

## **The Families and Communities Approach: building thriving communities case studies**



Each of the following case studies provides a snapshot of some of the work undertaken by West Suffolk Council's Families and Communities Team.

To find out how the team can work alongside you and your community, see our website: [Your Community pages](#) pages.

## Community Chest 2024-2025

In total, £466,733.00 was spent on 32 projects run by voluntary groups and organisations to support their valuable work. Funding was applied for by the groups and agreed by Cabinet, recommended by the cross council Grant Working Party.

The specific areas of focus for these projects include:

**General health and wellbeing** - £383,664.00 – 19 projects – including community spaces and organisations which provide advice on and support with mental health problems and/or signpost to relevant resources.

**Cost of living** - £66,916.00 – 11 projects. – Projects aim to support communities and/or certain vulnerable groups in the light of the ongoing socioeconomic situation.  
[Community Chest grants recommended for cost-of-living support](#)

Please note: Community Chest was reviewed in 2024 and has been replaced by the Thriving Communities Fund.

## Locality budgets

West Suffolk district councillors each have an annual budget of £2,500 that they can allocate to community-led activities in their ward. locality budgets

In 2023-24 West Suffolk councillors contributed £157,074 towards initiatives and projects in their ward areas including:

- **Community Events** - £44,489 (28 per cent) – Example: Newmarket Cinema Project
- **Educational Events and Resources** - £13,455 (8 per cent) – Example: Community Speeding Awareness Project
- **General Health and Wellbeing** – £6,519.97 (4 per cent) – Example: Community Defibrillators
- **Cost of Living** - £2,760 (2 per cent) – Example: Additional SEND provision for Families, Friends of Lakenheath Primary School
- **Community** – £17,898 (11 per cent) – Example: Theatre Royal Community Ticketing Initiative
- **Infrastructure** - £54,555.44 (34 per cent) – Example: Great Barton Village Gateways
- **Conservation and Heritage** - £6,000 (4per cent) – Example: Construction and Conservation Supplement
- **Media and Communication** – £4,520 (3 per cent) – Example: Marham Park Community Newsletter
- **Environment and Sustainability** - £9,360.80 (6 per cent) – Example: Floral Enhancements in Rougham

## Volunteers tackling village speeding - Stradishall Parish Council

- An example of a locality budget application, supporting a community to take action is in Stradishall Parish Council. All levels of councils came together with £900 (£300 from each councillor's locality budget) has been allocated from West

Suffolk Council with a further £500 from the county council with £850 covered by Stradishall Parish Council.

- Stradishall Parish Council wanted to buy a vehicle activated sign to use in three locations in Stradishall village. The sites have already been approved by Suffolk County Council.
- Stradishall residents who live along the B1063, which is a busy through route, as well as residents using the public footpaths in Stradishall, and anyone else visiting the village, are all affected by the issue of speeding in the village.
- Stradishall Parish Council responded to the concerns of residents by purchasing their own vehicle activated signs (VAS) and will be actively trying to make the village safer.
- The project will be supported by volunteers who will work together to charge and move the VAS and take speed data from it. VAS is now in place and functioning.

## **Community champions**

- A local resident who took time to get to know their neighbours, heard some concerns around antisocial behaviour and limited organised activities for children and young people. They met with their neighbours to discuss how to address these needs.
- The meeting resulted in the development of a community champions group and a plan to offer events within the locality and many ideas for future projects.
- The group contacted their local district councillor to explore funding opportunities and gain advice on how the council could support with the questions and ideas that had been raised at the meeting. The councillor connected the group with the Families and Communities team to discuss locality budgets and for a conversation on how to develop plans made by the champions. Families and Communities officers work within the Asset Based Community Development Framework focusing on sustainable, community-led development.
- Families and Communities officers were able to listen and provide information about opportunities for them to develop their ideas and plans. The champions have applied for locality budget to set up their community group and fund an initial event for children and families at Halloween. As a newly formed group, they have been able to use the resources on offer within the council to develop the projects that will benefit their community.

## **Crucial Crew**

- Schools were contacted and asked for their preference as to continuing with the online format of Crucial Crew adopted due to Covid or coming back in person, this resulted in the project going live again at West Suffolk College in June 2024.
- We worked closely with partners and the college to set a programme based on what the concerns were for the schools and also the young people themselves.
- Seven scenarios focussing on personal safety messages and supported by Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Police, Brave Futures, Restore Women's Aid, Abbeycroft were run to each group of year six pupils.

- Over the course of two weeks, we engaged with 24 school and nearly 700 young people received vital awareness in relation to personal safety.
- Feedback:
  - "Great event for our young people."
  - "First opportunity are young people have had to attend this event and very worthwhile."

## **Community shop Newmarket**

- The portfolio holder for Families and Communities identified a local community shop, supporting residents during the cost of living crisis. It provided a comprehensive approach to reducing food poverty in our community, through a combination of affordable food options, educational programs, and community engagement. They set out to build on this positive model and aimed to create a supportive environment that fosters dignity, choice, and long-term stability in other parts of West Suffolk. To address food poverty in our community by providing affordable, nutritious food options while preserving the dignity and choice of its users.
- Working with The Racing Centre, who were interested in this model and UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) funding, we have been able to set up a shop will operate on these principles. Food will be sold at cost to ensure affordability. It will be open to community members (residents in the CB8) twice or three times a week for as long as needed.
- A coffee shop will be included to foster a sense of community and social interaction among users. Courses will also be offered to empower community members to cook nutritious meals at home.
- A robust volunteer program will be established to support day-to-day activities, with comprehensive training provided to ensure high standards of service.

## **Safer Streets Funding (Bury, Haverhill, Mildenhall and Newmarket)**

- Home Office Safer Streets Round Five funding was made available through the Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner.
- Families and Communities worked with partners on the drafting of the action plan, completing the funding application and co-ordinating work to ensure a successful bid.
- Areas identified were also part of community consultation and led to a co-ordinated action plan and funding bid being drafted.
- Funding has enabled the following work to benefit West Suffolk residents: West Suffolk Council CCTV upgrade to Wi-Fi; funding for deployable cameras; We Don't Buy Crime Campaign being launched by Suffolk Police; Teen Chill being established in Bury St Edmunds and Detached Youth Workers in certain areas of West Suffolk.

## **Voluntary Community Faith Social Enterprise (VCFSE) Funding Networking Event**

- West Suffolk Council elected members of the Grant Working Party requested the opportunity to host a funding network event within the district.
- Partners including Suffolk Community Foundation, The National Lottery, Community Action Suffolk, Suffolk County Council and West Suffolk Council created a funding and engagement session to assist organisations in Mildenhall, Haverhill, Brandon, Newmarket, Bury St Edmunds.
- Here is some of the positive feedback the event received:

"It was fantastic to meet and talk with other people about their experiences and be able to speak face to face with the various organisations able to help and support with the process [funding and grant applications]"

"The chance to network. Having multiple organisations in one room. It was really useful to hear more about the work of each organisation"

"It was great to network and be able to explain the work my group do and where we need the funding"

## **Teen Chill – Mildenhall**

- In response to concerns raised on social media surrounding a perceived lack of safe spaces for young people to meet, engagement was carried out and work commenced bring a youth club project to Mildenhall.
- Through engagement with the Town Council and local community support we worked with Abbeycroft to establish Teen Chill in Mildenhall. Abbeycroft provided support and training to local community members who now lead the project with them.
- Abbeycroft engaged with young people to identify an appropriate venue and day of the week for the project and together with Families and Communities Officer identified funding streams, with successful applications to Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner and Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership.
- Teen Chill was launched in Mildenhall in November 2023 and still continues to grow seeing consistent attendances each week with flexible sessions providing a wide variety of events and activities for young people in a safe environment.
- Feedback from the young people:
  - "I feel like I have a safe space to go."
  - "We have a say in what activities we have."
  - "Gives me time away from my siblings."

## **Haverhill Science Festival with the Economic Development team**

- Ran from 22 to 27 April 2024 and provided a fantastic range of activities, all of which were free to attend, for everyone.
- Aimed to develop an interest in science, technology and engineering in children motivating them to study these topics at GCSE and beyond. Also aimed to promote employment and training opportunities in technology locally.
- Every Haverhill primary school received at least one day of science-based activities delivered by a specialist educational company. For secondary schools, all year 7s or 8's attended a presentation by Helen Sharman, the first Briton in space, who provides motivational talks to young people encouraging them to pursue STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) subjects. Outside of educational settings, the festival included a planetarium and a community day, full of science experiments and other activities. Free science books were provided through our partners, the National Literary Trust.
- Nine local ward councillors gave support with a total of £4,500 Locality Budget funding to assist with school delivery.

## **Approximately 3,414 people attended the festival**

- 1,813 from the primary schools
- 1,037 from the secondary school community
- 564 Community Engagement Involvement in Science Festival

## **Bury Youth Providers Network**

- A variety of active community services, organisations and individuals who work alongside young people in Bury St Edmunds get together once a quarter. All have a desire to understand and collaborate with young people in the hope of meeting young people's needs and provides them with greater opportunities to succeed.
- At the request of the portfolio holder, the Families and Communities officers organised the meetings and invited all known youth providers operating in Bury to meet. Agendas are determined by group members through discussion in previous meetings. Group members are encouraged and invited to take on roles within the group.
- The intention is for the group to eventually become run by group members and for Families and Communities officers to provide a supporting connecting role. One aim is to develop Youth voice and participation, a second to develop a culture of better coproduction between young people and the rest of the community as well as building better connections between members of the network to facilitate the sharing of skills, best practice, learning and assets.

## **West Suffolk Disability Forum**

- Meet quarterly to discuss issues and daily inclusivity problems that people living with a disability or with accessibility issues face. A hybrid meeting structure (both

in-person and online) has been adopted in order to achieve a better reach and enable more members to join.

- The forum enables members to share their insights and experiences which enables problem solving and networking between individuals and organisations.
- Members include local residents living with or with family living with disability, disability campaigners, representatives from organisations such as Suffolk Family Carers and Abbeycroft, Community transport and transport providers and so on.
- The Chair and Vice Chair set the agenda with the Families and Communities Support Officer, as well as taking away discussed actions and finding relevant information or contacts to share at meetings. The Families and Communities Support Officer holds the contacts list and facilitates and organises the meetings.

## **Reducing health inequalities - St Olaves ward in Bury St Edmunds**

- [Core20Plus5](#) is a national NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSEI) approach to reducing health inequalities. West Suffolk Alliance has received funding to reduce inequalities in identified areas in West Suffolk.
- The initial phase of project centred around St Olaves ward in Bury St Edmunds. The Families and Communities officer was invited to attend meetings to represent a community perspective and was asked to support health colleagues on their research by introducing them to local residents and key community assets to gather insight into their views and experience of health services. This would also inform the community about, and build trust in, the project.
- Families and Communities officers are in privileged position to get to know the geography of their localities ([Families and Communities ward map](#)) and meet regularly with representatives who both live and work within them. On this occasion, the officer was able to support the project by taking project team members on a tour of the ward, offering introductions to groups and individuals to gain valuable insight into the dynamics of the community.
- The project is ongoing, the Families and Communities team remain in key position within the project which will be rolled out across west Suffolk.

## **ASB case review**

- Request for the activation of an Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) Case Review under the Anti-social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014.
- The activation request related to individuals residing at the neighbouring property of Ms X. They were reported to be targeting her through means of causing harassment, alarm and distress. There were incidents of theft, criminal damage, noise nuisance and threats of violence directed at her and her family members. Ms X felt incredibly vulnerable and was afraid to leave her property. The impact was taking a toll on her mental and physical health and had led to her covering her windows in an attempt to hide from the perpetrators.

- After contacting the police and the housing provider on multiple occasions, Ms X did not feel there had been any improvement to the situation which prompted Ms X to activate the case review.
- A full case review was convened with the organisations involved. Ms X was invited so she could directly share her experience and account and how she would see a resolution to the situation.
- The Families and Communities officer overseeing ASB is responsible for managing the ASB case reviews. The process includes chairing the case review meeting(s), working with the organisations involved, producing a report of the input, generating an action plan with those involved to resolve the case and being a single point of contact (SPOC) for the person who activated the case review. This offers continuity to those involved throughout the process.
- Following the commencement of this review, increased safeguarding measures were implemented due to heightened risk. Safeguarding referrals were made, GP and mental health services were involved. Increased support was provided from police and the Families and Communities officer to aim to protect the health and wellbeing of Ms X.
- The changes implemented led to Ms X feeling supported and empowered to act, assistance provided from the Housing Team enabled Ms \* to move to a more suitable property and in turn, increased levels of resilience and confidence. Completing this process reinstated the right Ms X has to live safely and feel safe within the community she resides. Tenancy breaches by the perpetrators were dealt with by the housing provider to address their behaviour and mitigate against the risk of repeat offending.