



Community First Annual Review 2022-2023

Vibrant Communities Brighter Futures

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22/23 Highlights

COMMUNITY
FIRST

Our team:

34

Full/part-time staff

20

Sessional staff

9

Trustees

Youth Action Wiltshire supported:



★ **569** young carers

★ **501** young people facing challenges in their lives

★ **43** NEET young people

Community development



153 drivers

trained through MiDAS training scheme



101,130 hours

volunteered by local Link Schemes



£406,993 grants

paid through the Landfill Communities Fund

In our network:

226

Local Councils

185

Village halls

63

Transport groups

1.6k

Volunteers

Employability programmes*



198,045 hours

of key worker support provided



1,942 participants

supported through Building Bridges



£12 million

economic benefit to the region

Welcome

Welcome to the Community First Annual Review 2022-2023. This review contains a summary of how our programmes and services have performed over the last 12 months, as well as key highlights from our work with people and communities.

Community First is a leading local charity (288117) in Wiltshire and Swindon, with over 50 full-time, part-time and sessional staff working across our many programmes and services. Our work is broad and impactful. This includes award-winning services for children and young people (including young carers), outdoor education, employability programmes, community development, grants, community organising and support for village halls, community buildings, local councils, and community transport groups. We also deliver a variety of trading services which offer added value. This includes specialist insurance, Minibus Driver Awareness (MiDAS) training and creative design and development. All surplus from our trading services is reinvested back into local communities through our charitable activity.

Each year Community First works with thousands of service users, volunteers, community leaders and voluntary organisations at a local, regional and national level. We are proud to be a member of the Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) network, a national network of 38 organisations that are committed to supporting and championing rural communities in England. Community First also plays an active role in



strategic local partnerships. Notably, our role within the Wiltshire Voluntary Sector Leadership Alliance, which works with the local Integrated Care System to help shape, improve and deliver health services in the region.

Addressing health inequalities and improving health and wellbeing for the approximately 723,000 people who live in Wiltshire and Swindon, is strategically important for our charity. The process of recovering from Covid-19 and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis has had a significant impact on the people and communities we support. This includes young carers, young people facing challenges in their lives, residents who are isolated and those who are unemployed or economically inactive. Wiltshire also has an increasingly ageing population, with the percentage of older adults expected to rise significantly by 2040. Helping people to maintain good health and wellbeing in later life is a major factor in improving health outcomes. As such, we expect to see a rise in demand for community transport services, Link Schemes and community-based initiatives that keep people active, independent and connected to others.

The initial phase of the Building Bridges Programme, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund and the European Social Fund has now come to an end. We are pleased to have secured continuation funding through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund via Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council. The new programme for people aged 16-65 years in Wiltshire will continue to be delivered as Building Bridges and a targeted programme for young people aged 15-25 years in Swindon will be delivered as Inspire Swindon. Both programmes will run to the end of March 2025 offering

holistic support to help people overcome their barriers to employment and education.

We are excited to be moving forward with ambitious plans for Oxenwood Outdoor Education Centre, which was purchased by Community First in 2019. The centre is a popular venue for adventure activities, history days and school or group residentials. It is also a key delivery location for Youth Action Wiltshire activities. In 2023 we appointed a project manager to lead on the development of plans for the centre and help us deliver our vision for the future of Oxenwood. We look forward to seeing how these plans develop over the next 12 months.

It has been another exceptionally busy year for the team at Community First. As ever, none of this work could be delivered without the support of our dedicated team of staff, local volunteers and our Board of Trustees. We are committed to meeting the increased demand for support and services locally, despite a rise in costs and a challenging fundraising environment. We are also grateful to all of the supporters, partners, donors and funders who make it possible for us to deliver our vitally important work.

Lynn Gibson
Chief Executive

James Moody
Chair of Trustees

Our Patron

2023 was a very special year for our Patron the former Duchess of Cornwall who was crowned Queen alongside the coronation of His Majesty The King on 6th May 2023 at Westminster Abbey. Community First has enjoyed the Patronage of The Former Duchess of Cornwall for a number of years and we were delighted to receive invitations to celebrate the festivities.

Members of our Employability Programmes Team, Catherine and Abi were joined by four service users and volunteers nominated by Community First. The attendees were seated in the 'Coronation Grandstand' with 3,800 members of the public. They enjoyed a view of the carriage procession as it passed along The Mall. Team members Harry, Val and Dawn represented Community First at a Buckingham Palace Garden Party. The Garden Party was hosted by Their Royal Highnesses The Prince and Princess of Wales, The Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester and The Princess Royal.

On behalf of the Community First team and our guests who were lucky enough to attend the Coronation festivities, we would like to offer our sincere thanks and appreciation for being able to be part of this historic day. We continue to be grateful to our Patron The Former Duchess of Cornwall (now Her Majesty The Queen) for her ongoing support of Community First and our work across the county.

Photograph © Chris Jackson



Our Priorities

Community First is a forward-thinking charity that puts people and communities at the heart of our strategy and programme delivery. Over the next 12 months, we aim to recruit two new trustees and secure at least £443k in fundraised income to help us deliver on our growth objectives and priorities.

Tackling disadvantage

The provision of support and opportunities for vulnerable young people is central to our mission of tackling disadvantage. Over the next 12 months, Youth Action Wiltshire will continue to deliver and expand on our work with young carers, young people facing challenges in their lives (including young victims of crime) and young people who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET). We will work with at least 120 young carers, 350 young people facing challenges in their lives and 50 NEET young people through Project Inspire. At least 24 Young Leaders will also be supported to achieve accreditation.

Our employability programmes Building Bridges and the newly developed Inspire Swindon youth programme, will also play a significant role in helping to overcome disadvantages faced by those who have complex barriers to employment and education. This includes individuals who are unemployed or economically inactive, people who lack basic skills e.g. Maths/English and young people who are NEET, engaged with the criminal justice system, care-experienced or are on an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). As managing partner for the Building Bridges and Inspire Swindon programmes, we will oversee delivery in Wiltshire and Swindon until the end of March 2025.

The wider partnership aims to work with at least 335 participants each year in Wiltshire and Swindon, offering holistic support to achieve and sustain education and employment outcomes.

Connecting communities

Village halls, local councils and community transport networks are of central importance to our mission of connecting communities. Over the next 12 months, we will secure growth in Wiltshire Village Halls Association and Wiltshire Association of Local Councils. Halls, buildings and councils are at the heart of communities and democracy locally and we will continue to offer specialist advice, support, guidance and networking opportunities to enhance and strengthen these networks. In addition, we will continue to support our vibrant local network of 42 Link Schemes and 21 Community Minibus Groups. We are proud that Wiltshire has one of the most successful community transport schemes in the country, with over 1,600 volunteers helping to keep people connected to local services. In order to meet the demand for transport (particularly in rural areas), we aim to increase the number of local transport volunteers to 1,700 by 2024. Community First has seen positive growth in demand for MiDAS training from schools, groups and organisations. We aim to expand on this success into 2024, as well as contributing to a national review of the MiDAS training scheme.

Community First is committed to engaging at a grassroots level, by listening to and learning from a diverse range of people in the community. Our Community Development team will work with organisations, groups and individuals to embed Community Organising within the Neighbourhood Collective Pathfinders project, deliver rural youth engagement services, offer support for youth clubs and develop community-led housing in partnership with Wiltshire Community Land Trust. We will also seek continuation funding for the Get Out Get Active project to further expand on the work already delivered with Wiltshire and Swindon Sport (WASP), Age UK Wiltshire, Wiltshire Council and Wessex Community Action.

Encouraging enterprise

Community First manages and administrates the Landfill Communities Fund grant scheme in Wiltshire. This important scheme helps to encourage communities to create and retain local facilities. This includes community shops, sports facilities and play equipment. Since 2002, Community First has worked with landfill operators to distribute over £5.5m in funding. Over the next 12 months, we aim to distribute approximately £350,000 in funding from local operators The Hills Group and Crapper and Sons. In addition, we will offer support and guidance to groups who apply for funding and continue to build and develop relationships with key partners.

Inspiring ideas, innovating and delivering excellence

To support fundraising objectives for Community First, we will deliver growth in our trading services which include MiDAS training, Community Insurance and Bold creative design and development. All surplus generated from trading services will be reinvested in programme delivery.

The redevelopment of Oxenwood Outdoor Education Centre is an important priority for Community First, alongside achieving growth in bookings for schools and groups. Plans for the Centre include the provision of new and improved facilities, achieving the LOTC Quality Mark and the potential to develop Oxenwood as an instructor training centre. Our plans for Oxenwood will ensure the Centre is fit for the future, preserve the heritage and historical significance of the building and generate new income to support the running of Oxenwood, as well as new opportunities for learning and adventure.

Community First will support and advocate for the wider VCSE sector, including through the Integrated Care System (ICS), Integrated Care Alliance (ICA), Wiltshire Voluntary Sector Leadership Alliance and Youth Partnership. We will also continue to work alongside partner organisations and sector colleagues to champion the role the VCSE can play in developing and delivering services for communities.



Our Vision

Vibrant communities,
brighter futures

Our Mission

Connecting communities
Tackling disadvantage
Encouraging enterprise
Inspiring ideas, innovating and
delivering excellence

Our Values

Effective	Enthusiastic
Trustworthy	Supportive
Encouraging	Pioneering



Youth Action Wiltshire

Youth Action Wiltshire (YAW) is the award-winning youth work arm of Community First. Our team works with hundreds of young people each year through targeted support programmes for young carers, young people facing challenges in their lives, young victims of crime and young people who are NEET or at risk. Our services include:

Wiltshire Young Carers Service

Offering opportunities to achieve and thrive for young carers aged 5-18 years in Wiltshire. This includes support planning and reviews, varied respite activities, individual and group/peer support, mentoring, coaching, counselling and guidance.

Splash

Action planning and reviews, an exciting programme of small group activities, mentoring, coaching, counselling and guidance for young people facing challenges in their lives. Splash also offers a specialist support service for young victims of crime to help them cope with and recover from their experience.

Project Inspire

A targeted programme to help young people who are NEET (or at risk) develop new skills, gain qualifications and access one-to-one and group support.

YAW also offers opportunities for young people to achieve accreditation, develop leadership skills and take part in structured volunteering.

Adventure and group activities are an important part of our unique offer and play a vital role in helping young people relax, have fun and make friends. This helps young people develop good relationships with Youth Support Workers and peers in a structured, safe environment.

In 2022-2023 we delivered a variety of respite/group activities many of which took place at our dedicated outdoor education centre in Oxenwood. Activities included: Varied water sports, archery, climbing, sailing, horse riding, music making, arts and crafts, sports and cooking. Young people also took part in targeted workshops, problem solving and team building session bushcraft and conservation through a variety of day, multi-day and residential provision.

Support for Youth Clubs (2022-2023)

56 voluntary Youth Leaders and 20 new Young Leaders completed a range of accredited training courses. A total of 9 monthly term-time young carers and 3 Splash clubs were delivered. We continued to offer outreach Youth Leader staffing for Box and Old Sarum Youth Clubs. Governance, volunteer recruitment and fundraising support was provided for 8 groups. Through the Rural Youth Project, we engaged and consulted with 645 young people to seek their views on local youth work needs and the team provided positive activities for 385 of these young people. In 2023 our Community Development team will be continuing and expanding on this work.

Wiltshire Young Carers Service



569

Young carers supported

165

New referrals to our service

2,517

Face-to-face respite places attended

447

Young carers accessed face to face young carers specific respite groups

A young carer is a person under the age of 18 who looks after a family member or loved one with an illness, disability, mental health condition or addiction. They may also help to care for siblings or elderly relatives.

It is vitally important that young carers get the help and support they need to achieve and thrive. Youth Action Wiltshire has been working with young carers since 1998 and Wiltshire Young Carers Service was one of the first young carers support services in the country. Our team works with hundreds of young carers aged 5-18 years every year through a package of support designed with young carers and their families this includes

- Wide ranging respite activities
- One-to-one and group support
- Individual support plans (co-produced with each young carer)
- Counselling/talking therapy
- Information, advice and guidance
- Mentoring and coaching
- Skills development and awards

2023 is a special year for Wiltshire Young Carers Service as it marks the 25th anniversary of our work with young carers. We are proud to support and champion young carers in

Wiltshire, helping them to feel safe in their caring role and offering opportunities for young carers to achieve and thrive.

Over the last 12 months, our team has worked with 569 young carers and accepted 165 new referrals into the service. Of the young carers who access our support in 2022/2023, 447 young carers engaged in face-face young carers specific respite activities, with a total of 2,517 face-to-face respite places attended. This is an average of 5.6 respite places attended by each young carer. Our team delivered structured one-to-one mentoring and coaching programmes for 146 young carers. 75 young carers requested and received intensive support with education and 187 young carers received information, advice and guidance to help them in their caring role. A total of 167 newly referred young carers were enabled to co-produce a support plan. The team also maintained regular, weekly, term-time contact through remote group webinars, which 60 young carers accessed.

Utilising our other targeted support services; 14 young carers identified as in significant danger of becoming or who were currently Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET), accessed an average of 40 hours of wide ranging specialised 1:1 and group work provision through Project Inspire, to help them overcome the challenges they were facing and maintain or move into a place in Education, Employment or Training (EET). 80 young carers attended a total of 420 contact sessions with Splash.





Splash offers

positive activities for young people facing challenges in their lives.

By providing one-to-one and group support sessions, Splash helps young people increase their confidence, self-esteem and skills.

Young people may be referred to Splash for a variety of reasons including behavioural challenges, issues with school attendance or being a young person in care. Since 2019, Splash has also worked with the Police and Crime Commissioner for Wiltshire and Swindon to deliver a programme of support for young victims of crime. Referrals can be made by the Police through the Horizon system. The service aims to help young victims of crime to access support to help them in the process of recovering from their experience of crime. This could include counselling (offered by a partner organisation), one-to-one coaching or mentoring and taking part in activities with other young people.

501

Young people
accessed support

302

New referrals into the
service

2,218

Sessions attended by
young people

218

Hours of counselling
arranged

In 2022-2023 our Splash service worked with a total of 501 young people facing challenges in their lives, this included 364 young victims of crime. There were 302 new referrals to Splash during this period. 2,218 contacts (defined as a place on a group or one-to-one session) were completed with young people, including 218 hours of counselling for 27 young people supported by Splash.

Splash is a safe and welcoming environment. Spending time with peers who have had similar life experiences is very beneficial for young people supported by the service. Young people also form positive relationships with Splash Youth Support Workers. Parent and carer feedback surveys for 2022-2023 recorded the following increases or improvements for participants who took part in our Splash programme:

91%

Improved self esteem
and confidence

89%

Improved mental
health and wellbeing

88%

Improved social and
communication skills

78%

Improved School
attendance

Project Inspire

43

Young people
accessed support

74%

Achieved a place in
EET* on exit

94%

Gained new skills with
Project Inspire

87%

Felt more confident in
applying for a job

Project Inspire is a learning and support programme for young people aged 16-19 years who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) or at risk of becoming NEET. Our Project Inspire team works with young people to offer support, guidance, skills development and training to help them achieve sustainable education, employment or training outcomes.

Project Inspire offers intensive support to approximately 40-50 young people each year. This includes developing an individual action plan, offering information, advice and guidance, brokering work experience placements and providing advocacy for access to specialist services. Project Inspire also offers opportunities to take part in a wide range of personal/social development activities, accredited training courses, volunteering and staff-led webinars. Project Inspire works closely with the Employability programmes team at Community First to offer support for young people referred through the Building Bridges Programme in Wiltshire.

Over the last 12 months, Project Inspire supported a total of 43 young people, 18 of

whom were NEET and 25 who were at significant risk of becoming NEET.

74% of young people who exited Project Inspire in 2022-2023 achieved a place in Employment, Education or Training (EET), with the remaining 16% moving into supported job searching activities. Alongside wide ranging 1:1 provision, 46 face to face day groups and 3 residential projects were delivered.

72% of young people who took part in Project Inspire reported an improvement in self-assessed mental health and wellbeing. 93% of young people gained new skills or further developed existing skills and 87% said that involvement with Project Inspire and Building Bridges helped them build the confidence and skills they need to apply for a job.





Employability Programmes

The Building Bridges Programme is a multi-agency partnership of organisations across Swindon and Wiltshire that brings together charities, private organisations and statutory bodies to work collaboratively to support people with multiple, complex barriers and challenges in their lives to achieve and sustain ongoing employment and education outcomes.

The programme is led by Community First as managing partner, with central support provided by our Employability Programmes team.

The award-winning first phase of the programme was funded from 2016-2023 by The National Lottery Community Fund and the European Social Fund as part of the national Building Better Opportunities Programme. This first phase closed to new participants in February and officially came to an end in late Spring 2023.

The first phase of the programme was highly successful both in terms of participant outcomes and cost-effectiveness. It generated over £12m of economic benefit to the region since its launch in late 2016. The programme was also highly effective in reaching and supporting people where more mainstream employability approaches have not proved successful.

Participants were supported by a key worker who worked with them throughout their whole time on the programme. Key workers helped participants to maintain progress and advocated for them when engaging with external providers and other areas of support. A

personalised needs analysis and action plan was created for each participant. Support plans were not time-constrained and were adapted over time. The key worker was able to refer participants to courses and support available from other programme partners.

Building Bridges and Inspire Swindon (2023-2025)

In Wiltshire, funding has been secured from the UK Shared Prosperity fund via Wiltshire Council for Building Bridges to continue to support people aged 16-65 years who have significant barriers and challenges to move towards education and employment.

In Swindon, our employability work will continue under two programmes:

- Inspire Swindon is being funded by the UK Shared Prosperity fund via Swindon Borough Council to provide employability support to young people aged 15-18 who are NEET, at risk of becoming so or are engaged with youth justice services and those aged 19-25 who are care experienced or have an Education, Health and Care Plan
- Building Bridges is being funded by The National Lottery Community Fund to support adults aged 18+ who have significant barriers and challenges to move towards education and employment

These new programmes all run through to 2025 and our support workers are already working with participants referred into them.

Building Bridges (2016-2023) Impact



We have produced an impact report for the Building Bridges Programme (2016-2023). Highlights from programme delivery between 2016-2023 are included below. Scan the QR code to view and download the impact report.



Partnership and Staff

- 40+ programme partners
- 248 staff involved in delivery
- 5 participants later become staff
- 198,045 hours of key worker support
- 1 national award, 1 regional award

Participant demographics

- 84% were classed as being disadvantaged
- 19% were from areas of multiple deprivation
- 67% were economically inactive
- 59% had disabilities or long-term health issues
- 46% lacked basic English/Maths skills

Outcomes through the programme

- 67% gained new skills and qualifications
- 28% took part in structured volunteering
- 23% accessed debt or financial advice
- 15% took part in work experience
- 13% accessed travel training

Positive outcomes (harder to reach groups) %

- Homeless - 42% success
- Disabilities or long-term health issues - 36% success
- Disadvantaged - 48% success
- Ex-offenders - 38% success



"I'm so grateful for the support I've received from Building Bridges. The support I have had from key workers was amazing. When I look back, I can see how far I've come."

*Including 291 who were NEET (or at risk) who have re-engaged with education.
**Cost-benefit calculated by Pro-Bono Economics from BEIS



Now taking
bookings

CREATING MEMORIES FOR A LIFETIME AT OXENWOOD AND LINKENHOLT



Oxenwood Outdoor Education Centre offers residential experiences and exciting adventure sport, outdoor education and bespoke historical enrichments days.

Linkenholt Countryside Adventure Centre offers camping residentials and exciting day activities. Perfect for D of E, Scouts, Guides, Youth and School Groups.



Your school or youth groups residential or day programme, will be designed to meet your young people's needs and learning objectives.



01264 731274



enquiries@oxenwoodcentre.com



www.communityfirst.org.uk/oxenwood



www.communityfirst.org.uk/linkenholt



Outdoor Education

514

Disadvantaged young people benefited from outdoor education

174

Free to access, varied group work sessions provided

60

Day projects provided for schools and youth clubs

35

Residential projects provided for schools and youth groups

Community First owns and operates Oxenwood Outdoor Education Centre, offering outdoor education, adventure sport, residential activity and historical learning days for schools, clubs and groups. Oxenwood is also a key delivery location for many of the activities delivered through our Youth Action Wiltshire programmes.

During 2022-2023, 174 free to access, varied group work outdoor education sessions were provided, including 8 residential projects benefiting a total of 514 vulnerable and disadvantaged young people.

Oxenwood Outdoor Education Centre also provided 60 day and 35 residential projects of varying lengths for schools and youth groups.

In addition to Oxenwood, Community First also manages Linkenholt Countryside Adventure Centre through an ongoing partnership with The Blagrove Trust. In 2022-2023, 12 day activities and 28 residential projects of between 1-3 nights were provided at Linkenholt Countryside Adventure Centre.

External users of this site included; Various Duke of Edinburgh groups, Scouts, targeted school groups, Cubs, Guides and foster families.





MiDAS: Minibus Driver Awareness Training

Is your group or organisation looking to train new minibus drivers?

MiDAS is a training scheme designed to enhance driving and safety standards for drivers of minibuses. MiDAS is a nationally recognised standard for the assessment and training of minibus drivers.

Community First is now taking bookings for MiDAS training with our MiDAS Training Coordinator Martin Carter. Martin is a retired Police Advanced Driver with over 35 years' experience of driving minibuses.

MiDAS Training includes a theory and practical test, along with detailed information on how to operate and manage a minibus safely. Drivers who pass both the MiDAS practical and theory tests will receive a certificate which is valid for four years.

Bookings:

mcarter@communityfirst.org.uk

"Excellent course. Great trainer!"

MiDAS Training Feedback

MiDAS Pricing

Standard MiDAS induction £125.00
Accessible MiDAS induction £165.00
Standard MiDAS refresher £105.00
Accessible MiDAS refresher £125.00

Weekdays Only
Minimum 3 drivers per booking





Community Development

645

Young people engaged through rural youth project

385

Young people took part in positive activities

£20k

Secured for youth outreach and engagement work



Community Development is the process of working alongside people and communities to help them access opportunities, develop new initiatives and come together to identify and find solutions to important local issues. At its heart, Community Development is the work of building, sustaining and developing relationships and local networks.

Our Community Development team delivers outreach and engagement activity on behalf of organisations, groups and other services. The team is trained in Community Organising techniques and works with young people and adults across the county through door knocking and direct engagement. This includes delivering targeted programmes of activities, skills and training. The team also supports other Community First programmes by carrying out listenings with participants or service users.

Over the last 12 months, our Community Development team has delivered two youth engagement projects, one focusing on youth engagement in rural areas and a second project at The Friary Estate in Salisbury. Through

the Rural Youth Project, the team engaged with 645 young people across eight Wiltshire areas and four Area Boards. The aim of the consultation was to understand what was felt to be needed in terms of youth provision and young peoples' views on local youth work delivery. As part of the Rural Youth Project, the team also provided positive activity sessions for 385 young people. This included zorbing, sports and crafts.

Alongside the Rural Youth Project, the team continued to engage with young people and families at The Friary in Salisbury, with a new youth club called The Hangout, now up and running for the young people on the estate. The project has now concluded, with ongoing support and staffing for The Hangout provided by Salisbury City Council. The team will continue offering support to local youth clubs with a consultation exercise taking place in Autumn 2023, in order to establish how Community First can support local youth clubs and offer a tailored service which meets their needs. This will also feed into local Youth Partnership planning and delivery.



Wiltshire Village Halls Association (WVHA)

Village halls and community buildings are at the heart of rural communities. They offer an important local meeting place and a space where people can come together to take part in physical activity, social clubs and community events. Community First offers practical support, guidance and networking opportunities for halls and buildings through membership of Wiltshire Village Halls Association (WVHA). All village halls, community centres and other community buildings are eligible to join our network for a yearly membership fee which contributes to the cost of running the service.

Over the last 12 months, there were 185 halls or buildings in WVHA membership, an increase of three halls since the end of March 2022. This is a positive sign that our network is growing. Similarly, many village halls have been active within the network in 2022-2023, with 33 halls or buildings taking part in WVHA networking.

In January 2023, Community First once again took part in the annual #VillageHallsWeek celebrations. Six WVHA member halls were interviewed by BBC Radio Wiltshire and also featured on BBC Sounds. Through the Village Halls Week campaign, we reached over 6,000 people to raise awareness of how village halls and community buildings offer warm, welcoming and inclusive spaces.

185

Members of Wiltshire
Village Halls
Association (WVHA)

£55.4k

Awarded to halls
through the Platinum
Jubilee Fund

Our Village Halls and Community Buildings Advisor has supported six halls to apply for funding through the Platinum Jubilee Village Halls Fund which is administrated by Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE). This is a new £3m fund from the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) which marks the Platinum Jubilee of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The aim of the fund is to support the modernisation and improvement of village halls in England. Four member halls have been successful with a total of £55,460 awarded to date. One hall is currently awaiting a funding decision.

We have continued to engage with local halls and buildings, including visits to several halls in 2022-2023 to see the fantastic range of facilities on offer. We were also delighted to see new village hall investment and funding in Wiltshire, with the re-opening of two halls in February 2023. This included a new annexe at Sherston Village Hall and the completely refurbished Berryfield Village Hall near Melksham. This was a long-awaited project which will provide a valuable space for the community.



Get Out Get Active

42

Inactive people
supported to become
more active

128

Community listening
engagements carried
out

27

Attendees at
Community Organising
training sessions

25

New volunteers identified
and trained

Community First has worked in partnership with WASP, Wiltshire Council, Age UK Wiltshire and Wiltshire Centre for Independent Living, for three years to deliver the Get Out Get Active (GOGA) programme. GOGA is about more than being active, it strengthens community spirit, increases confidence and improves mental health.

GOGA Phase 2 is nearly at completion and there are so many stories to tell of people overcoming barriers to bring activities in various ways into their lives. A new phase of the GOGA programme is set to continue after September 2023.

Over the last 12 months community engagement and Community Organising training has taken place in Melksham, Tidworth and Salisbury, including the historic house of Arundells. It was a great opportunity for our team to share the learnings from the youth project in The

Friary Community Centre and their Hangout sessions and gardening project.

At the training session, representatives from Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, Alabare's Boots on the Ground project and the trustees of Arundells shared their experience of being involved in local community groups and how to support them using Community Organising techniques. Community First was also pleased to support at a festival called Wild and Free at Arundells. We helped by collecting opinions to ensure Arundells can engage with more families living in the area.

We look forward to the continuation of the programme in Wiltshire building upon the strong working relationships with GOGA partners and the communities we engage with.

Get Out
Get Active

wiltshire and swindon sport
wasp



Community Insurance

Community First offers specialist insurance for local councils, village halls, community buildings and playing fields



Trusted Provider

Our scheme is underwritten by Zurich, a leading provider.



Flexible Cover

Pay only for the cover you want.



Best Value

Competitive prices and no hidden costs.



Charitable Causes

Surplus is reinvested into local communities.



Expert Team

Our insurance team are friendly, dedicated experts.



Comprehensive Protection

Offering comprehensive protection.

“

“Their insurance premiums have always been the cheapest. We have continued to receive excellent customer service from them over the years. We can highly recommend Community First for Parish Councils.”

”



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Call: 01380 732809

Email: communityinsurance@communityfirst.org.uk

www.communityfirst.org.uk/insurance



Wiltshire Association of Local Councils (WALC)

226

Members of Wiltshire
Association of Local
Councils (WALC)

33

Training courses
offered for Clerks and
Councillors



There were 226 local councils in membership of WALC over the last 12 months, this represents 85% of Local Councils and Parish Meetings in Wiltshire and Swindon. WALC membership allows councils to access up to date advice and guidance, both nationally and locally; training sessions for Councillors and Officers at preferential rates through membership of the organisation. WALC held 33 training sessions for Councillors and Clerks and shared 10 newsletter updates with news for members.

June 2023 saw the re-introduction of the yearly County Conference, with free attendance for members. The theme this year was planning, including the national planning policy framework, CIL & s106 monies, commenting as a consultee on planning matters and preparing a neighbourhood plan.

The speakers were Dr James Derounian, Mrs Angie Hurran and Dr Carlton Brand, all of whom have previously addressed national audiences. MP Danny Kruger also attended, giving his view on the current planning policies. Leading us through the day was compère Linda Roberts, Clerk to Melksham Town Council, SLCC Wiltshire chair, and a Community Governance module tutor. The conference also featured a panel session with Wiltshire Community Land Trust and Community First on the subject of neighbourhood planning.

Post conference feedback was very positive with all attendees rating the day as at least 'Good' and commenting they were eager for this event to continue in 2024.



Link Schemes and Community Transport

42

Link Schemes in our network

21

Community Minibus Groups in our network

1,620

Link Scheme volunteers in Wiltshire and Swindon

£1.26m

Economic value of Link Schemes

Community transport schemes are a vital service in a rural county like Wiltshire. According to Census data from 2021, over 28,000 Wiltshire households do not have access to a vehicle for personal use. There are 42 Link (volunteer car) Schemes and 21 Community Minibus Groups that offer door-to-door or group transport for people who do not have a car, are unable to drive or cannot access public transport. Link Schemes and Community Minibus Groups help to keep people connected to shops, facilities and medical care. Some Link Schemes also offer help with shopping, prescription collection, befriending and small tasks in the home or garden.

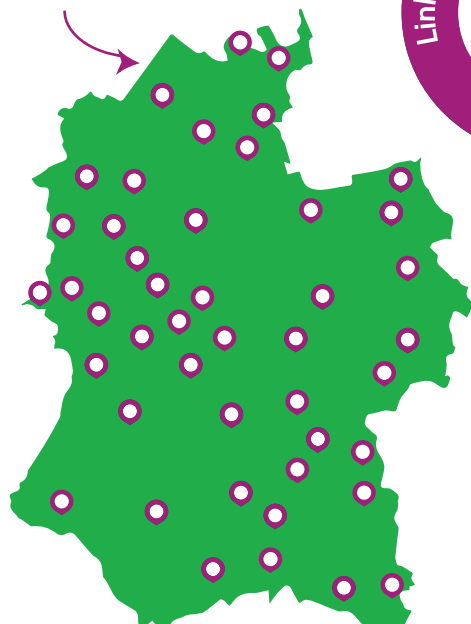
Community First offers practical support, guidance and advocacy for local transport groups. This includes grants, information and help with volunteer recruitment. In October 2022, Community First carried out a digital volunteer recruitment campaign in order to raise awareness of the need for more volunteers to come

forward to support Link Schemes and community minibus groups. Alongside the digital campaign, our team also carried out face-to-face and direct outreach and engagement in local communities. The campaign reached over 3,000 people with information about volunteering.

According to data from our most recent audit in 2022, 53 new volunteers have come forward to support their local Link Scheme. This is an average of 1.2 new volunteers per Link Scheme in the last 12 months. Link volunteer numbers have grown steadily since 2021 and are beginning to return to the levels seen before the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2022, Link volunteers carried out 34,125 tasks and drove over 689,000 miles. This included trips to local hospitals, GP surgeries and dentist appointments. In total, Link volunteers gave over 100,000 hours of their time in support of their local communities, an impressive 25% increase compared to the previous audit.

Link Scheme Audit 2022

Link Scheme map of Wiltshire



Link Good Neighbour Schemes
42

The total number of local Link Schemes is unchanged from 2021

1,620

Number of volunteers involved in Link Schemes in Wiltshire and Swindon



38

Average volunteers per Link Scheme

% change in Link Volunteers from 2021

+3%

689,661

Miles travelled by volunteers in 2022

34,125

Everyday tasks completed in 2022

26,249

Health related journeys in 2022

In 2022 Link volunteers offered:



101,130 hours

Economic value based on hourly rate*



£1,262,102

Average added economic value per volunteer in 2022



£779.07

The economic value of Link Schemes is calculated based on ONS South West Average hourly pay - for all jobs at £12.48 per hour.



Landfill Communities Fund Grants

37

Projects funded
through the LCF in
2022/2023

£406k

Funding awarded
through the LCF in
2022/2023

Community First manages and administrates the Landfill Communities Fund (LCF) in Wiltshire and Swindon. The LCF offers capital funding for local community, heritage and environmental projects in areas where local landfill operator sites or depots are located. Over £5.5m of funding has been distributed through the LCF since 2002.

Funding for the LCF in Wiltshire and Swindon is received from landfill operators The Hills Group Ltd and Crapper & Sons Landfill Ltd. In 2022-2023 a total of 37 projects were funded through the Landfill Communities Fund, with £406,993 paid out to community groups and organisations (from a total of £431,748 approved during this period).



LCF Funding (2022-2023)



Total projects approved: 24

Total funding approved: £238,003



Total projects approved: 13

Total funding approved: £193,745



Blunsdon Community Shop

An established community shop in Blunsdon re-opened in Spring 2023, with new and improved facilities. Blunsdon Community Shop was established 20 years ago to serve the community of Blunsdon in North Wiltshire. Owned by residents and supported by the Parish Council, the shop is operated as a cooperative. Whilst the shop is operated on a not-for-profit basis, Blunsdon Community Shop has generated a turnover of approximately £3m since it opened. Surplus from the sale of daily staples, newspapers and other items is reinvested back into the shop and the local community.

Following engagement with developers and the Parish Council, representatives for the community shop had identified an opportunity to move from temporary facilities to a new, permanent building which would be leased from the Council for a peppercorn rent. The new premises were made available as part of the new Hayfield Wood development. Developers Hayfield had agreed to donate a new building to the Parish Council for the benefit of the community.

The new premises offered more retail space and space for a new coffee shop. This was felt to be essential as the community had grown in size since the shop first opened and needed to expand to meet demand. As part of the vision for the improved premises, Blunsdon Community Shop planned to utilise additional space to sell beer,

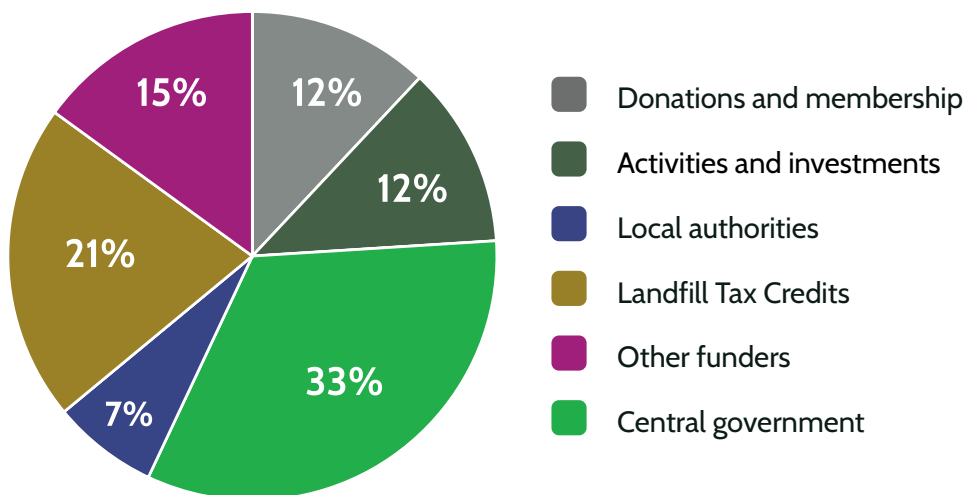
wine, locally produced fruit, vegetables and meat and other fresh, near-zero air-mile products. The shop also aimed to create a local community hub where people could meet over coffee and offer new services for the village with the addition of mail and parcel services.

Blunsdon Community Shop approached Community First to complete a grant application for funding through the Landfill Communities Fund. The funding would cover the cost of new equipment including fridges, freezers, display areas, counters, shelving, wall units, a barista-style coffee machine and café seating (including indoor and outdoor covered seating). The application was successful and Blunsdon Community Shop received £18,000 from Crapper and Sons Ltd for joinery and fixings and £10,000 from The Hills Group Ltd for white goods for the shop and cafe.

The shop re-opened at the new location on 25th March 2023. Local resident and television personality Nick Knowles attended the re-opening event, along with shop representatives and Community First Grants Manager Mary Hardwidge. Congratulations to everyone involved in supporting this community facility.

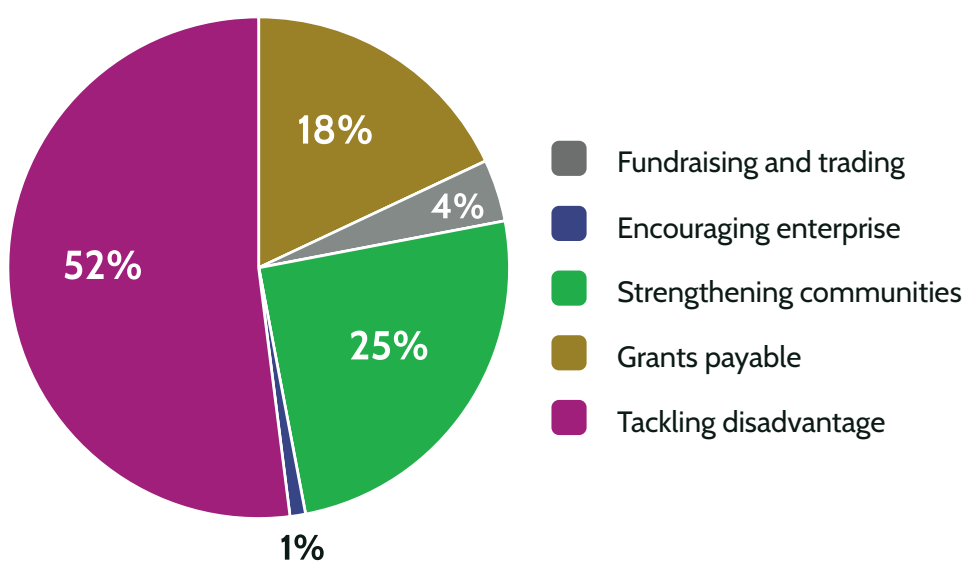
Finances

Incoming resources: £2,300,961



The financial report uses information taken from the full Community First financial statement for the year ended 31 March 2023, prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 2006, the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) "Financial Reporting for Smaller Entities" 2015 and applicable accounting standards which received an unqualified audit. The finance report may not contain sufficient information to enable a full understanding of the financial affairs of Community First. For further information the full Report and Financial Statements and the Independent Auditors report can be obtained from the Company Secretary.

Resources expended: £2,327,031



The full report and Financial statements were approved by members of the Board of Trustees on 22nd August 2023 and will be submitted to the Charity Commission and the Registrar of Companies.

Funder Thanks

The work of Community first has been made possible with financial support and contributions from the following groups and organisations:

Accommodation Welfare Committee
Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE)
Active Plumbing Supplies (Malmesbury) Ltd
Avon Valley Runners
AW Gale Community Trust
BDP Imports
Bingham Kindergarten
Bradenstoke Solar Community Fund
Bradford on Avon Rotary Club
Brewster Maude Charitable Trust
Buzz Action Foundation
Children's Chance
Children's Choice
Chippenham Lions
Community Foundation
Corsham Town Council
Corston Architecture
Crapper & Sons Landfill Ltd
Crudwell Bike Ride
Dauntsey 6th Form Parents
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
DWP – Kickstart Programme
E&S Shops Ltd
EAP Sells 2007 Trust
Easy Fundraising
Edington Parish Council
Friends of Youth Action Wiltshire
Garfield Weston Foundation
Greensquare Accord
Groundwork UK
Happy Days Childrens Charity
Hedley Foundation
Henry C Hoare Charitable Trust
Hills Minerals & Waste Ltd

Integrated Care Board
James Ware Foundation
JH King Charitable Trust
John Lewis PLC/Waitrose
Knight Frank Sponsorship
Lansdowne Lodge of Unity
Melksham Rotary Club
Melksham Town Council
Mr John Rendell
Mrs A Lloyd
Mrs R McCulloch
OJM Advisory Limited
Police & Crime Commissioner for Wiltshire & Swindon
Pucklechurch Developments
Radnor Charitable Trust
Salisbury City Community Lottery
Seend Community Centre
St James Place Charitable Foundation
St James Trust
Stampede Sports
SVO (Calne) Ltd
Sweell Mullings Ltd
Tesco Groundworks
The Beaufort Christmas Bazaar
The Blagrove Trust
The Estate of Diana Maude Jones
The European Social Fund
The Finlay Foundation
The Inchcape Foundation
The Julia and Hans Rausing Trust
The Julius Silman Charitable Trust
The Lions Club of Bradford on Avon
The Lions Club of Devizes
The Malthouse Nursery
The National Benevolent Charity
The National Lottery Community Fund

The National Lottery Reaching Communities Fund
The Underwood Trust
The Vernon Smith Family Charitable Trust
Tristenagh Trust
Trowbridge Town Trust
TW Partners Ltd
VCS Emergency Partnership
Walker Logistics Limited
Warminster Lions
WASP – Wiltshire and Swindon Sport
Whatley Manor
Wilkins Builders Limited
Wiltshire Association of Local Councils
Wiltshire Community Foundation
Wiltshire Council
Wiltshire Council Area Board Youth Grants
Wiltshire Council Community Led Housing
Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
Zuru Media Ltd

We would also like to acknowledge the support of the following partners:

Barnardo's
Relate
Wessex Community Action
Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

The Charity has also benefited from the generous support of many individuals whose donations and gifts have enabled services to be maintained and expanded and an endowment fund to be established to provide income in future years.



Patron:

The Former Duchess of Cornwall (now Her Majesty The Queen)

President:

HM Lord-Lieutenant of Wiltshire, Mrs Sarah Rose Troughton CSTJ

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