

Community Resilience - DRAFT

1. Introduction

Resilient communities have better outcomes and with diminishing resources for the public sector, the need to create the conditions for individuals, families and communities to be more resilient is paramount. This approach offers more than savings to the public purse: individuals and communities who are self-sufficient and able to use their own assets to meet their needs and those of others undoubtedly have better outcomes.

By communities we mean both communities of place and communities which share common characteristics or interests. The question is what is the role of the public sector in creating the conditions for resilient communities?

The purpose of this paper is to:

- outline the role of the public sector/public services in strengthening community resilience;
- define the Suffolk-wide approach to community resilience; and
- explain how community resilience can support Suffolk's public sector reform and transformation programmes.

2. Role of public services

Convener

Collectively the public sector, private, voluntary and community sector and communities, families and individuals themselves have a wealth of assets; people, buildings, time, skills, abilities, financial resources and goodwill. Too often however we think of these assets in silo, without recognition of what exists elsewhere.

In many cases communities support each other and come together, either through a shared interest or a desire to contribute to their area, without any engagement by the public sector. Suffolk benefits from vibrant and lively communities which contribute to making the county an attractive place to live, work and visit. It is worth noting that the human urge to make a difference drives this action rather than the need to save public money, but the public sector does have a local leadership role in engaging and bringing people together to create a shared understanding and ownership of local priorities and assets in communities. This requires an understanding of place and the ability for the public sector to develop positive trusted relationships with local stakeholders. Each part of the public sector has a relatively small amount of staff resource to build and sustain these relationships. By pooling the community engagement and development capacity and creating multi agency communities teams which act as employees of the Suffolk system, the ambition is to create additional staff capacity which can work alongside local elected members to be conveners within communities.

Intelligence

There is a wealth of information available about the population of Suffolk. Those involved in delivering frontline services will have an insight and understanding of the issues faced by individuals, families and communities that is often hidden from the wider community. The challenge is how we bring together this information with the local intelligence of the community to create a shared understanding of the issues

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they face and the totality of assets which can be used effectively and sustainably to ensure better outcomes. It also supports future planning to ensure that our communities are robust and responsive to changing and diverse range of needs and assets of those who live and work within. This is also an opportunity to share intelligence to help focus/prioritise resources across agencies on those who are most vulnerable and require support, e.g. victims of domestic abuse, those with mental health related issues.

Infrastructure support

The voluntary and community sector has always had an important role in supporting individuals within communities across Suffolk. The public sector must ensure that the voluntary and community sector organisations have effective infrastructure support (training, advice, guidance, support services) to develop new initiatives when a need has been identified and to ensure existing VCS organisations continue to thrive and be sustainable, recognising the reduced amount of funding available in the public sector and continuing to develop and sustain the additional financial and human resources that they are able to attract. Infrastructure support also has an important role in working with the voluntary and community sector to understand what is important to public sector partners, reduce duplication and promote collaboration, understanding that the community and charity sector works in different ways and has opportunities that are not open to public sector organisations.

Connector

We need people who have an understanding of communities, the public and the voluntary sector to make effective connections when issues and needs arise and create pathways and platforms which connect need to assets. For example, connecting those who are prepared to give their time to those who need volunteer support or enabling practitioners who have identified a need for early intervention to make contact with a voluntary sector organisation who is able to provide this help. The public and voluntary sector has a key role to play in identifying the community connectors.

There is also a need to help communities to navigate complexity of public sector and enable them to access the expertise and support they need to progress their ideas and ambitions. We can also harness the connectors' skills and experience to help shape service provision and commission effectively.

3. Our Approach

The Transformation Challenge Award (TCA) identified 'localism' now referred to as community resilience, as a key strand of activity where the Suffolk System should work together. In scoping the focus for the TCA sponsored activity it was clear that community resilience and an integrated approach to working with communities is something which underpins or contributes to a range of strategies and plans across Suffolk.

The *Connect* health and social care integration programme recognises the importance of both an integrated response when an individual has reached a point of needing the intervention of public services but also the need for an integrated approach to keeping need out of the system through the support for resilient communities.

The Local Policing Review of the Suffolk Constabulary has key overarching priorities for their Safer Neighbourhood Teams which refer to community engagement, safeguarding and support for the vulnerable, demand management and crime reduction. This also reflects changing trends in crime with a

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greater focus on dealing with and preventing hidden harm related issues – such as child sexual exploitation, domestic abuse and cyber-crime offences.

The Borough and District Councils across Suffolk have various strategies, plans and approaches in place such as the Families and Communities Strategy in West Suffolk and the Enabling Communities programme in East Suffolk.

The Families Strategy 2020 recognises the importance of resilient communities as an enabler as does the Strategic Transformation Plans required by the NHS.

Overarching this is the Health and Wellbeing refreshed Strategy that recognises the important of resilient communities as a cross cutting theme to deliver on the ambitions articulated in its Strategy. The Health and Wellbeing Board has endorsed a number of supporting plans such as the Poverty Strategy, Children’s Emotional Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Prevention Strategy (which also identifies community and personal resilience as a priority) and the Volunteering Strategy.

In developing the approach for the community resilience programme we will take account of all the commitments outlined in these key strategic documents and will ensure that our plan supports and contributes to the activity outlined in the various plans.

Recognising that there is not an infinite amount of resource to support the programme, we will use data, evidence and insight to prioritise activity with communities. Importantly, alongside the development of the plan we are discussing how to measure and evaluate our impact (see section 8 below).

4. What does a Resilient Community look like?

Everyone will have their own interpretation. In the development of the integrated approach to working with communities, partners have been developing a shared set of outcomes about what a resilient community would look like. The following vision and outcomes have been developed following a series of individual conversation with system leaders, partnership meetings and co-production workshops with stakeholders. We expect that the vision and outcome will evolve over time, due to experience and changing community expectations, but they provide a solid foundation on which we can build.

Vision

We want Suffolk to have; Compassionate, cohesive, caring and safe communities which enable people to live well and take responsibility to help improve their wellbeing. We will achieve this by:

- working alongside communities
- providing clear pathways for early support
- supporting people to make positive choices

Outcomes

- i) Reduce health inequalities through improved mental and physical health and well-being with individuals and families better able to take responsibility for their own health and well-being.
- ii) Individuals, families, and communities that can do more for themselves and can access early support to maintain or regain their independence.
- iii) Resilient, connected and inclusive communities that support those who are vulnerable, in need, or at risk of becoming so.
- iv) A strong voluntary and community sector, encouraging a wide range of formal and informal networks, providing support to enable strong communities, working effectively alongside the public sector and attracting additional resources both from within and from outside Suffolk, by enabling people to make a difference to those in need.

5. Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles will inform the Suffolk system in relation to community resilience

- Local Communities are our Key Partners
- Respect the contributions that are already being made across Suffolk and learn from them
- Build on the success of those communities who already demonstrate high levels of resilience and proactively engage with those who are disadvantaged.
- Respect the differences within and amongst communities whilst promoting a sense of cohesion, tolerance and respect.
- Take an evidenced led approach in deciding how resources are used, to inform our dialogue with communities and when determining our impact
- Rather than taking a deficit approach, take an asset based approach when working with individuals and at a community level and with co-design as an accepted way of working.

6. Governance

A Communities Steering Group has been formed which brings together representatives from public sector organisation responsible for the communities or partnership agenda and those organisations which have a role in supporting the VCS. The purpose of the group is to develop and implement the community resilience programme on behalf of the Suffolk System, taking an integrated and co-ordinated approach which makes best use of the resources of the Suffolk System and shares good practice.

The Communities Steering Group is chaired by the TCA Community Resilience strand lead and through the nominated Chief Executive lead (currently Ian Gallin) reports to Suffolk Chief Officer Leadership Team (SCOLT).

Given that the community resilience programme contributes to the business of a number of partnership forums, the Communities Steering Group will ensure that connections are made and maintained by ensuring it provides representation from at least one member of the group. Please refer to Appendix 3.

7. Enabling Activity

The focus of the Communities Steering Group will be developing its plans around four key enablers:

- Personal Responsibility
- Early Support
- Community Action
- Strong VCS

The plan will identify the enabling activity which is best delivered at a countywide level, however the expectation is that most of the activity in the plan will be delivered at a local level with local variation to reflect the unique circumstances of each community of place and interest. In developing the plans we will take the time to understand what is already being delivered and working well and consider how we can sustain and build upon this before developing new interventions.

A selection of case studies are included at Appendix 1 below to example the type of activity within each of the enablers.

Personal Responsibility

People will

- benefit from good quality provision in their local community; (schools, health services, education, housing, employment opportunities, open space/environment, leisure facilities) and the ability to influence the design of provision.
- have access to good quality and accessible information, advice and tools to self-help and make positive choices
- be supported by frontline practitioners who take an asset based approach, creating independence

Early Support

- Those working with communities will be supported to develop their understanding of those who are at risk through good use of data, evidence and insight
- We will develop pathways where they do not exist to connect those in need of early help and the help that is available
- Where the support is not available within the community, we will work with the voluntary and community sector using co-production to build the capacity to meet needs
- Use the intelligence from those enabling early help to support to inform effective commissioning of public services

Community Action

- We will use co-production with communities and partners to create opportunities for social connectedness, encouraging wherever possible social integration
- Through effective engagement, develop a shared understanding (public services and the wider voluntary and community sector) of the challenges and ambitions of the community and use the collective resources and opportunities to enable communities to thrive
- Take a community led approach to delivering campaigns which inspire positive community action, break down taboos and encourage mutual support.

Strong Voluntary Sector

We will;

- ensure effective infrastructure support which supports the development and sustainability of grass roots community based activity and creative local solutions
- seek opportunities to develop blended services with volunteers working alongside professionals where appropriate, recognising that the support of volunteers takes resource.
- increase the number of volunteers through the support of inspiring campaigns and making it easy to participate
- support voluntary organisations, community groups and charities to ensure the provision of volunteers that are well supported, trained and valued
- find ways of measuring the value and impact of voluntary and community based activity which creates confidence and encourages investment
- develop new and creative funding models which sustain activity
- deliver with partners through co-production a model that develops local leadership and empowerment within local communities
- ensure public services 'get out of the way' and not be a blocker to local creative solutions

8. How will we know if we are making a difference?

The data, intelligence and insight strand of the TCA is supporting the development of the community resilience programme by developing a data set which will inform the priorities within each locality and by developing an impact framework.

The evidence base to support priority setting will also help form the narrative with communities as part of our community engagement. We will look to overlay data from a variety of sources based on the strategic commitments of the various plans that we are contributing to and the need we are trying to mitigate.

The impact framework will seek to establish qualitative and quantitative measures which will give confidence to communities that they are developing their resilience and which will give confidence to public services that the interventions are making a positive contribution and will help the VCS to evidence their contribution and make the case for invest to save.

The evaluation framework will encompass three key elements of measurement; of DEMAND, of HIGH LEVEL OUTCOMES and of LOCALITY ACTIVITY, utilising both national (Eg WARM measures) methodology and bespoke methodology to complement local activity monitoring and evaluation. Please refer to diagram in Appendix 2.

Prepared by the Suffolk Communities Steering Group

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APPENDIX ONE
Case Studies

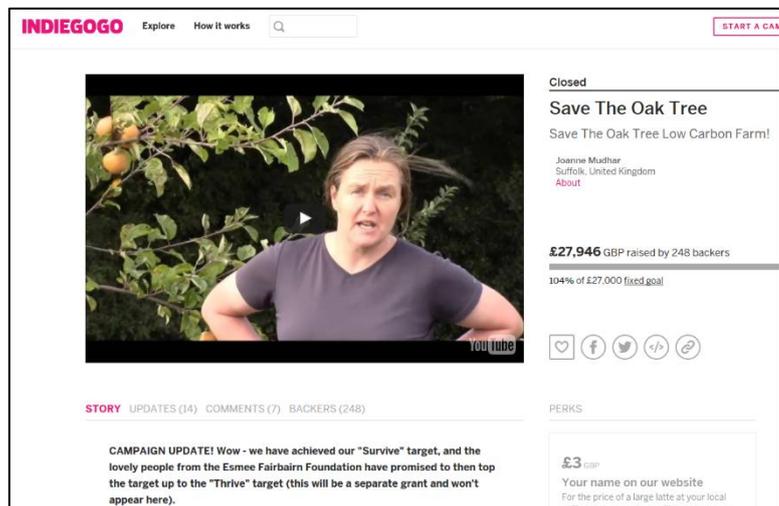
Community Resilience Case Studies

Personal Responsibility

Crowdfunding Case Study: The Oak Tree Low Carbon Farm

The Oak Tree Low Carbon Farm is an innovative Community Supported Agriculture scheme set on 12 acres of Suffolk countryside near Rushmere St Andrew. The farm produces eggs, meat, and up to 50 weekly boxes of fresh, seasonal, and chemical-free vegetables, grown by the members themselves. The low carbon status is achieved through minimal use of machinery, soil carbon storage, and manure from the farm’s livestock, which acts as natural fertiliser. Beyond the environmental benefits, many members experience enhanced wellbeing – resulting from the physical exercise, improved diet, connection with nature, and strong sense of community.

By 2015 the farm was experiencing financial challenges, mostly because smallholdings are not eligible to receive subsidies from the Common Agricultural Policy. As a result, their director, Joanne Mudhar, came to a decision to set up a crowdfunding campaign with an ambitious target of raising £27,000, through the online platform – Indiegogo. Generous donors soon came to the rescue, helped by a radio interview with BBC Suffolk, many YouTube videos, and a strong presence on social media (the campaign was even retweeted by Green Party leader, Natalie Bennett). As well as sharing with friends online, some members sent tailored letters of request to philanthropists and researchers with an interest in sustainable agriculture. In exchange, donors had the option of receiving a choice of gifts. At £1,250, the most exclusive reward was to spend a full day with the farm’s founder to learn how to set up a community farm themselves, with a year of follow-up support. Other gifts included framed photographs, and a bee-keeping workshop. Within just two months, the campaign successfully reached the finish line, exceeding its target by £900. In total there were 248 backers from both Suffolk and around the world. The money raised enabled the farm growers to earn the minimum wage, purchase essential farm equipment, and develop new enterprises in fruit and cut flowers.



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Social Prescribing: Lowestoft Solutions.

This is a social prescribing pilot set in Kirkley Mill Health facility, that houses two separate GP practices. The GP's were seeing increase demand and in particular an increase in non-medical issues. Lowestoft Rising was asked to look at a Social Prescribing offer. Working with partners across Lowestoft a pilot started on 1st August introducing a non-medical triage appointment system in the same building. Morning appointments are 45 min long and with a trained CAB member of staff who looks at the holistic situation facing the patient. They provide a range of support from debt management, isolation, housing issues, relationship issues including advice to those experiencing domestic abuse. CAB staff then refer the patient to a specialist afternoon clinic or to additional help through the Suffolk Information partnership to get the correct help and advice.

The specialist afternoon clinics are provided by partners and include Physical well-being and smoke cessation and weight loss (One Life Suffolk) Domestic Abuse advice (IDVA Service) Mental Well-being (NSFT Well-Being Service) Drug and Alcohol abuse (Turning Point) and more generic housing and advice support service (Access Community Trust). Crowd source funding has funded the 8 month pilot which will be evaluated to determine to what extent it has reduced GP demand, reduced prescription levels and improved the lives of those involved. The project is using the Warwick/Edinburgh assessment scale with patients at regular steps on their journey. Since initiation 2 further GP surgeries not based in the building have also started to refer patients to the scheme.

Local Area Coordinators

Local Area Co-ordinators have been introduced into two areas of Suffolk, Sudbury and more recently in Ipswich and will also be introduced into the Saxmundham and Leiston area shortly. Here are just two examples of the types of Early Support they are providing.

Example A

The Local Area Coordinator met a lady at a coffee morning who wished to sell a wheelchair that had belonged to her late mother. That afternoon Cally met with a lady who hadn't left her house for three months because she had no way of getting out. She was saving up for a wheelchair but they were too expensive and it would have taken her a long time to raise the necessary funds. Cally introduced the two ladies and the person selling the wheelchair was willing to sell it for much cheaper than the person buying had saved. Both ladies were really happy with the outcome and the money saved was used for a day out with her son in her new wheelchair. The local area was also able to support the lady to get to a coffee morning to start to reacquaint herself with people she had lost contact with. This has had a massive impact on the ladies wellbeing and reduces the risk of mental ill health and negative impacts of isolation on her physical health.

Example B

Jean's daughter contacted Imogen and asked her to meet with her and her mother.

Jean has Parkinson's disease, Osteoarthritis and Atrial fibrillation. Following a diagnosis of Osteoarthritis Jean was reluctant to go out and as a result started to feel low. Jean had been an active woman who enjoyed playing sport. Her daughter contacted the Local Area Coordinator to see if she could advise both Jean and her family.

Imogen gave immediate advice on social service assistance for adjustments to the home, Suffolk Family Carers, information on a meal delivery service and home help.

Imogen spent time getting to know Jean and established that she wanted to do more but needed help with the get up and go. Imogen attended a chair based exercise at the sports centre class with Jean which she

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now continues on a weekly basis. Jean used to play indoor bowls so Imogen escorted her to a casual indoor bowls session as spectators. Jean had the opportunity to speak to a member of the management committee and has asked the member to contact her if they can locate adapted equipment for people to play bowls with mobility issues.

Inspired by her visit Jean is going to make contact with other local carpet bowls club which may suit her better and has also booked herself onto a lunch and film showing at a local community resource. In return Jean has introduced Imogen to the local Parkinson's group she attends.

Of her experience Jean said "Imogen has motivated me to look to being involved in various outlets in my community, she has opened me up to a more positive attitude"

Jean knows the Local Area Coordinator is only a phone call away but otherwise is now independent.

Community Action

Halesworth Men's Shed

The Halesworth Men's Shed was set up by a group of mainly retired men in Halesworth. They decided they wanted to open a shed that would be accessible for men and women to come and work on projects, have some social time, have lots of banter and laughs and do some good for the community. For the first 6-months they met in a pub and generated plans and talked about ideas. In partnership with the Halesworth volunteer centre they could lease premises that could be used as the shed. The shed has come on in leaps and bounds and is now accessed by men and women of all ages. Because they have created a friendly and welcoming space they have members (shedders) from all walks of life and have worked hard to adapt the shed to make it accessible for all. They are now involved in lots of community projects such as fixing benches and fixing equipment for members of the public. This is a fantastic resource which has a real impact on the lives of its members as well as creates genuine good in the community.

<http://www.halesworthshed.org.uk/>

Strong VCS

Community Family Support Service

Homestart Suffolk are commissioned to provide the community family support (CFS) service across Suffolk. This service offers an early help befriending and practical assistance support to families with children under 12. The service is key to reduce rural and social isolation; improve family relationships; support learning and development and support school attendance. The service is provided by matching a family with a CFS outreach volunteer, who will visit the family on a weekly basis.

The service has recently been evaluated and there is good evidence that the outcomes are being met. Stakeholders felt that the service had a considerable impact on families and the wider Suffolk system and without it 98% felt that the impact would be negative and increase demand for statutory intervention. Families appreciated seeing the same volunteer and that the service is about their own needs and choices. Volunteers are positive about their role, with a 92% retention rate. The service provides a valuable "blended service" working closely alongside professionals and working as part of family plans.

What families say:

"She's wonderful (volunteer)... I almost couldn't tell you without crying... she came into our lives at the worst time"

"It's the only time in the week that I get to breathe, have a cup of tea and spend time with another adult"

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“My daughter loves her so much and the kids need that in their routine, having another person visiting. They know that Wednesday is (name of volunteer) day”

“I suffered a workplace accident... we started falling behind on rent and I got mental health problems.... we were referred to Homestart. We are now free of all external services and Homestart played a massive part in that. It was exactly what I need for my mental health, breathing space”

What volunteers say:

“It has a great impact, not always a direct impact... helping mum has a knock on effect on helping the child”

“Homestart can help families in a way that may not seem extravagant but drastically changes the smooth running of day to day lives”

“the number of younger volunteers joining is growing, which is very positive”.

What professionals say:

“The CFS programme reduces some of our workload and is invaluable to families”

“The volunteers were able to support the family in the support plan, liaising with professionals involved and provide excellent support in an appropriate manner”

“I feel they really help families find sustainable solutions to the problems they are facing and they have the time to listen”

“They are excellent at working in multi-agency partnership. Many agencies talk about partnership working, but they do it”

What needs to be measured & how?

