

communities WHO CAN

Year 1 - Health and Wellbeing Project Evaluation

1,170
sessions of
activity

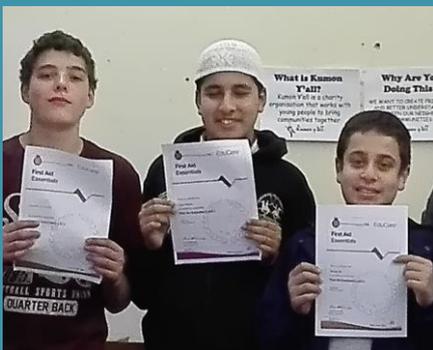
“My community is
like a massive family
that needs helping,
building to make it
stronger” - *volunteer*



200 volunteers
giving 16,600
hours of support



975 local people
repeatedly
benefited for only
£45 per person



“I have something
to get out of bed
for and have made
wonderful friends”
- *beneficiary*



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Mission Statement

Communities Who Can cares passionately about Kirklees' local communities. We support local people to unite together to grow communities that work. Led by and run for local people, CWC helps communities to speak for themselves and work effectively with key stakeholders to improve the quality of life for all.

Communities Who Can (CWC) is the working name for Kirklees Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations Ltd, a community-led organisation which works with over 100 community-led groups in and around Kirklees, helping them achieve more for their communities. We:

- work to build happy, healthy estates by uniting communities and developing volunteers.
- work with partners to meet community and council priorities in creative ways.
- want to preserve social, affordable, rented housing for our children and grandchildren.

We particularly focus on supporting groups working with deprived, disadvantaged and vulnerable communities.

To find out more, go to www.kirkleescommunitieswhocan.co.uk.

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Executive Summary

In March 2015 Communities Who Can (Kirklees Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations Ltd or KFTRA) received a two year, £78,152 grant from Kirklees Community Partnerships to deliver an innovative two-year project in joint collaboration between Communities Who Can (CWC) and their members. The work aimed to improve the lives of local people through a range of health and wellbeing interventions based on peer support. Work officially started in August 2015 and its first ten months delivery were evaluated by an independent community consultant to capture early learning about what was working and what wasn't.

Project Outcomes – The project aims to deliver a range of overlapping outcomes which aimed to increase participants’:

- involvement in activities promoting positive health and wellbeing behaviour
- social contact, friendship and opportunities to volunteer
- feelings of being valued and respected as volunteers
- access to existing local voluntary and community led support groups
- take up into new community activity.

What we did – This creative partnership saw 40 CWC members and associated groups - grass roots community groups, mainly tenants and residents associations from across the district - opt into providing health and wellbeing activities, overwhelmingly through volunteer labour. Some groups were already providing some activity; for others this was completely new work. CWC then supported these members to identify local needs, expand ongoing activities, plan new ones, recruit volunteers, help them to promote their activities and monitor the impact. They also helped communities set up new groups, supported groups to develop the skills they needed, helped groups secure funding to continue activities, operated a referral scheme into the project and widely promoted the scheme to statutory and voluntary sector partners.

The range of activities - The range of activities was huge, including regular and one-off coffee mornings, raffles, bingo and luncheon clubs, tea dances, fish and chip teas and pie and quiz nights, with most focusing on helping people make friendships and socialise. Most groups offered a range of parties, linked to events like the Queen's birthday, Halloween and Christmas. Two groups actually

‘It’s about small pots of money and lots of goodwill’
Group representative

74% said volunteering had helped them make friends

“If we can find someone with a passion they want to share, we can nurture it”
CWC staff member

96.5% of users said project activities made them feel ‘good or very good’

I volunteer in my community because it’s like a massive family to me that needs helping, building to make it stronger.

provided a lunch on Christmas day. There was a strong appetite to learn something and many groups ran craft, gardening, cook and eat and IT classes. People also wanted to get outside and went on trips, community walks, held barbeques, cleaned up 'local grot spots' and built community gardens. Project activities became part of local community life with 41% occurring regularly, some as often as twice a week. Lots of activities delivered in sheltered accommodation or areas with high levels of older people.

Who took part – 975 local people (target 475), mainly from deprived and vulnerable groups, took part in 130 project activities. In total, groups provided 1170 sessions of activity attended 8,775 times. They particularly wanted to engage over 55-year olds and 61% of participants were in this age group (target 20%) with about half over 70 years. 59% of users were women and 92% of users described themselves as white, though this included a large number of non-British participants. 17% of users had poor health and 27% low levels of physical activity. 44% said they had a mental health problem. Disability was not fully recorded and is likely to be higher than the 18% reported. 47% of participants had taken up medical services in the last fortnight and 24% said they needed some or a lot of help from health and social care support.

Some amazing volunteers – 203 local people became project volunteers, massively exceeding the project target of 100, with 62% being retired local people. Overall they gave some 16,645 hours to project activities, an average 320 hours a week. Most volunteers helped out with at least 2 different activities. 23% of these volunteers also helped neighbours with things like shopping, befriending and gardening. 76% volunteered because they wanted to make a difference. By the end of year one, 80% of groups said more volunteers were involved with their activities.

The difference we made – The evaluation proved that community groups are extremely accessible and valued providers of health and wellbeing activities and, with their ability to draw in local volunteers, offer funders excellent reach and value for money. In its first 10 months the project has massively exceeded its targets and delivered real and sustainable gains for vulnerable local people, most significantly in the areas of combating isolation, making friendships, strengthening communities and improving mental wellbeing. The project has tested out activities, demonstrating which contribute to physical and mental wellbeing. Some key findings about gains to participants include:

975 users
203 volunteers
16,645 volunteer hours
130 activities

‘The project’s given members a community empowerment role. It’s speeded up a natural process, from focusing on housing to a wider remit’
CWC staff member

“We rely on the day on users doing small jobs to help out. I couldn’t do it all. They enjoy it. Many of them don’t feel needed any more. Helping lets them feel useful”
Group representative

“If we can find someone with a passion they want to share we can nurture it”
CWC staff member

“This craft group gives me a sense of achievement when I make something. It helps with my depression.”
Project participant

- Surprisingly, when most activities were aimed at social engagement, 76% of participants said activities made a reasonable level of improvement to their physical wellbeing.
- Project participants overwhelmingly said activities made them happier. 55% of users said project activities made them feel very good and 41%, good. 75% of users said project activities improved their mental state.
- 83% of participants said the project stopped them from feeling lonely and 92% said it gave them something to do.
- Three quarters of groups said their activities made their communities stronger and just about everyone said they felt more involved in community life, with people valuing the opportunity to help with delivery.
- Volunteers gained real benefits too: 60% of volunteers took part to keep active, 44% to make friends. 42% said volunteering had improved their confidence, 55% said they were valued by their community and 64% said it has made them feel better about themselves.

How did groups benefit? – CWC support helped its members expand and deliver new activity.

- One third of participating groups expanded existing delivery or revitalised flagging activities by attracting new members and delivering more relevant activity.
- Groups started 75 new activities, increasing the supply of activity by about 150%.
- 39 groups were supported to assess their skills and competencies and develop tailored plans to address any gaps.
- 20 groups accessed training to improve their management and planning skills and 11 groups for 1-1 support. 12 groups were supported to access training from other providers such as digital literacy.
- Nearly all groups benefited from CWC's extensive contacts which helped them make links with key partners.
- All groups planned to continue this work, though 50% were worried about the lack of potential funding and many said their capacity was limited by the aging nature of their volunteers.

Could this have happened without CWC? – The simple answer is no. Groups were clear that CWC's 'quiet and endlessly flexible expertise' is valued, makes a real difference and is integral to their success. Most groups accessed support several times a year.

- 73% of groups said CWC support stops them from feeling they are on their own and helps them learn new skills.
- 63% said CWC support helped them think more broadly about their role, helps things happen more quickly and has made them more confident.

Significantly, most groups struggled to complete project monitoring activities and see its relevance to their work. Without the extensive support of CWC staff, little monitoring data would have been collected.

Cost effectiveness – The project delivered these gains for £41 per person, £34 if volunteers are counted as beneficiaries. Groups also brought in an additional £11,000

from grants, small user fees and participatory fundraising. These low costs mean activities are extremely sustainable and offer great value for money.

Where should the project go next? – The project has a wide range of options. Key evaluation learning suggests it should:

- Particularly grow the engagement of additional groups and amongst its associate led groups.
- Boost the capacity of professionals to directly refer into the project by publishing easily accessible and live data group activities.
- Support groups to increase activities that promote physical activity.
- Increase its fundraising support to groups.
- Consider how it could help groups increase capacity through creating a flexible pool of volunteers.

Learning Points – Outcome 1 – Increased participation in health-promoting activities

- **User led activities** – Community activities seem to work because activities have been based on what users say they want to do. In taking the work forward, this listening needs to continue.
- **Cohesion activities** – Intergenerational and cohesion activities are valued by all participants and act to reduce fear and tension. They should be encouraged in future delivery.
- **Counting attendances** – Given groups are reluctant to keep registers for all activities it would be helpful to have a formula agreed with funders which CWC could use to project attendances.
- **The frail elderly** – Assessing the number of frail elderly engaging in activities might be useful. Perhaps recording people aged over 75 or 80 years might achieve this.
- **Volunteers are beneficiaries** – With most volunteers being drawn from the same groups as users, the project's failure to count them as beneficiaries appears somewhat false and we suggest including them as an identified beneficiary group.
- **People like to learn** – A sizeable number of people value opportunities to learn new things and be creative as well as simply socialise. Achieving something builds confidence and self-esteem.
- **The right users** – Community-led activity is highly attractive to vulnerable people who need to improve and maintain their health and wellbeing. Groups are usually trusted by communities and their activities are usually seen as relevant.
- **Growth in take-up** – Funders and delivery bodies need to make sure they don't interpret an activity for relatively low numbers of unique individuals as unsuccessful. Many activities attended by low numbers deliver high levels of activity – e.g. weekly engagement.
- **Increasing take up from BAME groups** – In taking work forward CWC needs to work with groups that can engage more BAME groups. This may mean recruiting outside of their typical TRA membership.

Learning Points – Outcome 2 – Increased social contact and friendship

- **Improved mental wellbeing** – low level, low cost and very simple grass roots community activities deliver an overwhelming improvement in participants' happiness and mental wellbeing, which should not be underestimated. They provide great places to make friends, stop loneliness and give people positive things to do. The range of activities provided mean most people can find something to enjoy. Levels of distress in communities would be likely to increase if activities were discontinued.
- **The chance to 'help out'** – Activities gave all vulnerable people the chance to be needed, 'own' their activity and belong. This opportunity should not be undervalued and future delivery models need to continue to create and value (count) opportunities for people to help to run activities however minor the role they play, rather than be a passive recipient.
- **Community volunteers** – Volunteering improves the wellbeing of volunteers. There are people in all communities who want to make a difference and value volunteering for the benefits it brings to themselves and neighbours. Being able to offer a range of roles will increase the number of volunteers recruited. Volunteers share many of the same gains as participants.

Learning Points – Outcome 3 – Volunteers feeling valued

- **Improved confidence and self-esteem** – There is a direct correlation between volunteering and improvements in volunteers' confidence and self-esteem.
- **Being valued** – The project is very successful at enabling most volunteers to feel valued, though most gain the most satisfaction from users' enjoyment.
- **Community helpers** – Project volunteers take part because they want to help. They are grounded in communities and have little identification with statutory bodies and strategic needs. They can find the term volunteering overly-formal and off-putting.
- **A 'thank you' goes a long way** – All partners must keep in mind the power of thanking volunteers and community groups for their work in improving community wellbeing. If volunteers feel their dedication is being expected or taken for granted by what they feel are powerful institutions some may well 'take their 'bat and ball home'".
- **Monitoring** – Few volunteers recognise the value of monitoring and are likely to ignore it wherever possible.

Learning Points – Outcome 4 Increased access to existing community and voluntary activity

- **Expanding existing activity** – Groups should not just look at doing new things. It can be just as helpful to increase delivery hours of existing activity or attract new participants. Accepting members from other local communities (groups) is one way to increase overall local offer for relatively little additional work.

- **Project promotion** – Lack of easily accessible information about activities is limiting referrals, particularly from busy professionals. To help referrals and self-referrals CWC should establish and maintain a single accessible point of up to date information about all project activities including local contact information, possibly a web page.
- **Increasing referrals** – In year two CWC staff should deliver presentations in community health settings to increase awareness of and referrals to the project.
- **Increasing digital links** – The project needs to make sure that it is properly networked into infrastructure projects such as Better in Kirklees, allowing potential users (or their helpers) to self-refer.

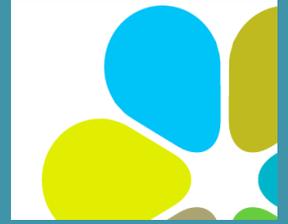
Learning Point - Access to New Activities – Outcome 5

- **Keep it fun** – Local people are interested in difficult discussions and do want to learn, but things need to be fun. Mix and match things up to attract people and get them to come to events where more difficult messages will be presented.
- **Some activities are seasonal** – As snow volunteers are seasonal and if the 'season' doesn't happen that may stop new activities from taking place. But building a bank of people for next year is always a good idea and will reduce the rush to find last minute solutions.
- **Physically active volunteers** – Physically active volunteering like gardening is likely to need a different pool of people from its normal volunteers groups. CWC needs to look at whether it could create some sort of district solution linked into its members.
- **More health specific activities** – With a good range of activities now taking place CWC needs to look at how it can integrate specific health interventions into current delivery e.g. community walks, seated exercise. Investing into developing 'specialist' facilitators who might work across several TRAs – walk co-ordinators, accredited exercise leaders might be one solution and would act to reduce costs long-term. This may need to be done in conjunction with other partners.
- **Volunteer pool** – Activity groups are increasingly facing short term crisis as they lose key volunteers to ill health or other change. These risk undermining the viability of the group. The impact of such changes could be mitigated in the short-term if CWC could recruit a pool of volunteers willing to work outside their district and support groups to deliver activities at times of change.
- **Helping schemes** – The co-ordination of 'helping' schemes can be onerous on volunteer organisers. This may be a role that CWC want to take on if there is demand for such schemes.
- **New groups** – In year 2 CWC should focus on creating new community groups or identifying existing non TRA groups who can create access in communities that are currently under-represented on the project or where gaps in delivery currently exist.
- **Pairing of local groups** – Building links between local groups and creating shared activities is another way to secure volunteer help at times of crisis and increase access to activities.
- **External partners** – still struggle to 'get' CWC's role and CWC needs to be much more proactive in its relationship if partners are going to understand and value the key role it plays. They should deliver a specific stakeholders' survey at the end of year to review progress.

- **Planning and support** – Groups with access to support with planning, promotion and networking will be more likely to deliver successful events. Help linking to the holders of resources, volunteers and delivery partners is particularly valuable.

Learning points – Income, Resources and Cost Effectiveness

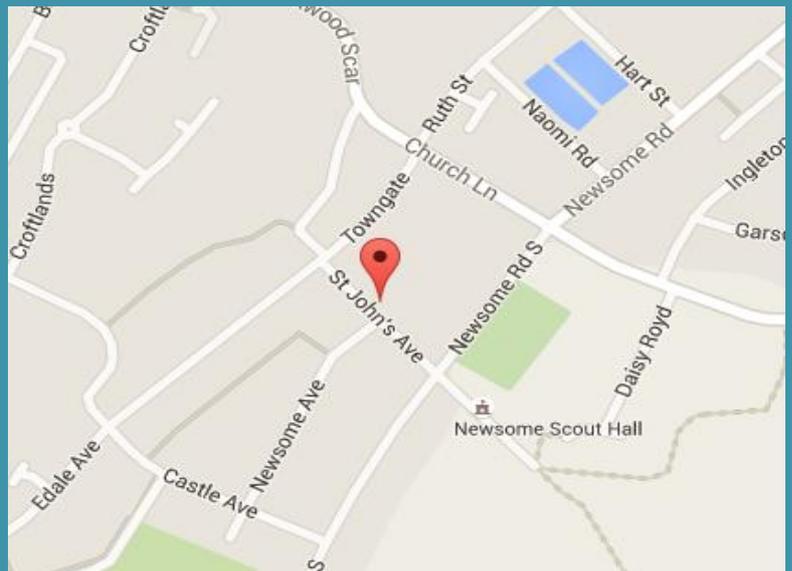
- **Value for money** – Grassroots community health and wellbeing work offers considerable value for money for significant wellbeing gains. It conservatively draws in additional income and gifts in kind worth at least twice its costs and at least 40% of activities have the potential to be self –sustaining in all their direct costs.
- **Ongoing support activity** – With activities so reliant on volunteer activity and key volunteers in particular, ensuring groups have access to professional advice, support and training seems essential. With the project securing the volunteer equivalent of 8 full time staff in year one with the potential to increase this in year 2, the cost of a full time support worker seems a good investment and CWC should continue to secure funding for this work.
- **Funding applications** – CWC needs to continue to support groups to access funding for their activities, making sure groups are aware of the range of skill development and funding opportunities that are available. Helping more community volunteers to develop funding skills is essential.
- **Access to affordable premises** – CWC should continue to support groups to negotiate with statutory partners, particularly KNH, for access to spaces that could be used for community activity at nominal cost. This work should take a more strategic approach and seek to gain access not just for tenants and residents associations but all community-led groups delivering health and wellbeing activity.
- **Monitoring** – Funders should minimise the detailed monitoring required from this type of work as much as possible. However a one-off focus on understanding the gains made from different types of work in year 2 might be valuable.
- **Monitoring** – Moving forward CWC should take steps to make sure project data is differentiated from their mainstream activities so evidence of activity and gains are not lost.



If your community group needs help with ...

- Start-up
 - Training
 - Running AGMs
 - Managing your finances
 - Fundraising
 - Promoting your activities
 - Rescue – help when things go wrong
 - Developing volunteers
 - Helping your community to help itself
 - Influencing local service providers
- ... get in touch

Where to find us



Become a volunteer

We offer a wide range of volunteering opportunities. If you want to...

- make friends
- develop new skills
- gain new experiences
- make a difference to local communities

... get in touch

Communities Who Can | St John's Avenue | Newsome | Huddersfield | HD4 6JP Phone 01484 225799 | Email general.admin@kftra.net

Judith Courts

INSPIRING SUCCESS

Report produced by independent community consultant Judith Courts on behalf of Communities Who Can in Sept 2016.

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