Building **Stronger** Communities in East Sussex

from Street Corner to County Hall

JULY 2016

East Sussex BETTER TOGETHER

Connecting 4 you

Contents

This report has been produced in partnership by:

Find out more about the programme or obtain an electronic copy of this report here:
https://news.eastsussex.gov.uk/east-sussex-better-together/2016/02/02/building-stronger-communities/
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Executive summary

The Annual Report of the Director of Public Health East Sussex, 'Growing Community Resilience in East Sussex' (DPH Report 2014/15) outlined the benefits of developing strong or resilient communities to improve health outcomes for local people. It recommended that partners come together to build on communities' strengths and the energy of the people (rather than focusing on weaknesses); this is known as an 'asset based approach'.

A multi-agency partnership was set up – the Community Resilience Steering Group- made up of local NHS commissioners, the County Council (ESCC) and the voluntary and community sector, and led and supported by ESCC Public Health.

The Steering Group identified that the first step in developing a local approach to growing community resilience was to engage communities, using an asset based approach. A partnership of local voluntary organisations (The CVS Partnership) was commissioned to undertake comprehensive engagement activity to inform key priorities for the programme. The CVS Partnership worked with an external organization, Asset Based Consulting (ABC), and with a multi-agency communications and engagement group set up to oversee and support. A team of facilitators from across voluntary and statutory organisations were trained in asset based techniques to make sure as many organisations and people as possible were reached.

Between March and May 2016, an impressive 1,500 people across East Sussex got involved in the East Sussex Community Resilience Programme, using innovative ways of identifying and building on the unique strengths in communities.

Engagement activity included eight interactive workshops, attendance at community events, and visits to community and partnership groups. In addition people were invited to send in written comments, approached on street corners and at meetings at County Hall. The response was amazing: people tweeted, emailed, talked over tea and coffee, sent videos, and drew pictures.

The Project Team collected together all the responses and summarised them under key themes. There was an incredible amount of common ground and clear priorities emerged. These were; understanding the local context, allowing sufficient timescales for things to happen, collaborating more, communicating better (including ensuring two way communication), making better use of our resources, and helping people to get involved, especially as formal and informal volunteers.

1 Context

Every place and community is unique. Context is vital, and any activities or services must take account of a place or communities' unique strengths in planning and delivery.

2 Timescale

Community asset building and the development of relationships with communities takes time, and we may not be able to demonstrate effectiveness within traditional annual evaluation cycles.

Short-term funding and project support is a challenge for smaller, community-based services and activity.

3 Collaborating

Across all consultation responses there was a strong desire for more effective ways of working together and genuine collaboration between organisations and with organisations and communities. Suggestions included sharing practice and learning from each other, pooling budgets and commissioning processes that encourage and reward joint working across all sectors.

4 Communicating

Many people in communities and small community based organisations want to be involved in on-going attempts to improve life for local people and are looking for deeper involvement and a reciprocal exchange that would develop into co-production relationships. This should go beyond traditional ways of communicating between communities and organisations.

5 Volunteers/Active Residents

Local, community, resident or volunteer-led activities are highly valued, but there are increasing difficulties in recruiting and retaining volunteers. In some areas there are also problems with engaging people with existing activities. These issues, when combined are making it hard for many groups to sustain in the longer-term.

At the same time people wanted to be engaged with and feel welcomed into groups: People were also interested in finding different ways of providing opportunities for involvement, recognising different lifestyles and changes over time.

There were some contradictions in the findings around this theme that need to be better understood.

6 Resourcing

Funding and resources emerged as an area of interest for local communities. This is not a simple issue but a set of interconnected factors that create many challenges.

While funding is reported in the data as a significant issue, the solutions, dreams and aspirations expressed rarely involve significant amounts of money. Instead, they suggest ways of working more efficiently and making the most of existing community assets.

The programme has already started working on plans to address the priorities. Three new multi-agency Deliver groups have been established and are recruiting eight new Locality Link Workers to help new joined-up health and social care teams to work more closely with communities.

Ideas will evolve over time and the programme will keep talking and working together with everyone that can be involved, to recognise and make best use of our communities' many skills, resources and enthusiasms.

1 Introduction

We wanted to know:
How can we all work with people, groups, businesses and organisations in East Sussex to build stronger, more resilient, communities where they are most needed?

Strong communities are really important for good health and wellbeing. A strong community is more confident and well-connected, can act on the issues that affect the people in it, and collaborate with others to make local services more relevant and effective. Research shows that strong communities are not just a 'good thing'; they actually keep people active, involved and healthy.

This is set out in The Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 2014/15 'Growing Community Resilience in East Sussex' (DPH Report 14/15), which outlines the benefits of developing strong or resilient communities to improve health outcomes for local people. It summarises available research and recommends an approach that builds on communities' strengths, known as 'an asset based approach'. Other more recently published research and guidance has echoed this view.

The DPH Report 14/15 recommended that commissioning organisations work together to enhance community resilience. A multi-agency partnership was set up under the direction of the Community Resilience Steering Group, made up of local NHS commissioners, the County Council and the voluntary and community sector, and led and supported by ESCC Public Health.

The Steering Group set itself the challenge of developing a strategic programme that would help grow community resilience by changing the way that organisations and people interact with communities. The East Sussex Community Resilience programme is now a key strand of the system wide East Sussex Better Together[1] and Connecting 4 You[2] health and social care programmes.

The Steering Group decided to establish a three year programme, and agreed that Phase 1 of this should include a comprehensive engagement process to identify shared priorities across communities, and those that work with them. The Steering Group wanted to understand how local people who want to make a difference in the community can be best supported to do so. So the central question was:
How can we all work with people, groups, businesses and organisations in East Sussex to build stronger, more resilient, communities where they are most needed?

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1 ESBT is our 150-week programme to transform health and social care services. It's about making sure we use our combined £850 million annual budget to achieve the best possible services for local people. The programme started in August 2014 and is led by ESCC and the two local NHS clinical commissioning groups.

2 Connecting 4 You is a transformation programme that is being created in partnership by High Weald Lewes Havens (HWLH) CCG and East Sussex County Council. The programme is being developed in order to address the specific population needs, geographical challenges, arrangement of services and patient flows of the HWLH area.

Support to undertake the engagement process was commissioned from The CVS Partnership (Council for Voluntary Services[3]), a partnership of three CVSs covering East Sussex. The CVS partnership was led in this piece of work by Hastings Voluntary Action (HVA), and supported by locally based community engagement specialist Nick Wates Associates. Technical support was obtained from Asset Based Consulting (ABC), an external consultancy with recognised expertise in asset based approaches. The engagement process known as 'Building Stronger Communities' was overseen and supported by a multi-agency working group. This report describes the engagement process undertaken by the CVS Partnership and other partners. The organisations who collaborated in this piece of work are referred to as the Building Stronger Communities (BSC) Project Team in this report.

In undertaking the Community Resilience Programme, the Steering Group recognised that it was not starting from scratch. Many organisations across East Sussex are already using asset based approaches. For example, Chances4Change East Sussex supports local people to create opportunities for improving health in their neighbourhood, and

schemes such as community speed-watch work collaboratively with local people to reduce speeding. In addition to the many voluntary, community and partnership groups, there are extensive less formal networks and relationships on which to build.

The engagement process was undertaken at a time of huge pressure on public services, and public concern about cuts or reductions to services. Because of this it is important to emphasise that the Community Resilience programme is not designed to replace health and social care services, but to take a much more general view of the role that communities can and want to play in improving the health of themselves and their neighbours. Throughout the engagement process and in the analysis of its findings, the BSC Project Team looked at how to grow community assets, what can make them 'fragile' or 'vulnerable', and ways of protecting them, and sought to create a consensus about how this could be done.

The following sections of this report by the BSC Project Team summarise the engagement process, its findings, what people said needed to happen, and what will be done in light of this (known as **phase 2**).

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3 Hastings Voluntary Action, Rother Voluntary Action and 3VA.

2 How we went about the engagement

We, the BSC Project Team, were asked by the Steering Group to get as many people and organisations as possible, who live and work in local communities, actively involved in considering what we can all do to build stronger, more resilient, communities. This section describes how we did it, and the reasons for our approach.

2.1 Values and principles

We know that communities themselves are in the best place to identify what makes them strong, and identify the things that can help them to get involved and bring about positive change.

In line with research suggesting the most effective way of working with communities, the Steering Group challenged us to use an approach that focused on the strengths and talents of communities in East Sussex, and the energy of the people. The underpinning principle of this work is that everyone has something to offer and should be included, and that being in a stronger community will increase people's control over their health and lives. This focus on the positive is sometimes referred to as an 'asset based approach' and this approach is the core principle underpinning this engagement process.

To support the concept of stronger communities, our task was to understand how best to support people who can make a difference in their community. Although using an "asset based" approach meant looking at positives, we also wanted to recognise and deal with some of the factors that could slow local action, and make it less likely for people to get involved. That's why the first phase of this project has involved an extensive and wide ranging community engagement process.

The approach we chose is underpinned by a clear set of asset based values and principles, based on research, and which will be used to guide how this work develops and is implemented. In short, the approach builds on the actual and potential assets within communities, envisages strong partnership between local people and the public sector to co-design services to meet local needs, and aims to build on local networks and the connections between individuals, groups and communities. The values (what we believe is important) and principles (how we put the values into practice) are set out below:

Values for an asset approach

1 Give support to identify and make visible the health-enhancing assets in a community

2 See citizens and communities as the co-producers of health and well-being rather than the recipients of services

3 Promote community networks, relationships and friendships

4 Value what is already working well

5 Identify what has the potential to improve health and wellbeing

6 Empower communities to control their futures and create tangible resources

Principles of an asset approach

1 Recognise assets: any resource, skill or knowledge which enhances the ability of individuals, families and neighbourhoods to create and sustain health and wellbeing.

2 Instead of starting with the problems, start with what is working, and what people care about.

3 Networks, friendships, self- esteem and feelings of personal and collective effectiveness are good for our well-being.

Source: What Makes Us Healthy (Foot 2012)

2.2 Working together

Through the engagement process, our task was to 'co-design' local approaches while making best use of all available expertise. Alongside this we wanted to build in sustainability where we could. We did this by:

Combining skills and experience: bringing together a project team with local experience and links

with local communities, (The CVS Partnership) while ensuring that the project approaches are consistent with relevant national and international best practice and methodologies (ABC).

Developing peoples' skills: offering development opportunities to practitioners in the public and voluntary sectors to train as facilitators. This would extend their skills and the capacity for future activity. Twenty four practitioners, drawn equally from the public and voluntary sectors, were trained.

2.3 Methodology

We wanted to use an overarching asset based methodology which could gather key information to help our inquiry whilst enabling the widest range of people and organisations to take part in a consistent way. We also wanted to use a method that not only led to more insight about how communities want to be involved but that also would help us take quick action to implement communities' vision of what 'should be' and start to grow the strengths that communities identified.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a process for valuing and drawing out the strengths and successes in the history of a group, a community or an organisation. This is used to develop a realistic and realisable vision for the future and a commitment to take sustainable action. AI is not an uncritical or naïve approach; it creates a positive mind-set by talking about success rather than being defined by past failures. The inquiry starts with appreciating the best of what is; thinking about what might be and should be; and ends with a shared commitment to a vision and how to achieve it.

- Communities can use Appreciative Inquiry to develop their vision and plans for locally defined improvements.

- People in organisations can come together with users or residents to share their knowledge and redesign their relationships and ways of working together.

- Groups – be it a partnership, a group of work colleagues or a mixed group of residents and professionals agree that they want to change in a positive direction.

- There is no pre-determined solution and any agreed and realistic change is possible or permitted.

The AI process is commonly described as having five stages:

1 **Define:** the people involved agree the positive focus of the inquiry.

2 **Discover:** through storytelling and using interviewing and conversations, the approach draws out positive experiences, and together, people uncover common experiences about what works and what can be built on.

3 **Dream:** people describe their dreams. This is presented as positive statements of what they would like their communities to be in an ideal future.

4 **Design:** from collective experience people discuss what the ideal future in the community would be like.

5 **Deliver:** plan the actions to deliver the dream. How do we work together to deliver the ideal future? Who needs to be involved and what practical actions are needed?

(Source: ABC)
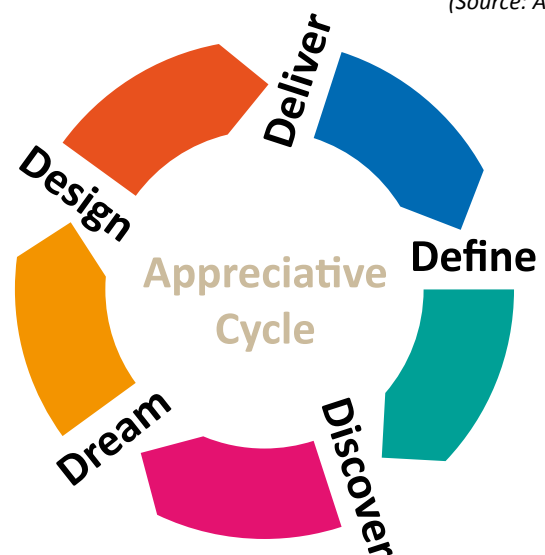
Five core questions were developed based on the 5 Ds and were used in all engagement activity.

Key questions

1 Thinking about your work in the community what difference are you making and what are you most proud of?

2 What could help you to do more of the work you think is important – or do it better?

3 What are your dreams and ambitions for your community/the community you work in?

4 What things could get in the way of achieving positive change for your community/the community you work in?

5 What are the most important messages for all those involved in communities (communities, organisations, businesses, and those planning ways of supporting communities)?

We also used other asset based methods:

• Community Asset Mapping – head, hands and heart (previous page)
• local 'Timelines' (below)

The methods were designed to help participants consider:

• A sense of place (what makes this community unique)
• A sense of 'self' (what motivates people to get involved in their community and connect with others)
• A sense of time (what key events have shaped the area and what do people want the future to look like?)

2.4 Reviewing the literature

A literature review was undertaken to add to the findings of the Annual Public Health Report 2014/15 and gain further insight to the concept of community resilience, asset based approaches and community capacity building. A total of 65 studies were considered as part of this review, which are listed at Appendix 1, alongside a description of the methodology.

2.5 The stages of the engagement process

The stages are shown below:

Stages of the engagement process

Design
• Project design
• Agreement of methodology & key questions
• Literature review and emerging principles to underpin activity

Skills
• Community Facilitator training and awareness raising briefings

Events
• Locality Events x 8
• 'Embedded' events & workshops x 8

Outreach
• 1-2-1 interviews
• Attendance at events, networks and forums
• Street interviews, surveys, focus groups & table top discussions

Analysis
• Independent analysis of 4,000 pieces of data
• Production of key themes and subset data by locality

Summit
• Concensus building on key priorities
• Service providers, community members, public & voluntary sectors
• Cross sector working group refine findings into key delivery areas

Final Report
• Key findings presented to and endorsed by Community Resilience (CR) Steering Group
• Process evaluated by project team and CR Engagement Advisory Group
• Final report prepared & published

2.6 Engagement Activity

The engagement period ran from March 2016 to the beginning of May 2016, and took a number of different forms.

Workshops

During a four week period from mid- April to early May, eight workshop events took place across the county, in Hastings, Bexhill, Eastbourne, Newhaven, Seaford, Rye, Polegate and Uckfield.

This process generated information specific to each locality and detailed data will be made available in locality reports.

Feedback from attendees' perceptions of the events showed that people valued being listened to, having space and time to hear about experiences and personal reflections, and that the networking in itself was regarded as vital to the health of communities.

Interactive workshop in Bexhill

Time-line exercise at the Hastings workshop

Outreach

The outreach motto, 'From Street Corner to County Hall' captured our ambition to include everyone who wanted to contribute their ideas, from strategic leaders at a formal meeting to local people through a brief conversation in their neighbourhood.

In addition to the eight workshops a range of methods and approaches to draw out the positive experiences, strengths and assets of individuals, associations and organisations were developed. These included:

- Street engagement
- Focus groups
- 1-2-1 meetings with community groups
- An online survey
- Community events
- Mini- workshops
- An open 'call for evidence'
- Practitioner 'insight' meetings
- Partnership briefings
- Discussions with community networks and forums

These approaches helped to reach diverse areas and members of the community that are sometimes regarded as 'seldom heard' alongside decision makers. Examples of engagement activity include:

Young people: through the local youth councils and through the SPARK youth participation network.

Rural communities: through activities in 22 village communities, delivered by Action in rural Sussex.

People participating in community activity: the project team went to a range of community events and took the opportunity to engage with runners

Young people's activities

and supporters at the Hastings half marathon, charity AGMs and network meetings, family fun-days and community celebrations as well as individual conversations with first time volunteers at a neighbourhood event.

People using community venues: project team members spent entire days in community anchor buildings, interacting with the groups who used them. In the words of one team member:

"I drank more tea than I have ever done before. I started with the mother and toddlers at 10am and finished with the weight watchers group at 7pm. It proved really worthwhile as we contacted people who might never have become involved".

Councils for Voluntary Service contacts: existing contacts and networks established over many years to engage with Charities, Voluntary Organisations, Community Groups and Social Enterprises were used. Methods included individual conversations, 1-2-1 discussions, and collectively using a presentation/ discussion at the VCS SpeakUp Forum, and at local networks such as the Bexhill Network, Eastbourne Forum and Hastings Community Network.

Through ad hoc requests: a member of the project team was available to speak at events or meetings – for example at a meeting with a local church group and following Friday prayers at a local Mosque.

An open 'call for evidence': offered existing groups the chance to submit their own insights and ideas, and a range of detailed and thoughtful submissions

were made. These covered a range of subjects including transport/connectivity, activist support and community cohesion.

System leaders: with presentations given at the East Sussex Strategic Partnership and two other Local Strategic Partnerships. Conversations were held with local Councillors, and a session held with the East Sussex Better Together Scrutiny Committee and the Community Resilience Steering Group. A briefing document was provided to planning and partnership groups so that they were aware of and could participate in activities.

A list of all participating organisations can be found in Appendix 2. An evaluation of the engagement activity by the CVS Partnership can found in Appendix 3.

2.7 Data collection methods

Information was collected in a variety of different ways, to encourage diverse input. This included: participatory workshop methods, film/video, reports, questionnaires, audio interview, and individual tweets.

2.8 Data analysis

Over 1,500 people took part in engagement activity, resulting in over 4,000 individual comments. Analysis of participation of different stakeholders, groups and communities indicated that the engagement process was far reaching. From this enormous reservoir of data, the information was analysed in a systematic, objective way and the key themes which emerged from it were reviewed in an open, inclusive and transparent manner. The following approach was adopted to ensure this happened consistently:

Separating community engagement and data analysis activities
While the CVS Partnership undertook the engagement process they played no role in the analysis or interpretation of the data. This was conducted by Asset Based Consulting, who did not attend the events or have contact with the engagement team.

Undertaking a rigorous and independent thematic analysis of the data
Thematic analysis is a conventional practice in qualitative social science research that involves

searching through data to identify recurrent patterns. A theme is a cluster of linked categories conveying similar meanings. The risk of bias was reduced by the analyst lacking previous knowledge and hence pre-conceptions of the local area and its communities.

Summit: defining key themes and prioritising

The engagement process culminated in a Summit event where results of the thematic analysis were presented and reviewed. The event brought together a range of stakeholders including representatives of Public Health, Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Clinical Commissioning Groups, East Sussex Governance and Corporate Services, BME organisations, Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) infrastructure bodies, SpeakUp VCS representatives and East Sussex Better Together Advisory Group Members. Representatives were drawn from attendees of the eight core engagement events, including local residents and people involved in community organisations.

Verifying data quality and consistency

Analysis of the data by the expert organisation engaged to support the programme (Asset Based Consulting) indicated that the reach of the engagement programme had produced high quality data and a verifiable consistency of methodology that could make the conclusions drawn from it robust.

"I thought the event was something really special – a couple of weeks ago I had turned up at my local community centre and at the Summit. I felt I was part of something which could really shape some positive change for my community. "

*Community member
feedback from Summit event*

"In reviewing the data from East Sussex we found a high quality and consistency of information on which to base our conclusions. This has been derived from multiple sources. We have worked extensively across the UK and internationally and would confirm that the work in East Sussex has delivered an engagement programme which has consistently applied the methodology and kept absolute faith with the principles on which it should be based. It is among the strongest programmes of activity we have ever seen and has been delivered with absolute fidelity to the Asset- Based process."

ABC Consulting

The Summit Event

3 What we found

What would things be like in an ideal future, when everyone in East Sussex has worked together and built stronger, more resilient communities where they were most needed?

3.1 The literature review

This section provides a summary of ten key issues that were identified from the literature by the CVS Partnership, with advice from ABC. More details can be found in Appendix 1.

1 Assets within communities are often poorly understood – even by communities themselves – and as a consequence the considerable potential they offer is often not fully realised.

2 For an asset based approach to be feasible a fundamental shift of attitudes, language and perspectives will be required.

3 A long term view will need to be taken for an asset based approach to have meaningful and measureable impact, requiring strategic leadership.

4 The ownership of change by communities is fundamental.

5 There is change and volatility in the nature of civil society which will over time be felt at local community level.

6 A consistent framework for developing an evidence base to measure the impact of Asset based approaches in the achievement of public health is yet to emerge.

7 Building a healthy community is not always about 'health'.

8 The nature of volunteering may be changing, requiring new approaches and systems to meet the needs of those who want to "make a difference".

9 Scaling, resourcing and procuring to meet local 'need' will be significant as asset approaches take effect.

10 There is a broad potential for change by using asset based approaches as an overarching way of looking and acting to create positive change in communities.

3.2 The engagement findings

Aspirations

Everyone who took part was asked what their dreams were for an ideal future in East Sussex.

The resulting dreams for an ideal future were:

1 An equal society where difference and diversity are embraced: everyone's talents are valued and all people can thrive

2 Communities offer opportunities and choices for everyone – education, employment and social interests

3 There are good quality integrated care services for those that need them

4 Activities led by communities and voluntary organisations have equal status to statutory provision and are adequately funded

5 Open spaces are valued, enjoyed and cared for by everyone

"We want to see more opportunities for young people – they are our future!"

Participant

"We need to be braver in challenging unfairness."

Participant

Responses to the five key questions

1 Thinking about your work in the community what difference are you making and what are you most proud of?

- Action to reduce inequalities
- Establishing support structures and services to help communities
- Connecting people in communities for their benefit/reducing isolation
- Particular concern for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people
- Action on environmental issues
- Support for and development of the community and voluntary sector

2 What could help you do more of the work you think is important – or do it better?

- Adopting a more flexible approach to funding and supporting and evaluating this work – especially that of the voluntary/community sector
- Recruiting and retaining more volunteers – especially younger people – is vital
- Training and capacity building across organisations and communities
- More opportunities to network and share good practice
- Adopting strategic structures that encourage and drive collaboration
- More effective community engagement and development – moving towards co-production

3 What are your dreams and ambitions for your community/the community you work in?

- That communities are inclusive and good places for all residents/members
- That current levels of community support and engagement efforts are at least sustained, and where possible enhanced/extended
- Communities offer better prospects for young people and people with disabilities to learn and work
- Services reflect the expressed[4] needs of users/potential users and the wider community
- People are connected and everyone has the social contact they need
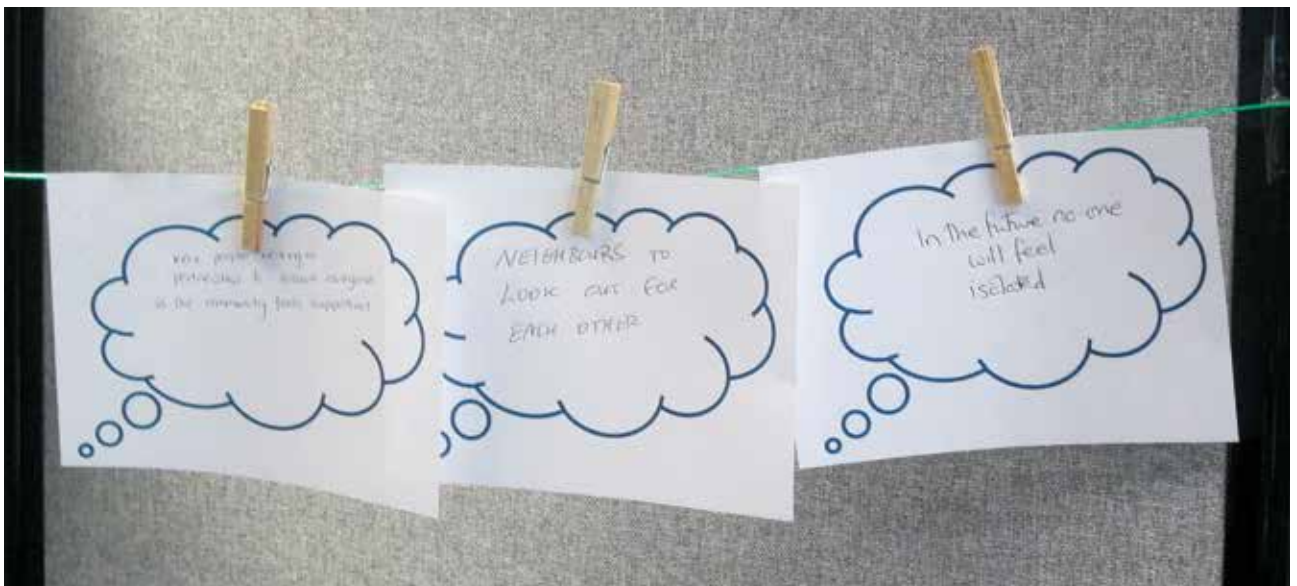
4 Expressed needs are felt needs turned into action or seeking help, e.g. going to the dentist for a toothache (Bradshaw 1972)

4 What things could get in the way of achieving positive change for your community/the community?

- Bureaucratic systems that present barriers
- Issues/challenges that present barriers to volunteering – costs, responsibility
- Funding – a range of complex and connected issues
- Social and community tensions – based on cultural and faith-based prejudice
- Lack of knowledge or understanding about assets approaches – resulting in inconsistent use of methods

… and how could you overcome these?

- Develop a strategic approach to supporting community resilience that is:
  – whole system
  – long-term
- Communicate consistent positive messages about individuals, groups, communities and projects
- Involve communities in all aspects of work – co-production
- Adopt funding/commissioning policies that:
  – understand and value asset approaches
  – accept qualitative evaluation methods
  – encourage community-led outcomes
- Find more ways to bring and encourage people to get together socially
- Organisations to find ways to support communities through 'the day job'.

5 What are the most important messages for all those involved in communities?

- Adopt asset approaches across all services/work streams
- Be aware of the specific context of each community/area – rural/urban etc.
- Communicating rather than communication – people want deeper, reciprocal involvement in things that concern them and their area
- Everybody has responsibility for improving life in their community
- Make it easier and 'normal' to volunteer – value volunteering
- Make sure the 'local system' supports positive ways of working and does not create more barriers or challenges

Values

Two strong themes were repeated so consistently across all communities and geographies as to create a set of community led values to guide thinking and our future approach.

1 Context

Every place and community is unique. Context is vital, and any activities or services must take account of a place or communities' unique strengths in planning and delivery.

"I think that time should be taken to really get to know an area and its community. If there is a move towards locality working an understanding of local neighbourhoods and what makes them tick will be crucial."

2 Timescale

Community asset building and the development of relationships with communities associated with it takes time, and we may not be able to demonstrate effectiveness within traditional annual evaluation cycles.

A current short-termism surrounding many funding regimes and project support from a wide range of sources, is a challenge for smaller, community-based services and activity.

'"The short term nature of funding limits aspirations and creates massive work."

"Time is required to make a real difference – long term thinking not 'quick fixes'."

Themes

Four core themes for the delivery of work to build stronger communities emerged from the engagement.

1 Collaborating

Across all consultation responses there was a strong desire for more effective ways of working together and genuine collaboration between organisations and with organisations and communities. Suggestions included sharing practice and learning from each other, pooling budgets and commissioning processes that encourage and reward joint working across all sectors.

"Link with us – we have extensive knowledge of our area and a real stake in the future."

*"Be **with** us. Don't do things **to** us."*

"Increase partnership working – give time to allow this to happen – we are equal partners with statutory sector and we all have an equal part to play."

2 Communicating

Many people in communities and small community based organisations want to be involved in on-going attempts to improve life for local people and are looking for deeper involvement and a reciprocal exchange that would develop into co-production relationships. This would go beyond traditional ways of communicating between communities and organisations.

"Spread the word and encourage genuine dialogue and contacts with local groups."

"I think openness, co-operation and communication between all is the key to building a real sense of community."

"We would like more opportunities to speak with those who provide services to our community to make the best use of resources and help to ensure that services reach those who really need them."

3 Volunteers/active residents

Local, community, resident or volunteer-led activities are highly valued, but there are increasing difficulties in recruiting and retaining volunteers. In some areas there are also problems with engaging people with existing activities. These issues, when combined are making it hard for many groups to sustain in the longer-term.

At the same time people wanted to be engaged with and feel welcomed into groups. People were also interested in finding different ways of providing opportunities for involvement, recognising different lifestyles and changes over time.

There were some contradictions in the findings around this theme that need to be better understood.

"It's amazing how these small groups often rely on 1 or 2 people who put so much time into their community. It's great that they do this but it would only takes a single person to move out of the area or give up to create real issues for the group."

"More should be done to celebrate the people who week-in-week-out work so hard for our local area – they are amazing."

"I would like to step back and not do so much but I have no one who I can hand the reins onto."

"Each area is different and sometimes knowing what's going on and the number of groups who are out there can be difficult. As a fairly new resident I wish it was easier to know about the different things I could do and volunteer for."

"We need help for to communities to get to grips with funding and fundraising."

4 Resourcing

Funding and resources emerged as an area of interest for local communities. This is not a simple issues but a set of interconnected factors that create many challenges.

While funding is reported in the data as a significant issue, the solutions, dreams and aspirations expressed rarely involve significant amounts of money. Instead, they suggest ways of working more efficiently and making the most of existing community assets.

People said:

- Small resources can make a big difference.
- Over-complicated systems and processes can get in the way.
- There is desire for ways of working more efficiently.

There are lots of existing assets and we can make the most of these and potential community assets.

"We need funding, but we also need organisations working in partnership not being all things to all people but providing genuine holistic support for the community."

"Funders are less accessible and it seems that you have to jump through a lot of hoops for a fairly small amount of money."

"Long-term sustainable funding is going to be vital – community led commissioning so we can play a real role shaping how resources are directed to meet the needs of our area."

More details of the responses from some particular groups can be found in Appendix 4 and an example of the responses from one of the locality workshops is provided in Appendix 5.

Comparison with literature review

All of these themes are consistent with the themes from the DPH Report 2014/15 and the literature review, but place particular emphasis on certain elements, reflecting as would be expected, the particular context within East Sussex, and local priorities.

4 Making sense of it all

The day after the summit event a working group drawn from the BSC Project Team, commissioners, VCS stakeholders and representatives reviewed all the material and took part in a facilitated workshop to refine the main themes agreed at the summit, and then focus these into a set of ambitions for the coming year.

The working group agreed that the delivery of these ambitions should be underpinned by asset based principles and values, and the local community centered values that came out of the engagement (context and timescale). The results were presented to the Community Resilience Steering Group who endorsed the findings of the Phase 1 community engagement activity, the community vision, and ambitions for taking them forward.

Engagement theme	Overarching ambition by June 2017
Collaborating	We have a whole system in place that supports the commissioning and delivery of joint working and collaboration between organisations, sectors and communities.
Communicating	Our communicating methods and practice are two way, consistent and coordinated, based on co-production.
Resourcing	We have a system for making the most of community assets, funding and grants, which is community informed, collaborative, asset based, and focuses particularly on small grants.
Volunteers/active residents	We have deeper understanding of the issues surrounding active residents/volunteering and have a response in place.

5 Making it happen – next steps

The engagement work undertaken and the approval of its findings has produced a clear commitment to:

1 Engage further with communities in the way they have requested.

2 Establish designated roles to ensure that this focused work is continued into the long term. These include Locality Link Workers who will be active in each of the ESBT and Connecting 4 You locality areas to ensure that local assets are used to best effect, and a project manager to support delivery and coordination of the programme work-streams.

3 Create multi-sector and multi-disciplinary working groups to take forward detailed activity against each of the key areas set out in the report. Three of these groups have now been established and are currently working towards a focussed programme of activity to enhance communicating and collaborating, active involvement of residents and better use of resources.

In taking forward this work there is a clear commitment to ensuring that the theoretical principles and values of asset-based working[5] as well as the local values and principles that were strongly voiced in the consultation activities underpin the Community Resilience Programme.

Working collaboratively across communities and organisations is a complex long term process and this is just the start. There are many other individuals and organisations who have a key role to play and who we want to work more closely with in Phase 2, from a widening group of local residents, to health and social care practitioners, to district, borough and parish councils. Learning from the process will inform the way we continue communicating and collaborating. The BSC Project Team also recognises that situations and thinking will constantly evolve and change. We do not see this report as a fixed point but as a summary of where we are, as part of an ongoing dialogue.

5 Foot J & Hopkins T – A glass half-full: how an asset approach can improve community health and well-being (2010) IDeA/LGA

6 Conclusion

The Building Stronger Communities engagement work set out to ask what we can **all** do to build stronger communities in East Sussex. The response has affirmed and uncovered the many diverse skills, passions, knowledge and resources that already exist in East Sussex communities. It has produced a vision of what communities see as their ideal future, and a strong consensus on what needs to be done. This includes in particular working together and communicating in the same interactive way we have been doing as part of this project; doing more to support people to take part in a wide range of informal and formal voluntary activity; and finding ways of making better use of community and other resources.

Work has already started to make this happen: the more people and organisations get involved and work together towards the same goal, the stronger our communities will become.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the large number of local communities, individuals and organisation who gave generously of their time, insight and expertise to make this work possible. In particular we would like to thank those who gave their time as volunteers, the Community Facilitators, and the Community Resilience Engagement Working Group (the multi-agency group who supported and oversaw this piece of work).

Appendices

Appendix 1
Findings from the literature and practice review

Building on The Annual Report of the Director of Public Health East Sussex 2014/15 the literature review sought to update the findings with any new research, and review any learning that has been documented from local practice.

The approach

The methodology for the Literature Review was based on a model which had been developed by Asset Based Consulting in conjunction with researchers at Leeds Beckett University. The search was undertaken in two phases: Firstly, an initial search for the terms 'asset' and 'health' or 'well-being' (and all spelling variants) in the abstracts of publications searchable by 'Discover'. This allowed for the simultaneous searching of all electronic databases the university had access to and returned an unmanageable amount of hits.

Therefore, the search was further refined for terms in titles of publications and excluded documents which refer to 'property', or 'management' or 'finance' or 'wealth'. The searchable databases were also further restricted to: the British Library Document Supply Centre Inside Serials & Conference Proceedings, Medline, Social Citation Index, CINHAL Plus with full text, Psych Info, Psych Articles, Psych Books all of which are health-related resources. We then screened the returned list of articles by reading the abstracts and selected those that looked relevant.

Secondly, we performed a similar search substituting 'social care' for 'health' and 'well-being' in order to tap into the impact of asset-based approaches on the social care literature. The initial search for this combination of terms in the abstracts of publications was fairly small, so we continued to search within abstracts. Again we further reduced the number of returned documents by applying the same settings as above.

Thirdly we searched documents for 'social capital' and 'health' or 'well-being' and the term 'asset' in abstracts to tap into literature that discusses social capital as an asset for health

and wellbeing. We also searched for documents that mention the terms 'resilience' and 'health' or 'well-being' and the term 'asset' in their abstracts. We used the same language and data base settings as for the first two searches.

Lastly, we searched for 'asset based community development' (text) and 'McKnight' (text) and health or well-being (title) to see what Discover would generate in terms of documents that specifically reference ABCD, and the key author associated with the term, in the context of health and well-being. A relatively small number of hits were returned, which were again screened and relevant documents added to the bibliography.

To gain access to local documents for the review, consultation took place with colleagues from East Sussex Public Health, Adult Social Care, who volunteered appropriate reports or evaluations. This process also included identifying documents from geographical areas where asset based approaches had been implemented through programmes such as Neighbourhood Renewal, Neighbourhood Management and the Big Local programme.

The culmination of this process was a review of 65 key documents by the project lead and the identification (as a collaborative exercise between Hastings Voluntary Action and Asset Based Consulting) of the 10 'core principles' which appear in this report.

Whilst there is insufficient space in this report to summarise the full range of publications at a local, national and international level it is possible to identify key issues and principles which provide an underpinning body of evidence to run alongside the more practical work examining Community Resilience in East Sussex. These principles are those around which there appear to be broad academic, theoretical and practitioner consensus and were used throughout the study as a framework to help focus and inform the discussions which took place about our local findings.

Key issues

1 **Assets within communities are often poorly understood – even by communities themselves – and as a consequence the considerable potential they offer is often not fully realised**

The shift towards recognising and valuing community assets is one which recognises the skills, knowledge and connectivity of a local community and seeks to understand how they might be used positively in ways which improve health and wellbeing. These assets are diverse in nature ranging from land and buildings within community control or influence, local skills and connections, knowledge and experiences, drive and ambition. Whilst a number of participatory models exist to map and capture community assets it is difficult to replicate this consistently across communities and in a way which recognises how assets change over time.

As Meridith Miller has argued "communities have never been built upon their deficiencies. Building community has always depended on mobilising the capacities of a people and a place"[6].

Whilst an approach which can consistently map across a large geographical area may not be plausible an approach which seeks to develop and build a register of community assets should be considered particularly where work is being undertaken on a locality basis. This implies not simply a mapping exercise but an approach or outlook which seeks to recognise the assets of a community and how they are changing or developing over time.

6 Meridith Miller Community Organising and Community Building for Health

2 For an assets based approach to be plausible a fundamental shift of attitudes, language and perspectives will be required

The change in professional outlook and approach which will facilitate a shift from a deficit based approach to a more asset based model is considerable and will take time if a genuine and long lasting community benefit is to be realised. This will have implications for professional and workforce development and may also need to incorporate flexibilities in delegation or decision making to respond quickly to local community needs and aspiration. Service providers will need to understand when they need to respond proactively but also recognise when community effort is best supported by simply "getting out of the way". Within the literature review and within the work in East Sussex it was often the attitude of professionals which, at best was seen to act to maximise opportunities for community action and, at its worst was perceived as a source of frustration and bureaucratic delay.

3 A long term view will need to be taken for an asset based approach to have meaningful and measurable impact requiring strategic leadership

Asset based working implies change over a long period of time and is unlikely to be achieved through one discrete programme or via a single departmental initiative. It implies a much broader set of changes to the way in which the whole system is working and speaks to a more fundamental shift in the relationship between citizens, communities and public services. Asset based working is therefore a developmental "whole systems" approach which will require leadership and strategic endorsement at the highest level.

4 The ownership of change by communities is fundamental

A key feature throughout the literature review is that an asset based approach will only be plausible if it is perceived as supporting autonomous community action rather than seeking to define or dictate it. An asset based approach will need to acknowledge a legacy in which communities have sometimes felt "done to" (often by people who do not look, talk like or share the same experiences they do). Public health messages have often been perceived negatively as ways of telling people what is good for them, often in ways which to do not always acknowledge the wider social or cultural context and the effect this can have. At a time when public sector resources are declining the profiling of asset based approaches needs to be configured around the positive message that communities are "in control" and to avoid suggestions that there is an expectation that community action can "step in" at a time when public services are under pressure or being rolled back. In this sense it is important that both the opportunities of asset based approaches are set out together with its limitations. It can enable real and long lasting change but cannot in itself alleviate long term social and health inequalities.

5 There is change and volatility in the nature of civil society which will over time be felt at local community level

Nationally and internationally, formal civil society organisations (clubs societies and associations) are in gradual decline. The role of the traditional anchors for community activity in family, church and neighbourhood are changing and there are some generational patterns emerging with increasing emphasis on social media rather than physical interaction. Levels of formal volunteering are also stagnating with some indications that individuals may be less likely to commit time during periods of economic uncertainty and job pressure. This is impacting more in the more deprived neighbourhoods which are experiencing higher levels of decline in both formal volunteering and informal "helping". This was mirrored in the work in East Sussex where activists felt that there was both decline in the numbers of people playing an active volunteering role, together with limited evidence of a "new generation" of activists emerging to continue the work of the group into the long term. The assets within communities are powerful but they may also be becoming more 'fragile'. Similarly there has been a national decline in the support and infrastructure provided directly or indirectly by public services to support community activity or build community assets, and this has been noted at local level also.

6 A consistent framework for developing an evidence base to measure the impact of asset based approaches in the achievement of public health is yet to emerge

Whilst instinctively practitioners and public health specialists have been drawn towards asset based working, a consistent methodology to measure and evidence the impact, cost effectiveness or value for money been slower to emerge. Evaluation and evidence to date tends to be based on a case study basis describing the value of an activity to its beneficiaries or wider community. A more robust or established approach is still emerging. Similarly whilst individual experiences or pieces of work can point towards the factors which enhance community strength or resilience, there is limited academic consensus that points towards a practical methodology to enhance community resilience which can act as a blueprint in all places. The values of asset building approaches are replicable but are not automatically transferable without taking into account complex community and cultural contexts.

7 Building a healthy community is not always about health

Celebrating the history of a neighbourhood and its community is central to forming an asset based sense of identity and the connections which can foster positive community action. Therefore events that don't 'look' like health initiatives: street festivals, community celebrations etc are as much part of the 'mix' as initiatives which focus on more specific or measurable health outcomes. In this context it is important to take a whole community approach which provides both practical support to those who need it and opportunities to build social capital- interactions between different parts of the community to build the elusive notion of community 'spirit' and the cohesion and sense of belonging this implies.

8 The nature and shape of volunteering is changing

The nature of volunteering may be changing requiring new approaches and systems to meet the needs of those who want to "make a difference":

As part of this study we reviewed volunteering trends over the last decade and took account of the fact that whilst volunteering levels (informal and formal) may remain relatively stable, new and creative ways will need to be found to involve people so that their desire to make a difference within their local community can lead to a successful outcome. As well as meeting the needs of long term volunteers we need to create more dynamic opportunities for local people to get involved in ways which are meaningful and can happen quickly. We have also reviewed some of the generational differences and trends which may affect volunteering patterns in the future to have a debate about the best way of involving young people in the life of their local neighbourhood and community.

9 Scaling resourcing and procurement to meet or 'nuance' local need will be significant as asset based approaches take effect

Supporting asset based approaches and delivering services which are adapted or customised based on the experience and wishes of local people are attractive propositions but will require a "thought through" approach to resourcing, investment and procurement. Projects and initiatives which are community driven and utilise the time and efforts of local people clearly offer enormous potential both in terms of effectiveness and value for money. However, such small scale neighbourhood based activities do not always fit well within wider commissioning frameworks and mechanisms. Similarly attempts to nuance service delivery in ways which accord with local aspiration and experience may be more problematic as service delivery is increasingly being organised across larger geographical areas and in ways which do not always allow scope for local adaptation. There is a developing constellation of ideas that more flexible, place-based services are likely to offer more effective and efficient outcomes.

10 A broad potential for change

Ideally asset based approaches do not simply speak to the ways in which communities might chose to do things for themselves but how they engage more generally with public services and the wider participative and democratic process. Therefore the potential and practice of Asset Based approaches is best seen as an over-arching way of looking and acting in ways which can use all available assets, share knowledge and learning and work towards positive change within communities.

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Assets into action illustrating asset based approaches for health improvement 2010

Assessing Community Resilience with Volunteer Responders

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Recommended introductory reading

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Asset Based Approaches for Community Health Glasgow Centre for Population Health – Briefing Paper

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Organisations and groups

1066 Good Neighbours
18 Hours Community Interest Company
54 Squadron Air Cadets
9th Bexhill Scout Group

Age UK Eastbourne
Arlington Road Medical Practice Practice Patient Group

Battle Health Pathway Project Group
Beachy Head Ramblers
Bexhill Museum
Bevern Trust
Beyond Words Project
Big Local
Big Local North East Hastings
Bridge Community Centre
Broomgrove Community Centre

Care for the Carers
Chapel Park Community Centre
Children With Cancer Fund (Polegate)
Christians Against Poverty
Citizens Advice 1066
Clean for the Queen Volunteers
Community Champions at Tesco Hastings Extra
Community Chef - Good Food For All C.I.C.
Community Crafters Guild
Community First Responders
Company Paradiso
Conquest chaplaincy team volunteer
Conquest hospital choir
Conservation Volunteers
Contact the Elderly
CrossRoads
Crowborough Community Association
Culture Shift

Ditch the Slippers Project
Diversity Resource International
Downs Farm Residents Association

East Dean Community Responders
East Sussex Disability Association
East Sussex Life Group
East Sussex Seniors Association
East Sussex Youth Participation Network
Eastbourne and South Wealden branch of the MS Society
Eastbourne Choral Society
Eastbourne Foyer Project
Eastbourne and District Hard of Hearing Association
Eastbourne Hockey Club
Eastbourne Orchestra
Eastbourne Peoples Assembly
Eastbourne Seniors Forum
Eastbourne Symphony Orchestra
Eastbourne Tamils Group
Eastbourne Vision Care
Education Futures Trust
Eastbourne Society
Energise Sussex Coast
Eridge Village hall
ET Sussex

Family Support Work
Fellowship of St Nicholas
Friends of Anne of Cleves House
Friends of Crowborough Hospital
Friends of Roosevelt Court
Friends of the Earth
Friends of White Rock Gardens
Friends, Families and Travellers

Gizmo Young Peoples Theatre Co
Grassroots Suicide Prevention
Greenfield Methodist Church

Hailsham Cricket Club
Hampden Park Community Action
Hartfield Social Group and Lunch Club
Hastings and Rother Rainbow Alliance
Hastings & Rother Disability Forum
Hastings & Rother Mediation Service
Hastings & Rother Mind
Hastings & St Leonards Christians Against Poverty
Hastings and District Interfaith Forum
Hastings and Rother Sports Clubs and Community leaders Conference 2016
Hastings and St Leonards Seniors Forum
Hastings Baha'i Faith
Hastings Community Network
Hastings East Neighbourhood Scheme
Hastings Foodbank
Hastings Furniture Service
Hastings Handicraft; Level Access CIC
Hastings Housing Access Project
Hastings Humanists
Hastings Independent Press
Hastings Jack in the Green
Hastings Lions Club
Hastings Predators Floorball Club
Hastings Red Cross
Hastings Trust
Hastings Walk to Run Group
Hastings Wild Things Project
Hastings Young Persons Council
Hastings Youth Council
Haven Church
Health Trainer Project
Healthwatch.Brighton and Hove
Hearing Resource Centre
Hollington Community Centre
Horizons Community Learning

Isfield Wednesday Club

Jeunesse Global

Keys Community Detox

Lewes District CAB
Lewes Group in Support of Refugees
   and Asylum Seekers
Lewes House of Friendship
Links Project
Little Common Community Centre
Little Gate Farm
Local Trust
LUPUS UK

Marina Allotment Association Hospital
   radio
Meridian PPG
MoDS

Oasis Community Project
Ore Centre
Ore Centre Seniors Project
Ore Community Centre

Parents Action Group
Pelham Centre
Penny Beale Memorial Fund
Pevensey Villages Partnership
Pilot Field Area Residents Association
POWER
Pravet Syndrome Support Group
Preservation Trust
Ringmer Disability Social Club
Ringmer Good Neighbours
Rother Seniors' Forum
Runners and Volunteers of the
   Hastings Half Marathon
Rye Community Gardners

Safer Hastings (Community Safety)
   Partnership
Sanctuary
Sarah Lee Trust
Sea Scouts Association
Seaford Community Garden
Seniors Forum
Shining Lights
Soteria
South East Advocacy Project
Southdowns Housing
Spark Young Peoples Network
Speakup Forum
SSAFA

St James Parish Hall Committee
St Mary's lunch club
St Mary's Newick Pastoral Care Team
St Wilfrid's Hospice
Stay Up Late – and our Gig Buddies
   project
Sussex Community Rail Partnership
Sussex Deaf Association

TEAM and Link Visiting
Telscombe Residents Association
Terrence Higgins Trust
Trust for Conceservation Volunteers
Trust for Conservation Volunteers
   Health Walks

Uckfield Community Resilience
Uckfield United Reformed Church

Victim Support
View Craft Group
Volunteer Fundraisers for the NSPCC

Waterways Association
WAVES Family Support
Wealden Senior Citizens Partnership
Wealthwatch East Sussex
Wellbeing Project
West Hill & District Community
   Association
Witness Service
Women's Voice

XTRAX

Partnerships and networks

Community University Partnership
   Knowledge Exchange
Eastbourne Local Strategic Partnership
East Sussex Community Voice
East Sussex Strategic Partnership
ESBT Community Resilience Steering
   Group
ESBT Scrutiny Committee
ESCC Voluntary Sector Liaison Group
Hastings Executive Delivery Group
Hastings and St Leonards Local
   Strategic Partnership
Hastings and Rother Adult Community
   Learning Forum
Hastings Community Network
   Executive
Rye Network
White Rock Community Planning
   Conference

Appendix 3:
Themes from evaluation of engagement

The CVS Partnership and Nick Wates Associates, in conjunction with Asset Based Consulting conducted a review process at the conclusion of activity. They examined how the engagement process had worked and identifying issues to consider or specific areas of the community which might be worthy of further activity. The following issues were identified:

General comments

The methodology had been used consistently during all aspects of the outreach which had produced rich and reliable data for analysis. The methodology had been well received by those who attended locality events who had evaluated strongly the nature of these opportunities and that they had enabled participation in a different way to other forms of consultation. Where participants had time to understand the context and be taken through the methodology by an experienced facilitator the methodology provided useful tools. This was more challenging when there was more limited opportunities for engagement such as street interviewing or brief 1-2-1 engagement. Here participants found that capturing some big community questions like "dreams" for the future to be more difficult to engage with.

The methodology relied on writing and posting discussions and ideas in a number of different forms. Consideration should be given to how the methodology could be adapted to take account the needs of participants who may have issues with basic skills or whose first language is not English.

Continuing work with young people:

Young people were targeted and additional outreach work was conducted to ensure that their voice was included. It was felt that this should be repeated in phase 2 and

that links should be maintained with relevant projects (Youth Cabinet, Youth Councils) as the project developed. Liaison with the SPARK Youth Participation Network was also felt to be an important way of supporting future involvement.

Business engagement:

Further work could usefully be developed in phase 2 to recognise the role of local businesses as a community asset and as a way of informing them about the initiative. A limited number of Local businesses were engaged with as part of the outreach activity such as local shops and services. Businesses sometimes play a role in supporting local community activity and the micro nature of the economy in East Sussex means that those who run a local business are more likely to be residents of the community they serve.

Public Sector Asset engagement:

A further area for consideration in phase 2 is to embed the understanding of the project among public sector partners and practitioners, including health and social care practitioners in particular, and understand how the CR phase 2 activity could align with (and add value to) the community contact and engagement of other partners. Where the CR process was presented at say a Local Strategic Partnership at a District or Borough level there was an appetite for further dialogue from Local Authorities or Social Housing providers which should be maximised. Other initiatives link strongly to the resilience agenda such as the work in Hastings and Bexhill to create a Community Led Local Development (CLLD) Area. The time and capacity to make these links at both a strategic and locality level could usefully form part of the next phase of activity.

Examples of participants' comments at locality events

Talking/meeting reps from other organisations

Thinking about things from personal and organisational perspective

Well organised

Friendly atmosphere/Informal

Great networking

Good variety of groups attending

Exercises were thought through provoking

Meeting new network partners

Everyone participated

Talking to other organisations

Opportunity to meet others

Nice relaxed atmosphere

Interactive approaches

Opportunity to communicate your message knowing this is part of a wider thing

Fun

Catching up

Seeing different people

Approaches to facilitating

The video

Organisation

Collective enthusiasm

Well thought through

Easy

Productive

Met like-minded organisations

Shared objectives – wide range of organisations

Good flow of activities

Good networking opportunities

Felt listened to

Appendix 4:
Findings from engagement with targeted local groups

CVS Outreach Team feedback:

The methodology worked best when people had an opportunity to approach it together and over a period of time. It was more challenging to get some participants to think of the big picture topics (dreams aspirations) on the basis of a single and relatively short interaction.

Participants valued the attendance of members of the project team at their events. It enabled lots of data to be obtained but felt that there work was being valued.

Further work could usefully be done to establish how the methodology could be built on and to enable those who had issues with basic skills or whose first language was not English to participate. It relied on some reading and writing.

Further work could be undertaken with those who are isolated through circumstances and some useful conversations have been had with carers' organisations.

The use of community anchor buildings was a useful way of reaching a range of groups in a single day.

Adapting the methodology for young people was crucial as they wanted something to "do" as well as discussing the issues. Creating physical building blocks for community was a good way in and led to YP talking as they were creating the blocks in a way that just asking questions proved more difficult.

1 1-2-1s with local organisations

The key responses from the questionnaires and one-to-one meetings with local networks and organisations across East Sussex are recorded below. As the questions were asked in a slightly different way and context, comparisons and themes from these responses are easier to read across separately. However, very similar issues emerged as at the locality events and other surveys.

By far the two most frequent responses were about getting volunteer involvement and more effective communication.

As with the majority of the responses across the whole exercise the request is to listen and understand more about the community and support in ways that will best achieve what they express as needs/aspirations.

There are clearly some links between the demand for local services and the difficulties faced in travelling to hospitals etc. Does this need further investigation – what informal support might reduce the need for health or care services and is it cost effective to commission transport so people can travel to where services are or to try to provide outreach sessions in local areas?

2 Local Network Meetings

As with the other consultation events and exercises the responses to the questions are as diverse as the groups and organisations that took part. There are though some unifying themes:

- Providing care and support to particular groups with a particular concern with the most vulnerable people in communities
- A particular focus on addressing social isolation
- Providing opportunities for people to get together socially or around shared interests or concerns
- Environmental and associated issues, such as sustainable transport

Again consistent with the majority of responses the main themes from the 1-2-1 surveys were:

- The current system can often present barriers to successful work in communities, especially policy direction (austerity/cuts) and associated re-organisations
- The reductions in direct funding, grant funding and difficulties with applying and administering funded projects are frequently noted
- Again many groups and organisations struggle to recruit, manage and retain volunteers
- Associated with this responses indicate that their capacity is low and that they struggle to effectively promote their group/service (to volunteers and wider participants)
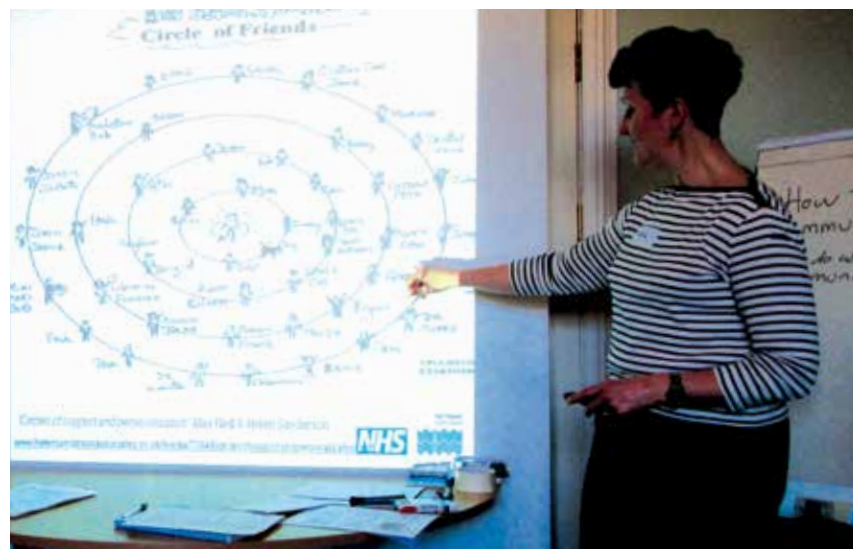
The responses to questions about what services can do to help directly relate to the challenges. As in the other data collection activities, where funding is mentioned it is usually referred to as a request for support and flexibility in the grants process rather that direct demands for more money. The main themes were:

• Better communication, publicity and information sharing
• More support and flexibility around funding, applications, monitoring and reporting
• Help with the recruitment and support of volunteers
• Better awareness of and collaboration between community activities and local services (across all sectors)

There was a strong sense of wanting to work together in collaboration and partnerships that include all interested groups and individuals in communities.

• Take up all opportunities to work collaboratively, merge budgets, align work programmes and projects
• Always consider and include the community and voluntary sector as they have a lot to offer – resources, skills and expertise
• Be inclusive and concentrate on the most vulnerable in communities
• Gain more understanding of the benefits of community activities and help to promote them to services and potential users
• Value volunteers and volunteering – encourage younger people to participate

3 Hastings Youth Council Session Feedback

The session with Hastings Youth Council asked the same consultation questions but allowed the young people to discuss each question in small groups as this was their preferred way of working.

The session with this group of young people shows that they share similar concerns to adults and all other groups that were involved in the consultation process.

They wanted better environments/communities where all residents can thrive and live equally. They state that lack of funding is an issue but most often ask for support from organisations as a way to move forward. They share similar barriers to participation- especially difficulties with travelling and finding local opportunities.

The most interesting difference is that young people suggest learning from international examples of good practice and successful development. In contrast to the other session responses which mostly focus on specific local solutions.

Not surprisingly this group see and understand the potential of social media as an effective communication and promotion tool and more importantly themselves as assets in multi-media communication to benefit their communities.

4 East Sussex Better Together Scrutiny Committee (comprising County Council Elected Members)

Committee Members expressed a consistent wish to support and develop inclusive communities, "Build sociable and collaborative communities..." linked with some statements about supporting resilience, "... communities that hold together and help all their members".

Members also expressed the importance of developing more sustainable ways of supporting communities and services and better collaboration, particularly around information sharing, between all local agencies, statutory and voluntary services.

Almost universally the members of the committee indicate that they see themselves as connectors within and across their communities and between their communities and the Council/other organisations. Comments included "... existing community connections with Borough Councils, police and voluntary orgs" and "... good group working on neighbourhood actions plans..."

Appendix 5:
'Community Conversations' – example from locality event

Thinking about your work in the community what difference are you making and what are you most proud of?

- Making connections with community
- Preventing an Individual case of trafficking
- The (community centre) is my greatest legacy
- Being a Councillor
- Community Development work
- Helping people to achieve what might seem unobtainable goals to them.
- Seeing small changes
- Lots of involvement with County Council and local agencies
- Support people to initiate big changes in varied areas – health, benefits, education, well being.
- Engaging with community activity
- Setting up and managing a community organisation. Building resilience and enabling/empowering people.
- Quality of staff – ability to meet need and innovate
- Growth redevelopment if new projects through staff skills and development
- Establishing a community organisation in 2011 and watching it grow. If we had not done this it would have closed. Ensuring it continues to grow.
- Enabling local people to have a voice
- Establishing local connections/ events/ business and individual orgs.
- Empowering local people
- Linking different age groups
- CCG celebration event
- Build on leadership
- Adopted working with partners to tackle health inequalities
- Developed effective relationship with CVS community
- 2000 individuals consulted about cancer
- Health and Well-being centres

- Leadership ESBT
- Involved in various sports clubs as volunteer
- Community Champions project – some individuals have demonstrated behaviour changes as well as becoming a community champion
- Neighbourhood work = informal peer support
- We have 5 LD adults in paid work – next year we will have 12
- We have provided respite during school holidays for LD children
- Helping carers to link up through support groups across E Sussex
- Bringing people out of isolation
- 1-2-1 work with individuals
- Referral for response services
- 1-2-1 support with sign posting
- Supporting carers – giving them the chance to meet other carers/share experiences
- Running carers clinics twice a month
- Trying to improve people housing conditions
- Seeing the development of an individual who had been tagged as NEAT and then see them at college and uni in the various roles in the community and education
- Seeing the individuals development
- Drawing together people who have a common vision. Extending the knowledge of these involved in the organisation.
- Getting to know people
- Supporting and developing parents skills in nutrition and basic cooking skills
- Delivering a basic cooking course to parents at the children's centre and seeing the impact
- Setting up a WI in the community to make new friends, work with CIC to run projects for children U5.
- Working with Children Centres
- Supporting people with mental health issues – preventing social isolation
- Using local business for services

- Giving young people of Hastings a voice and promoting mental health awareness by engaging with people in the community and holding events
- The Hastings Youth Awards where we recognise the achievements of young people for youth organisations
- Hastings Youth Awards
- Womens Voice – Global Kitchen project, Food Hygiene cert project, increasing employment opps for women, International Women's Day event, International Children's Day event, debates, empowering women, different communities coming together
- 4 community centres working together small grants scheme.
- Conservation volunteers, health walks with community, green gym of conservation work for own sake and for community to enjoy, more engaged community
- Proudest of green gym because it combines elements
- Councillor and trustee for Counselling organisation. Trustee with a mediation service, chair of local allotment assoc, trustee for rural community organisation rural Sussex.
- Counselling Plus 1-2-1 counselling work - improved clients life.
- Simply by asking in my community, encouraging others brings us together as a community
- Did my garden
- Bring neighbours together
- Big local – involved in setting up, programme to bring community centres together, developed CIC, developed local education plan
- Improving lives, health and well-being
- The difference is gradually getting more accessible place.
- Most proud of the mix of volunteers on the committee all of which have a disability
- We are contracted at the beginning of projects rather than in the past trying to adapt plans

- Removing people's isolation. Trying to remove the image of disability/health issue tragedy
- Trying to remove the image of a health issue – chronic long term as a tragic issue
- In my job to empower people to get involved in their communities and to sign post them to services that can help them
- Assisting people with smaller things that they may not ask for however often offered – they accept
- Peoples voices being heard
- Giving access to mental health services
- Improving quality of support.
- Relieving inequalities in health
- Empowering clients/helping clients to change their situation. Team are qualified to give QA advice. Making a difference to people's lives within the wider community and have an impact through advice and campaigns work. Interaction through IAG. Helping smaller orgs through training and partnership work.
- Empowering clients
- Supporting people to get skills to enable them to find their place in the community – health, well-being and through to formal qualifications, starting where the individual is
- Seeing progression in people more confident, contributing to community
- Work with people let down by the system of didn't get the most out of it
- 1-2-1 counselling
- Learning is not just for qualification and jobs
- Opportunities for those who wouldn't otherwise access it
- Providing a community voice that is positive about communities
- A community service – training people in media and work experience.
- A very supportive learning experience
- Taking people with bad educational experiences and working towards a better future. Social development, holistic approach to seeing people.
- Giving opportunities to people who wouldn't normally get them
- We are giving vulnerable adults a safe place for learning that isn't intimidating. We are also running

a day service for people with dementia, which also gives the carers a valuable break.
- First stage dementia is being slowed down by attending centre
- We are just starting out so cannot comment on this yet

What could help you do more of the work you think is important – or do it better?

- Everything available in Hastings in one place – common diary of activities/mapping.
- Money for centre manager at the Bridge
- Less paperwork, being able to make home visits to clients, more time to do community engagement and 1-2-1 support to accompany clients to activities in community
- Having more support from agencies/council
- Follow up – then get back to me and follow up issues or comments in a timely manner (if at all at the moment).
- Less paperwork
- More educational funding access
- Clients need more financial support
- Funding – staff and ideas are available – short tern nature limits aspirations, utilize staff more effectively
- Premises – need to offer a sustainable venue to deliver quality work
- Long term funding – short term finding can mean losing staff.
- Recognition that working with voluntary sector needs commitment and long term investment
- Long term funding
- CCG have agreed recurrent funding to Health Inequalities so mandated to continue
- Personal – time – prioritising where you make the biggest difference
- Allowed by commissioners to have the time to nurture individuals and projects to demonstrate positive outcomes
- Better funding
- I want HVA, RVA, CCG. Locate to create (including businesses) to help with me to find job opportunities to Learning disability people
- Easier access to funding for individuals removing barriers to access grants

- Better advertising about what we do
- People that will give time and effort to achieve our goal
- Access to funding and network that can be accessed easily
- More members and encouraging investment. A register of voluntary orgs.
- Easier access to funding and good networking. May be a data base of all local community orgs I could approach.
- Networking, advertising, sharing info at events, know what else is available
- Integrated health and social care budgets
- Funds and active committed members from a more diverse background
- Funding, active committed members, wider age group (younger)
- More residents taking part
- Regular funding from ESCC and other sources
- Consistency of funds and the competitive nature of funding.
- More individuals taking pride in the area – it's not all about money
- Community education, improved networking and support, more volunteer support, technical and other support, support from larger orgs
- Funding support from key enabler orgs
- More money for core work. Reaching more disabled people, so that our views are more representative.
- Funding and getting more positive images of disabled people and people with health issues in the community
- More resources – financial and staffing so that my time can be more efficiently used.
- More volunteers, resources to do things
- Information and delivery of it
- Less bureaucracy – having a more informal approach to supporting and educating others. Have an approach not to be led by commissioning constraints.
- More funding to run further projects in the community and support from other professionals through partnership working

- Other professionals having an understanding of where CAB sit in the local landscape and linking into projects at an early stage so can bring skills in advance to a wider group
- Funding, working in partnership not being all things to all people. Remaining to your ethos, provide holistic support for the community. Decreases depending on one organisation
- Funding for staff development
- Funding is currently a very big issue and problem.
- Money, funding core funding.
- Funding is always a problem
- Advice and more volunteers would help.
- Remove us and them (vol sector and stat sector). Treat vol sector as professionals – we know our communities.
- Funding more than 12 month cycles, less onerous monitoring – give us time to do the job rather than filling in monitoring forms
- More positive attitudes towards people living in deprived areas – they are not a problem they can offer a lot

What are your dreams and ambitions for your community/the community you work in?

- More funding resources and integration
- Ending child poverty
- Central points for neighbourhoods
- Cleaner more vibrant community
- Better neighbourhoods
- Raise area out of poverty and see sustainable change with a community that can maintain itself and grow
- For the community to grow and take responsibility for continued growth
- People being able to initiate and follow through their ideas
- More aspirational/optimism/ resilient – be happy!
- Evidence that events like today make a difference
- My org continues to flourish and reach communities
- More and more people use and benefit from open spaces – the park, seafront
- Community event in Alma Terrace – local street vent party

- For our society to see that LD adults are a resource and an asset
- Carers are respected
- Councils invest in care homes improving the expertise and care
- More volunteers to help carers befriending them.
- Young people to give time to their community
- For every student to volunteer at FE and HE
- Expanding the things we do to enhance training in ecology
- Being better known as an org
- I'd like to introduce volunteering as a compulsory part of education as I feel this would be really beneficial to both individuals and communities
- Expanding CIC to support wider community
- Better public transport/town planning
- To reach a wider audience and to engage more effectively
- Women's centre more young active women in group
- Nicer to each other, more patience
- Happier, healthier communities with improved green space across the county
- Speedy access to counselling session at low cost rate
- People are nicer listen and more patience
- Empowerment to make choices at a local basis
- Education – available info
- Available care and support for all
- Continuous good contact with the general public and orgs. I think inclusivity is improving but we are still not there.
- To become more inclusive as the norm not the exception
- Building a community where we can all be happier together and assisting the most vulnerable to access services
- Would like to tidy up my community to become more involved in schemes of this nature
- More awareness of how simple it can be to stay fit and well
- Equality, more resources
- Empower clients to solve their problems and tools to sustain this. Collaborative working and support smaller orgs financially and through training. More financial stability and stay focused

on clients' needs and this needs to encompass partnership working and through outcomes and campaigns.
- People aspire to be the people they want to be. Achieve something for themselves.
- Accessibility to quality learning opps, life-long learning
- That the community writes the paper and that newspaper cover cost and becomes self-reliant – with a view to being able to pay the contributors
- Stable community job. In terms of a community – access to good education and job prospects
- Being able to develop more opportunities for all our services. To reach more people and give each person more time.
- To develop the gardens for the benefit of the local community
- We start from what works, not what doesn't – positive not negative. How can we do this – not putting up barriers at every turn.

What things could get in the way of achieving positive change for your community/the community you work in?

- Lack of funding and apathy
- Funding
- No one engages
- Lack of support
- Lack of support
- Financial situation of member of community
- Political leadership locally – having 2 tier communities means never the twain shall meet
- Considerable number of funding streams which works independently – Big lottery, stat, CCG, NHS lack of coalition between priorities
- Funding and sustainability, lack of core funding, not having a coherent way of working in partnership
- Mandate being removed, sharing, sustaining
- Building broader collective of leaders
- Change individual and communities behaviour – change isn't easy. It needs long-term investment
- Social barriers and short term thinking by ESCC
- Social barriers and short term thinking

- Funding especially for young carers – one group had to stop due to lack of funding
- People's commitments
- Funding
- Lack of energy – stimulating energy in others
- Funding and higher level decisions
- Time to commit
- Financial and person powered strength
- Financial and person power
- Negativity
- Reliable funding, keeping funders engaged with continuing projects, not just bright new ideas
- Trusts and foundations don't want to fund on-going projects and revenue funding – is an issue with capital expenditure
- Negativity
- Lack of support from local public organisations/funders
- Lack of funding and support
- Lack of finance. Continued difficulty in finding affordable accessible venues.
- Lack of money, continued negative images of health issues and disability
- Reduction of funding
- Formal processes can hinder positive change
- Government legislation
- Government legislation – separate agenda to the community
- Not being fully connected with other orgs so don't know how best to help. People don't know what CAB can do for clients. More understanding of statutory sector and targets.
- Reduction in finding, changes of policy around adult and community learning. Where funding reduced sets up competition and collaborative working.
- Lack of funding
- Need more people with community knowledge
- Lack of funding. Over ambitious offer from exacerbated by lack of volunteer coordination and turnover of management team.
- Lack of funding. More people with knowledge and experience to work.
- If we were unable to secure funding to maintain and develop our services

- Lack of support from individuals and the authorities
- A lot of funders are focused on outcomes, outcomes, outcomes – some of the biggest impact projects make on individuals are hard to measure – esp in the long term
- The constraints of funding often means the people most in need miss out as the steps they make are considered to be too small to measure to fit the 'rules' of funders outcomes.

How could you overcome these?
- Showing we are proving a great service
- Evidence of great service – CCG ££££
- More time to go out and meet people to explain what's on offer and access to free resources
- Free resources
- Subsidised activities – particularly in education
- Political landscape and leadership
- Lack of ambition and aspiration , in ability of residents to realise that they can achieve
- Persistence and long term investment – individuals can realise their ambitions but they need sustained support
- Try to engage as a whole
- Strategic approach between funders
- Strategic approach amongst funders
- Leadership/champions embed across work
- ESCC needs to have a conversation with a current and long term government about planning and paying for services
- Long term planning and local engagement
- More funds to do the job
- More community spirit
- Community revolution
- Working together in partnership which makes communities bigger and stronger.
- Work in partnership
- Better outreach and publicity
- Better out-reach publicity
- Attraction marketing
- Enthusiasm
- Integrated working
- Local community led commissioning

- By identifying funding sources and continuing to make contact with other community organisations
- Continuing positive promotion of people
- Being more flexible
- More autonomy for local government
- More autonomy to local government to fund and have innovation
- Working/engaging partners
- Bringing large and small community orgs together to share learning, issues and challenges together. Working together on funding bids. Putting learning first.
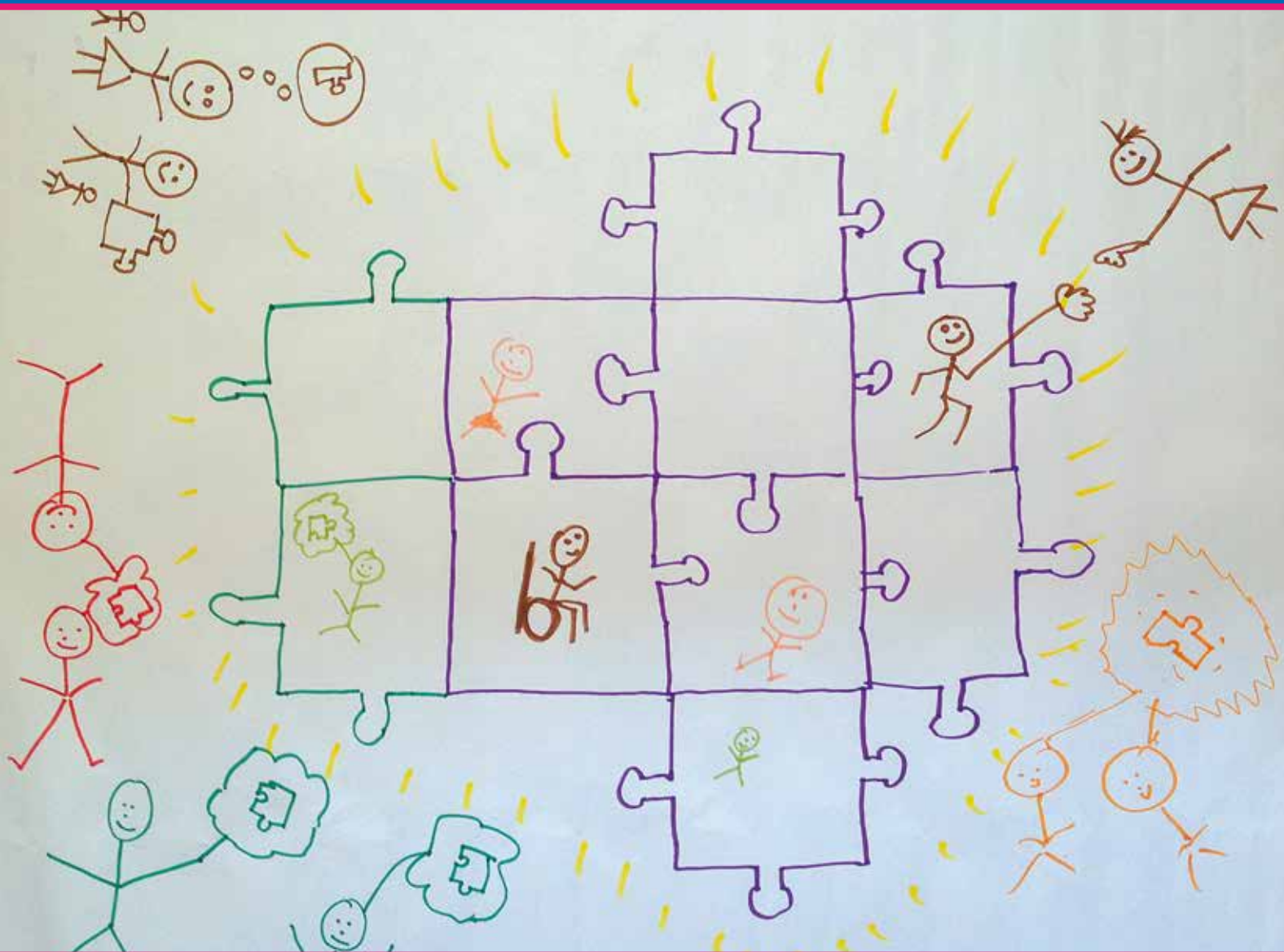- Recruit more volunteers
- Publicising and communicating

What are the most important messages for all those involved in communities?
- Communication
- Communication and links. Strength in partnership work.
- To understand what motives us and what de-motives people
- To consider the poorest and most vulnerable
- Accept that people can, remove not create barriers, think local not national
- Spread the word and encourage dialogue/contacts
- Need 5–10 year plan to support the voluntary sector to address outcomes necessary for health inequalities to build sustainable resilience
- 5–10 year plan to address health inequalities
- Greatest need is in Hastings and St Leonards
- Time is required to make a difference
- Working together collectively
- A kind heart and positive planning and networking
- Get involved set goals, work together. Tell other what works.
- Patience, perseverance and never give up
- Manage change
- Perseverance, patience and energy and looking to people needs
- Understanding of everyone's needs
- Meeting like this one

- Dispelling discouragement – more events like this
- Positivity, don't put off trying to lead by example
- Consistency and sustainability in funding
- Consistency and sustainability of funding
- Be positive, don't be put off trying - lead by example
- Local decision making – empowerment
- Long-term sustainable funding – community led commissioning
- To remember that we have a discrimination policy and truly embrace people difference. Access at grass roots is financially low cost compared with adapting.
- Don't write people off. Individuals have talents.
- For colleagues working in community resilience to 'sow' the links between communities and health
- Get out in the community and do it – find out what's going on
- Listen, taking action seeing what has gone before and learning from it.
- Listening, taking action, learning from experience and moving forward
- Partnership working to ensure clients well served. Free confidential advice and evidence of outcomes to change trends.
- Increase partnership working give time to allow this to happen – we are equal partners with statutory sector and we all have an equal part to play
- Being able to better communicate your message
- Keep people going, keep trying, keep knocking on doors and making applications
- Saying why we're important and why we are needed. Telling the powers that be why we matter
- I think openness and co-operation and communication between all in the community. Raising awareness of all that's available. Perhaps a community newsletter.
- To be open to new ideas and willing to give a little time
- Work to the communities' agenda not your own
- Be with us don't do things to us!

Building
Stronger
Communities
in East Sussex