

Interreg



France (Channel Manche) England
Connected Communities

European Regional Development Fund

News

WELCOME

Hello and welcome to our third edition of Connected Communities News! This newsletter is brought to you by your local council and five other key partners responsible for this project for positive wellbeing. Please share far and wide!

We appreciate your interest and for signing up to hear the latest news and developments.

PRESS LAUNCH IN EURE, FRANCE

The Department of Eure officially launched our Interreg Connected Communities programme by organising a press conference. This was held across the channel on 25th October 2021, and was accessible to British partners via "Zoom" and translators.

The Vice-President of the Department presented the three strategies they use to reduce social isolation for older people.

La Poste is the contracted partner for the frontline delivery of the project. They presented the "home support" package, consisting of a touch screen



tablet and help in using technology, a night lighting system to prevent falls when the elderly person gets up at night, and social visits by postal workers to the homes of isolated elderly people. Since the workers are already visiting older people with their mail and older people trust them, this is an innovative way of supporting people.

Hacktiv, another contracted partner, presented broad outlines of a future digital platform for mutual aid between neighbours, aimed at creating local solidarity between neighbours. Isabelle Jollivet-Perez, Director of Solidarity and Autonomy, then went on to explain the challenges of the "Monalisa" approach.

Several journalists were present and provided press coverage. Afterwards, all partners and connectors met over a meal at the restaurant. A number of beneficiaries were invited and attended, adding to the already friendly atmosphere. With Covid restrictions lifted, this much-awaited meal out all together, was a special moment for everyone.



KCC POSITIVE WELLBEING SERVICE IN ACTION

Our Positive Wellbeing service in Kent has gone from strength to strength over the last six months. With lockdown easing, our Community Connectors have visited project participants, been active in the community and promoted the service directly to the public.

Before things could really start, the service underwent a rebrand to Positive Wellbeing. It is now more relevant and accessible to the community, referrers and most importantly, over 65's.

Our new brand was created to signify health and community. Rather than a faceless logo, our Community Connectors are at the very heart of every communication. They are literally the face of our service, projecting trust and compassion.

Since the rebrand and revised strategy, we saw referrals rise and awareness of the service improved dramatically. Our social media campaigns reached over 70,000 people and drove hundreds to the service webpage.

We sent leaflets to over 15,000 households in the pilot areas and have another mail-out scheduled to reach a further 18,000. Public events are also an important part of our strategy and we attended events such as the Kent Police Open Day, which attracted over 15,000 people.

As part of the 12-week provision of support, events are organised to help tackle loneliness and isolation. Most recently, our Sheerness Community Connectors organised a 6-week cooking class for older people who had suffered strokes and long periods of



isolation. It not only helped them rediscover their cooking skills, but also their confidence and community spirit. It was an overwhelming success. The group are now going to meet up regularly and are even spending Christmas Day together!

Because of their positive experience, they are keen to volunteer and advocate for the Positive Wellbeing service, by encouraging others in similar situations to use Connected Communities support.



CONNECTED COMMUNITIES GRANTS: MEDWAY

Medway's Better Connected Team continue to support local organisations who are doing so much to help increase capacity in the community, especially for those who are over 65 and struggling with loneliness and social isolation. They do this through their Better Connected community grant scheme - a key element of this social prescribing project. Organisations apply through the Kent Community Foundation to receive a grant of up to £3,000 to help purchase new equipment, put on social events or kick start a new project. Here are some examples:

AFTERNOON TEAS AT WALT: WALT have used their community grant to put on outdoor afternoon teas for their members, encouraging people to come together again in a socially distanced way and enjoy a good chat!

ACTIVITY DAYS AT WHOO CARES: At whoo cares, beneficiaries have enjoyed trying their hand at various crafts and games whilst building new friendships at the centre.

BOWLING AT ST AUGUSTINES: Visitors to St. Augustines place of welcome can now enjoy a game of bowls during

their visit after the community team there used the Better Connected grant to purchase two brand new sets to increase the activities on offer.

Community Project Leader Andrew Gray said; "Being able to have the indoor carpet bowls is another key element of our work to use the huge space in St Augustine's to address social isolation and loneliness. We are delighted that the Better Connected initiative has recognised what we are trying to do here by providing us with a grant that has enabled the purchase of two indoor sets. People do not have to have played bowls before: the key thing is to have a bit of fun, make new friends and enjoy a cuppa at half time".

WALT's afternoon teas were enjoyed by many of their members who have not been able to get out and about due to covid or who were struggling with social isolation and loneliness before the pandemic came. Being able to come together again made a huge difference to their spirits and the funding helped to make these occasions even more special.

Community life planning co-ordinator Ruth Hardy said; "Your grant made that difference, it gave us the funding to brighten peoples summers whether they could come out for afternoon tea, or had it delivered to them. People said they made them feel loved; wanted; remembered; and special, and what better feedback could you have than that? We're now building on that connection to make sure as the autumn comes people continue to know that support is available for them, and they don't need to be alone whatever the weather."



COLLABORATION IS KEY

It has been a busy period for Connected Communities in Suffolk. After a successful summer of projects, organisations in the three project areas in East Suffolk continued to collaborate and develop projects to support those over 65.

Beccles, Bungay, Halesworth and surrounding villages

WILD WELLBEING AND ELDERS PROJECT

Connected Communities funded summer sessions for older people in Beccles, Bungay and Halesworth to enable older people to connect with nature. Instead of forest schools for children, these were forest schools for older adults. After a successful programme with 31 regular attendees, East Suffolk's Community Partnership for Beccles, Bungay, Halesworth and villages, provided some further funding to run Autumn sessions. because participants wanted the group to continue. This will enable original and new participants to meet others and engage with nature and further bolster the business case and longevity of the project.

Carlton Colville, Kessingland, Southwold & Surrounding Villages

KESSINGLAND MEN'S SHED

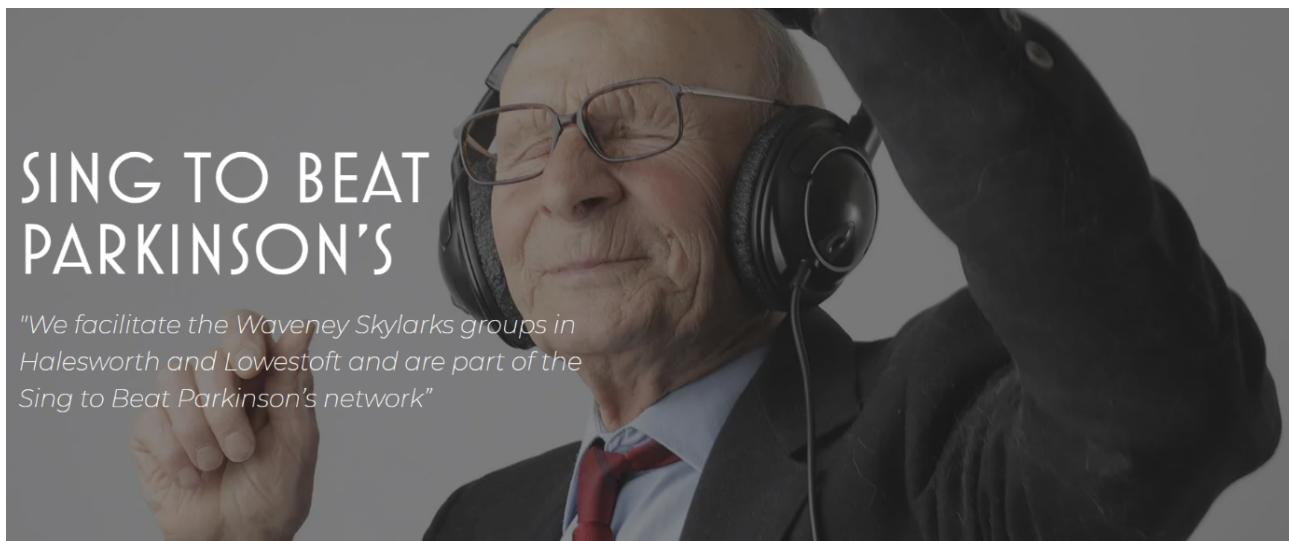
A Men's Shed in Kessingland has been in development for the past two years. Work was halted however with the event of the pandemic. With the Covid restrictions eased, the Shed is now developing further with a premises secured in the village. The volunteers have been more recently supported by Connected Communities with funding to assist in the renovation of the building, and the shedders are working with Suffolk Family Carers to receive referrals. Kessingland Men's Shed is keen to expand its role within the Connected Communities remit. As such, they are now active members of the Connected Communities Steering Group.

Framlingham, Wickham Market & Surrounding Villages and Melton, Woodbridge and Deben Peninsula

'FOOD SAVVY' COOKERY WORKSHOPS

Four cookery workshop sessions which were promoted in the previous edition of Connected Communities News, went ahead late summer. Local Chef Emma Crowhurst spoke with BBC Radio Suffolk about the free cooking lessons which were offered to older people. You can hear it [here](#).

Feedback from participants was very positive, with Hollesley residents asking for another workshop in the coming months.



SING TO BEAT PARKINSON'S

"We facilitate the Waveney Skylarks groups in Halesworth and Lowestoft and are part of the Sing to Beat Parkinson's network"

A SING OUT LOUD SUCCESS!

In addition to the projects mentioned above, Connected Communities in Suffolk have supported a local woman to set up her own Community Interest Company, an organisation where monies made above costs are put back into providing further services to the local community.

Helen Hayes provides a range of activities and opportunities to older people within the local area for Connected Communities. These include;

DEMENTIA: "Swell Music provides fun and supportive music-making sessions for people who are affected by dementia." Helen has trained to develop her awareness of dementia at Norfolk and Norwich Hospital and is an Alzheimer's Society Singing for the Brain practitioner and really enjoys the positive moments that singing and playing instruments together brings about.

SING TO BEAT PARKINSON'S: These are fun and supportive music making sessions. This approach is based on medical research and uses a combination of singing, breathing and

movement which are shown to relieve some of the symptoms experienced by people living with Parkinson's and other neurological conditions. It also improves wellbeing.

SINGING FOR LUNG HEALTH: This work has gained a higher profile since the Covid-19 pandemic. Research is being undertaken around supporting people with Long Covid. Working in partnership with The Seagull Theatre in Lowestoft, Swell Music has been facilitating a series of 6-week introductory courses in 2021.

Helen said; "[I founded Swell Music CIC in August 2020 after working for three years as a community music practitioner and facilitator in East Suffolk. The focus of my work is to help vulnerable members of the community to experience improved health and wellbeing through participating in music-making activities](#)".

Local residents aged 65+ are welcome to all the sessions. The groups are very accessible, so if you are supporting someone who'd like to attend, please let us know. We'd love to see them!

SOCIAL PRESCRIBING: HEALTH AND WELLBEING MODEL, ITS VALUES AND IMPACT

By Professor Gina Yannitell Reinhardt, PhD and Dr Dragana Vidovic, PhD, University of Essex

Social prescribing enables individuals to improve their health and connect with others. Social connections matter for people's health, economics, educational achievement and other aspects of life.¹⁻⁴

Those who are disconnected from their communities are likely to feel more lonely and utilise health services more, putting pressure on the public services.⁵⁻⁶ While social prescribing is used to address these issues, the evidence on the impact is sparse to determine success or value of money.⁷⁻¹⁰

In the UK, [the National Academy for Social Prescribing](#), has partnered with a number of academic institutions to build an evidence base that is more accessible, useful and compelling. In order for this to be achieved and for social prescribing to realise its full potential, we recommend that:

1) Decision-makers provide provisions for long-term monitoring of health conditions, health and social care usage and community life. Having time and resources to monitor changes at the individual, system and community level is essential to capture short and long-term impacts of social prescribing initiatives.

^{7,11}



Image courtesy of [The YOU Trust](#)

- 2) Academics and practitioners to co-design social prescribing implementation and evaluation protocols to ensure:
 - a. maximum benefits for the participants;
 - b. sufficient data collection to conduct rigorous evaluation of the impact;
 - c. usage of standardised measures and cross-case comparisons.
- 3) Develop novel approaches such as microsimulation models to estimate benefits and uncertainties regarding potential health and economic impacts.¹²
- 4) The relationship between professionals delivering a social prescribing and programme participants needs to be better understood. Some studies report this as the key aspect linked to programme success.^{8,13}

Social prescribing is becoming more widely implemented and studied in the UK and abroad, and with that the gaps in evidence are likely to be addressed in the near future. We urge decision-makers, practitioners, and academics to acknowledge the value of social prescribing and its potential impacts within the complex boundaries that come with implementation.

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