



East Suffolk Community Partnerships

Bringing ideas to life

August 2022 Newsletter

Welcome

to a brand-new newsletter, providing quarterly updates and information about the fantastic range of work of East Suffolk's Community Partnerships and the difference it is making.



What's inside?

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About Community Partnerships

East Suffolk Community Partnerships are an innovative way for East Suffolk Council, partners and communities to informally work together through workshops, events and Task and Finish Groups to understand the root causes and the impacts of the challenges people are facing locally. This work is then used to develop innovative solutions together, sometimes requiring funding but more frequently using existing resources more effectively, enabling Town and Parish Councils, community groups and local organisations to lead work in their areas and make a difference on the ground in our communities.

Overseen by the Community Partnership Board, there are eight Community Partnerships, each establishing a programme of activities to address priorities in their area.

Each Community Partnership, and the Community Partnership Board, has identified its own priorities based on both data and local insight about what matters to the people living in each area.

Community Partnerships represent a major investment by East Suffolk Council, with a total delivery budget of **£1,730,000** over four years.

The data packs that inform these priorities are currently being refreshed and each Community Partnership is holding a workshop to review its priorities. As an example of these renewed priorities, the Felixstowe Peninsula Community Partnership has agreed to focus on the cost-of-living crisis.

The main Community Partnership Board priorities for East Suffolk as a whole are:

- Tackling isolation and loneliness
- Transport and travel
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Covid impact
- Financial inequalities



Each edition of this new newsletter will focus on one of these priorities and review the progress made so far. We start with tackling social isolation and loneliness.



*Why is tackling **social isolation** and **loneliness** a priority?*

The people most in need of support with loneliness are young people, men, single parents, those over 80 years old, people with long-term health conditions and/or mental health issues, carers and BAME communities.



Solitude is the joy of being alone, whereas loneliness is the pain of being alone.



Companionship, friendship and a sense of belonging are basic human needs. Loneliness carries physical health risks and can be as detrimental to a person's health as smoking 15 cigarettes per day.

Loneliness is associated with high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke, as well as increasing the risk of depression, cognitive decline and dementia in later life.

Loneliness is likely to increase your risk of death by 26%

Social isolation is often associated with older people however during a recent survey in East Suffolk, more young people aged 16-24 reported feeling lonely.

In East Suffolk, it is estimated that 10,000 people often or always feel lonely.

The Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns exacerbated the feelings of isolation for many people and was particularly difficult for those who were already struggling to connect with their communities.

Half a million older people across the UK go at least 5 or 6 days each week without seeing or speaking to anyone at all.

What are the Community Partnerships doing?

Community Projects

As well as providing financial support to local projects, the Community Partnerships have instigated their own projects which aim to reduce loneliness, working with local partners and the East Suffolk Communities Team.



EAST bags

In January 2021, 2,000 'EAST bags' were delivered to vulnerable older residents who were identified as being at risk of loneliness.

Funded by the East Suffolk Community Partnership Board and Ipswich and East Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group, the EAST bag (Everyone Active, Supported Together) was a reusable jute bag

containing items to help recipients to stay active, both physically and mentally, during the winter months. This included resistance bands and exercise cards, a water bottle, hand warmer, recipe cards, freezer boxes,

a puzzle book and some seeds to plant when the weather improved. As an extra treat, the bags also included soft drinks and chutney, kindly donated by Adnams, tea bags and biscuits.



Grandpads

Grandpads are specifically designed around the need of older adults, and the large buttons and intuitive operating system make it easy for older people to use the device to connect with loved ones and the outside world without the complicated features of other tablets.

Launched during the Covid-19 pandemic, the East Suffolk Grandpad Loan Scheme aimed to tackle social isolation amongst older residents or those who struggle to use technology, particularly those who have little or no contact with loved ones or the outside world due to a lack of Wi-Fi, equipment and/or skills.

175 Grandpads were made available free of charge to older residents across the district during the pandemic who have been identified as being socially isolated.

Initially launched in July 2020, the scheme was extended until July 2022 thanks to funding from 11 East Suffolk Councillor's Enabling Communities Budgets, Councillor Steve Wiles' Suffolk County Council Locality Budget, Government Covid funding, East Suffolk Council's

Covid Community Recovery Fund, the Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG Prevention Fund and the East Suffolk Community Partnership Board.



Lowestoft Mile

People living in the Lowestoft area who may be unable to get outside to get active can join in [the Lowestoft Mile](#), a virtual walking project launched in March 2021.

Funded by the Lowestoft and Northern Parishes Community Partnership, the Lowestoft Mile currently comprises four virtual walks around the local area, filmed using 360 ° virtual reality and drone footage.

Developed by the East Suffolk Communities Team, all the walks

are approximately one mile and have been created especially for people who are unable to leave their homes, including elderly people and those with health conditions. The videos can also be used with virtual reality goggles which work with a smartphone to give the user an immersive experience.

If able, viewers are encouraged to walk on the spot, take seated steps or just move their arms whilst watching the walk.



‘Happy to chat’ benches

New benches have been installed across East Suffolk to encourage residents to speak to each other in an effort to tackle social isolation and loneliness.

One example is those funded by the Kesgrave, Rushmere St Andrew, Martlesham, Carlford and Fynn Valley Community Partnership, where it is hoped the benches will help people to start a new conversation with someone and encourage people of all ages to start talking to one another more.

The benches, which have ‘Happy to Chat’ plaques donated by Healthwatch Suffolk, have been located at Martlesham Heath, Grundisburgh, Swilland, Witnesham, Great Bealings, Charsfield and Rushmere St Andrew.



At the end of last year, the Felixstowe Peninsula Community Partnership awarded £5,500 to enable the purchase of ‘chat benches’. Those parishes who took up the offer were able to choose a bench suitable for their location and given a plaque to fix to the bench encouraging users to sit and talk. Since January, the chat benches have started to arrive, including this one in Nacton.

Covid Buddies

The Community Partnership Board provided just over £10,000 for a buddy programme run by Community Action Suffolk to support residents to feel confident to re-join, or begin attending, local groups and activities. The programme provides reassurance and practical support, including the option of attending the first meeting with a ‘buddy’.

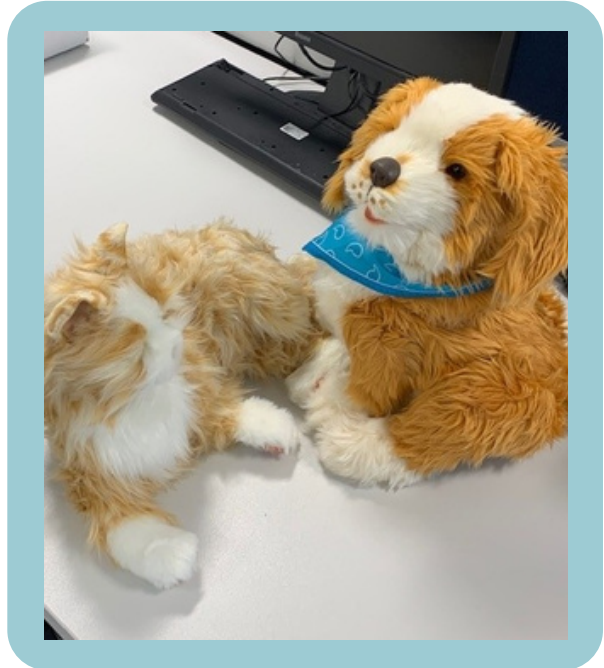


Robopets

To help older residents, especially those living with dementia, 20 companion pets were purchased for local dementia groups and care homes across the district.

The pets, which are robotic cats and dogs, provide the interactive companionship associated with owning a pet which can be therapeutic for many people, especially those living with dementia. Animal therapy is widely recognised to bring calm and comfort to people with dementia and these realistic 'robopets' are a practical alternative to introducing live animals into a residential home, whilst still providing the same benefits.

As part of the Council's Covid Community Recovery Plan, companion pets have so far been donated to the Sole Bay Health Centre in Reydon, Glebe House in Hollesley, the Pear Tree Centre in Halesworth and the Forget Me Not Café in Kesgrave. More pets are on their way!



Voice of a Friend

The Lowestoft and Northern Parishes Community Partnership funded the 'Voice of a Friend' befriending programme through Citizens Advice North East Suffolk.

This programme built on the telephone support provided by East Suffolk councillors and staff through the Home But Not Alone response service during the first Covid-19 lockdown.



Christmas Card Campaign

In December 2021, Christmas cards were sent to some of the most vulnerable residents in East Suffolk. As well as a festive message, the Christmas cards included information on organisations and services available to those who may need help or advice over the winter months.

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Funding

Community Partnerships are tackling social isolation through a range of funding schemes, which support projects specifically helping people struggling with loneliness. These schemes include the Hidden Needs Grant Scheme and Boost grants.



29 projects focusing on reducing social isolation received Hidden Needs grants of between **£2,057** and **£10,000**.

Hidden Needs Grants

The Hidden Needs grant programme, developed by the former East Suffolk Partnership, previously focused on older people and families with limited access to resources. However, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the criteria for the scheme were updated to cover people of all ages in East Suffolk experiencing loneliness or isolation.

The programme funded projects which support people who are more likely to be socially isolated and lonely

Hidden Needs funding has supported dementia-friendly cinema screenings, volunteer training, the purchase of a mini-bus to enable isolated residents to attend a club, a befriending programme for those affected by eating disorders, pop-up cafés, singing sessions for people with Parkinson's Disease, telephone befriending, support for new mothers unable to access parent and baby groups during the pandemic, befriending for deaf older people and support for people with spinal injuries and sight loss.

Boost Grants

Launched as part of the Council's Covid Recovery Plan, the East Suffolk Boost Grant Scheme focuses on supporting clinically vulnerable people and specific groups who were directly impacted by the pandemic, including people with disabilities, dementia and visual and/or hearing impairments with two additional themes focussed on sustainable food and getting active.

£100,000 of funding has enabled more than 60 groups and buildings to open their doors again to residents – reducing loneliness and isolation by connecting people with their community.

Boost offers grants between £250 and £5,000 to voluntary and community groups as well as town and parish councils who are tackling the needs of these groups. Boost grants have so far supported the purchase of outdoor gym equipment to help residents keep active, a community café, performing arts sessions for visually impaired communities, a community larder, a dementia group and cooking classes for bereaved adults.

Community connections

The Community Partnerships and their partners continue to promote the wide range of opportunities for community connection wherever possible, to encourage people to come out and meet others.



This includes Meet Up Mondays (supported by the Rural Coffee Caravan), Worry Tree cafés, Good Neighbour Schemes, Men's Sheds, Chin Wags, lunch clubs, singing and theatre groups, sports, crafts and youth clubs and faith groups to name a few. There are opportunities for community connections across the district, utilising local spaces such as pubs, allotments, village halls, libraries and schools, with more options continually being explored.

Meet up Mondays...



Social isolation and loneliness workshop

In a workshop held at the recent Community Partnership Forum, more than 50 delegates worked in groups to discuss what they felt could help to mitigate loneliness and how more community connections such as groups and clubs can be provided. The groups also looked at the sources of support available locally, and where there are gaps in groups of people who are not currently being considered.

Amongst these gaps, it was felt that children and young people were a key group who are not being sufficiently provided for when it comes to social isolation, as well as single parents and men of all ages.

Improved communication and coordination were key suggestions from the workshop on how to support community groups, with support for the idea of a central signposting resource and community mapping to avoid duplication of services.

The need for more transport options was also raised as a key way to reduce isolation, which is another of the Community Partnership Board's priorities.

The Community Partnership Board is setting up a Task and Finish Group focusing specifically on social isolation and loneliness to consider the ideas from the forum and develop a programme of activities for the coming year.

News from across the Community Partnerships

Community Partnership Forum

Taking place on Friday 25 March at Trinity Park Conference and Events Centre, the annual East Suffolk Community Partnership Forum was attended by representatives from local communities, businesses, voluntary organisations, public services, town and parish councils, faith groups, healthcare and more!

Through a packed programme of presentations, workshops, seminars and displays, the forum offered a chance for people to look at the issues affecting those living and working in East Suffolk and explore how people can work together to address them.



SALC Support

Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC) have been recommissioned to support Town and Parish Councils/Meetings to participate in Community Partnerships for the next 12 months.

Each Community Partnership Chair will be contacted by SALC to ascertain where they may be able to assist and can be flexible to the individual needs of each Community Partnership.

SALC may be able to help introduce Town and Parish Council representation onto those Community Partnerships where there are vacancies, identify wider Town and Parish Council participation in specific Task & Finish Groups, promote a Community Partnership's priorities and successes to Town and Parish Councils in the relevant area to raise the profile of the Partnership and help to flag up relevant issues which a Town and Parish Council may need support to address.

Events

Now that Covid restrictions have eased, more events have been taking place across the Community Partnership areas.

A series of 'pop along' events has been launched in Beccles, Bungay and Halesworth where local residents are invited to chat with a local councillor, an officer from the Council's Communities Team and a representative from a local organisation.

A free showcase event in Halesworth, organised by the Beccles, Bungay and Halesworth and villages Community Partnership takes place in May, enabling members of the public, local community groups and businesses to meet members of the Community Partnership and hear more about projects that have been supported.

And in March, the Lowestoft and northern parishes Community Partnership held a successful engagement event, attended by over 70 people. Representatives from more than 20 organisations were present, including BACT Community Transport, Suffolk Police, Everyone Active, Waveney Youth Council, Access Community Trust and Lowestoft Foodbank.

Small Grants Scheme

In January, the Beccles, Bungay, Halesworth and villages Community Partnership provided £436 in funding through its Small Grants scheme to enable Beccles Rotary Club to replace a bench near to St Michael's Church Tower in Beccles. The bench was originally installed in 2005 and has become a popular spot for local people to sit, chat and meet new people.

Meanwhile, the Melton, Woodbridge and Deben Peninsula Community Partnership awarded Hollesley Village Hall Committee with £10,000 towards replacing the village hall roof. Hollesley Village Hall is used widely by local residents and those from surrounding villages for social clubs, functions and activities including tai chi, karate, pilates, yoga, drama, whist and a youth cub, as well as providing a base for medical appointments.

Additionally, the Felixstowe Allotment Association's new headquarters is now complete, thanks in part to £3,000 in funding from the Felixstowe Peninsula Community Partnership. The building will be used as a meeting place for allotment holders and as a venue for the community and local schools when they visit.

Rendlesham Community Radio, which provides opportunities for local young people to gain experience as presenters or producers, while supporting local musical talent and offering life-skills training to those in need of assistance, has also been awarded £1,443.17 from the Melton, Woodbridge and Deben Peninsula Community Partnership.

Other news

To help shape the future work of the Melton, Woodbridge and Deben Peninsula Community Partnership, a survey was undertaken in February. The results showed the strong support for the partnership to continue to focus on reducing social isolation and also that respondents were keen to be kept informed of Community Partnership activities.

The Kesgrave, Rushmere St Andrew, Martlesham, Carlford and Fynn Valley Community Partnership has been encouraging students from Kesgrave High School to give their views as part of East Suffolk Youth Voice, which is the district-wide forum serving local young people.

Both the Lowestoft and northern parishes and the Aldeburgh, Leiston, Saxmundham and villages Community Partnerships surveyed their communities earlier this year about local transport options. Working with BACT Community Transport and Coastal Accessible Transport Services (CATS) respectively, a printed survey was delivered to households in the partnership areas and was also made available online, supported by a social media campaign which reached over 89,000 people. Following this, a new community transport service, Buzzabout, [was launched in July serving the villages north of Lowestoft.](#)



The Community Partnership Board also supports KATCH, a sustainable electric taxi-bus service for Wickham Market and Framlingham. KATCH provides vital connection for many people with journeys that can be booked on-demand by telephone or on the app.