

Mental Health & Isolation Task & Finish Group Meeting- Lowestoft & Northern Parishes Community Partnership.

I have now updated this document using RED to show the progress now made against each item planned ready for the November meeting of Community Partnership. This way we will have the original meeting notes and the update in one place. Phil Aves

Noted of meeting held on 30th August 2023.

Present:- Phil Aves, Claire Taylor Haig, Teresa Goldson (representing Amanda Stephens- Access Community Trust) Paul Ashdown, Andy Pearce.

1. Phil Aves recapped on the initial meeting held to set the group up and the initial task of trying to Map what assets were already available in Lowestoft area to assist people with Isolation and Mental Health. Phil Aves had undertaken to get the Solutions Social Prescribing Directory updated and shared. This document created by Citizen Advice staff to assist Social Prescribers work was a comprehensive capture of all things available in Lowestoft. It spans some 30 pages and is broken down into subject/topic area. The Directory is held on the 8 GP's website so that all professionals can access a copy to use. The updated version has been sent to GP Surgery for upload. The group agreed that this was a comprehensive list of activities and facilities available in Lowestoft and our role as Community Partnership should be to promote its awareness and use by professional working with those who are Isolated.
Action- For the Community Partnership to consider how best to promote the use of this existing Directory of Resources to the professionals involved in service delivery. The existing Directory run by Solutions Social Prescribing through CANES has been updated and is held on the 8 GP websites so that professionals can access it and use it to help match people with the right resource. As it is on 8 GP websites it is also available to the public should they wish to access it. We cannot print copies off as they are too large and would be out of date within days.....it is a constantly moving Directory that one person endeavours to keep up to date and I ensure that copy is uploaded on all 8 GP websites. This action is now complete.
2. Following the meeting of the full Community partnership it had been agreed and voted to continue to support the 4 existing Warm Welcome venues (namely St Andrews Church Hall, Kirkley St Peters Wednesday Club, Seagull Theatre meetings room and Pathways Care Farm Thursday meeting. These 4 had been the most successful of the previous Warm Rooms and were now known as Warm Welcome Rooms and were funded to end of October out of Community partnership funds. Phil Aves updated the group that East Suffolk were about to launch this winters Warm Welcome Fund and that for Lowestoft and Northern Parishes this amounted to £14,000 based on 14 Councillors across the wards. It was agreed that we should encourage the 4 existing Warm Welcome's to apply for the Winter Funding and that the Community Partnership be encouraged to support those 4 bids. It was acknowledged that there would be other new bids (Gunton residence hall and DANES had both shown interest) but it would be before the Funding Panel to decide how many bids were successful. It was not recommended that the Community Partnership put any additional funding to Warm

Welcomes this Winter and we use the £14,000 available funding to cover those. The Task and Finish did agree that it was important that we did all we could to promote the use of the rooms via Networks and potentially a Leaflet of useful information. **Action: - To recommend that the Community Partnership undertake promotion work once the Warm Welcome venues were agreed. WE have now held the panel meeting for this years Warm Welcome Rooms, 3 of the existing rooms have applied to carry on with only Pathways deciding to stop. This winter we have funded 10 location (including the 3 existing ones). The Poster has now been done and shared widely and as from 1st November Warm Welcomes started to open up. Community Help Team and other agencies are now looking to plan in visits to each venue to help connect and advise them. Louise Thomas as set up a network group of the 10 venues so we can communicate items to them all in one go. Lowestoft is by far the best served for Warm Welcome Rooms and the spread across days is impressive. We even have a Monday evening group for Men only at Gunton which may well help connect some people who would otherwise not attend. The Poster and Flyer are ready to distribute by Community Partnership Members through doors. The Poster and Flyer have been widely distributed via use of existing Networks.**

3. The T&F Group then discussed transport to the existing Warm Welcome Rooms and to other functions such as Over 60 Club etc. It was noted that BACT's was well engaged in the process and the Buzz Bus was changing to a Tuesday and Thursday rota which would help. It was felt that some people could not afford transport, either due to rural locations or costs, and this was a barrier to some accessing facilities that already existed. It was suggested that a small Transport Fund could be established by the Community Partnership to assist those cases in most need. Andy Pearce for Lowestoft Town Council added that the Town Council has put aside a fund for Food and Community support and that it would consider a bid to put some funding into that joint pot. The Town Council could not award to individuals but could support places like Warm Welcomes etc to hold funds to help those people. It was agreed by all that a small Transport Fund should be set up by Community partnership and a request made to Lowestoft Town Council to add funds to it. **Action: - Community Partnership to vote on putting £3,000.00 to this Transport Fund and seeking a match of £3000.00 from Lowestoft Town Council to create a £6,000.00 fund for the winter months to assist. This vote was concluded and agreed upon. We have worked with BACT's to help them complete the bid to Town Council directly for that £3000.00 so that the joint fund is £6000.00. We have agreed that BACT will hold the fund and use it to help those people who want to access a Warm Welcome location but cannot afford the transport. The cost includes a one off £20 Registration fee and then the amount for the trip. We hope by funding this for those that cannot afford it that it will encourage them to use both BACTs and the Warm Welcome Rooms and then also potential use the service for other things too. This is a great addition to our service and a real attempt to help those isolated through costs to still access services.**
4. The Group then looked at Isolation and the need for a Befriending service to help those unable to get out to reach the available services. During Covid there was a "Voice of a Friend" befriending service that had been started up. This had ended as the volunteers who helped during Covid had all gone back to work or other activities. Age Uk Norwich have been doing some work in Waveney to look at what services are missing and what they could do to help. It had already been suggested that Befriending Services were a key missing item and that they already ran them in Norwich. It was suggested that Phil Aves goes back to Age UK Norwich to discuss how they could role out a phone befriending service for Lowestoft and then potentially Waveney to address this gap in service. It was felt using an organisation that

was already doing such a service was the best option. **Action: - Phil Aves to speak with Age UK Norwich and progress the scheme for Lowestoft if possible.** As previously updated we had no joy with Age UK Norwich but since found Communities Together East Anglia CTEA already have a full befriending service in Suffolk but with limited cover in Lowestoft and Waveney. Through a separate mental health fund for Lowestoft we have bid for £10,000 for use in Lowestoft and a separate £5,000.00 bid for the rest of Waveney. The costing have now been re worked by CTEA and come in just under £15,000 for the service to be expanded and cover whole of Waveney. The service offers Face to Face, Phone, and on-line offers of Befriending by trained and checked volunteers. The difficult bid will be to find and recruit local volunteers to act as the Face-to-Face befriender. But this is part of the funding and CTEA feel they are best place to recruit (they do have some already who also Digital Champions helping people get on-line). We hope to agree the funding for this in the next week or so and give CTEA the go ahead to start expanding this service across the whole of Waveney. So we will have a funded Befriending Service not just for Lowestoft and Northern Parishes but for whole of Waveney without any additional cost to the Community Partnership.....but we have brought it about.

5. Finally, it was discussed about how best to promote all the things already available and to get important information out to those who are most isolated. The idea of a simple leaflet that could be sent out with other information e.g When GP's send out letters, or Councils send out communication, so that older people got a leaflet with the useful information contained in one place. Phil Aves reported that Sue Medley's team had done some of this work already. It was recommended that the Community Partnership consider preparing a leaflet with all the relevant information on it so it was ready to use. This could be shared both electronically and manually so that we reached the widest audience. The leaflet would sign post to things like the Directory, Bact's Transport, Warm Welcomes rather than just a list of activities. **Action: - Community Partnership to consider the creation of such a leaflet of useful information.** The leaflet has been created by Claire Taylor Haigh from the Task & Finish Group and has now gone off to print. We hope to have printed copies at the meeting so people can take away and start delivering to people who need it. The leaflet advertises the Warm Welcomes , promotes BACT's offer of Transport for that and other uses and has a handy list of local numbers that can help people connect with services etc. We recommend that these flyers are delivered alongside the Cost of Living Leaflet that was created by SCC but has an East Suffolk Front Page.....the 2 leaflets complement each other. One further suggestion to help us distribute these leaflets is to see if a couple of Schools in our most deprived areas would help to deliver the leaflets. This would be great exercise for the students and show a great connection between School children trying to connect the isolated to services. This can be explored.

The meeting ended at 5.15pm. That is the update on the Mental Health and Isolation Task and Finish Group work. We are however sighted and fully support the BoxUp project that Rachel Tucker is leading on , as although it is around getting people active it also crosses over into Mental Health and Isolation and we would support that project to get support. Phil Aves