families. Banardo's are delivering a project to address adverse childhood experiences and another one to increase the resilience of women who have had more than one child taken into care.

We are working with schools to explore how they can be resilient settings. This includes piloting nurture groups in primary schools. We are also engaging through storytelling and co-production to promote community cohesion in Lye. Partners are starting work to develop a public health approach to reducing violent crime and as part of this will explore how community resilience can contribute.

We also want this approach to be sustainable. We are inviting people to share their stories, to be uploaded onto the 'Beautifully Human in Dudley' website, moderated by CVS. We know these stories inspire people to get involved in their community.

We are also now integrating information about the things going on in our communities (including the local offer and the family information service) onto a single app based on the Dudley Community Information Directory, which will add the community innovation fund projects and stories to existing content. Working with the local community information champions, we engaged with communities and elected members about this new community information app, and their views have informed the specification, which is currently out to tender. We want to develop a social movement of connecting conversations so we can all enable people to engage with the activities in Dudley's communities.

This is just the start of our Community Resilience journey and it would be great to hear how other parts of the Council are working to develop resilient communities.