



COMMUNITY BUILDERS IMPACT REPORT

November 2024



Community Empowerment Team, Office of Director of Public Health

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What gifts of



DO YOU HAVE?

I Overview

The **Community Builder Programme** is part of the city's approach to tackling health inequalities through addressing the wider social determinants of health. Funded predominantly through the Devon Integrated Care Board's Fair Shares Fund, and administered through the Local Care Partnership, the approach aims to target additional funding to populations (defined by demographic or geographic characteristics) in which have historically been under-invested, consistent with the broader transition towards **Population Management in the Integrated Care Strategy**.

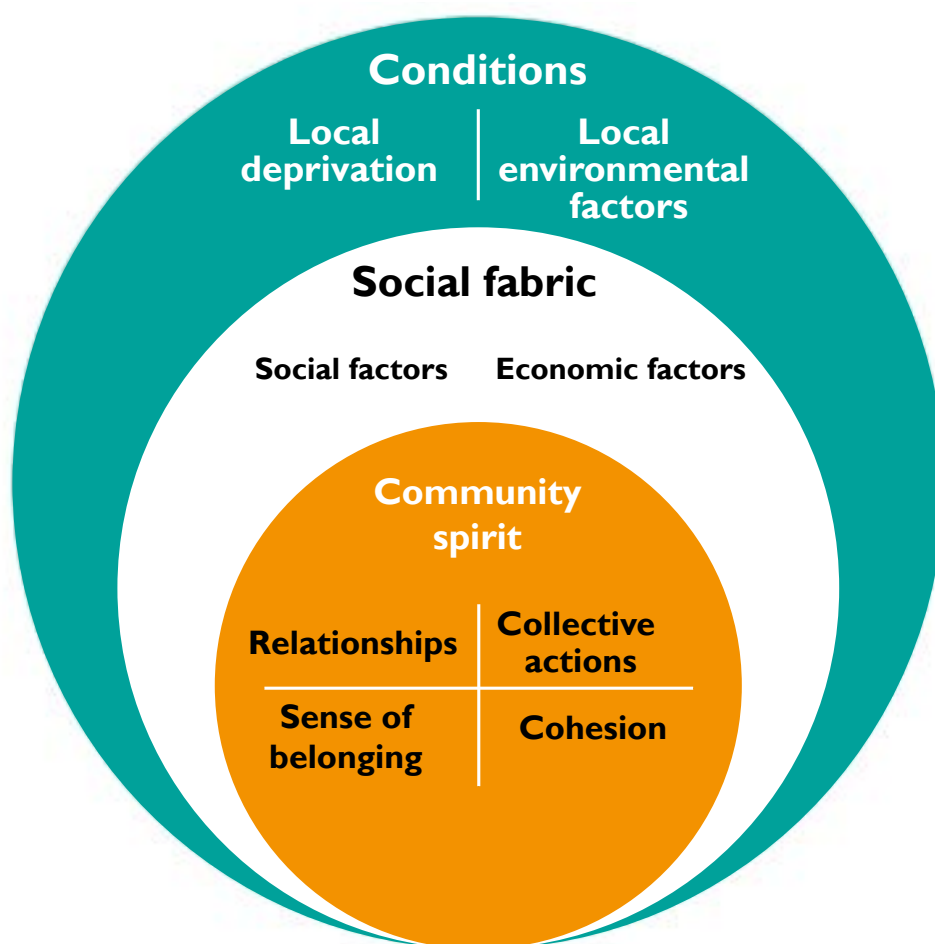
The programme was designed through stakeholder workshops and a UK wide review of similar models that exist (e.g. Leeds, Exeter and Torbay) and shared through Innovation Agency NESTA. It is based on an Asset Based Community Development approach to building and maintaining relationships with communities.

The team of six full-time and eight part-time Community Builders currently work within seven geographical communities (neighbourhoods) and seven communities of identity and interest. These areas were defined through analysis of citywide survey data collected biannually by Plymouth City Council. They correlate with areas that have higher levels of health inequality, low levels of involvement in communities and/or low sense of belonging.

A Logic Model was developed with the University of Plymouth who have continued to support the evaluation of the programme and which evolved through a co-design process alongside the Community Spirit level framework provided by the Royal Society of Public Health which maps indicators of community spirit that sits within the wider determinants of health: Relationships, Collective Action, Sense of Belonging and Cohesion.

The Community Spirit Level:

A Framework for measuring, improving and sustaining community spirit



The feelings of connection and belonging to a community and our ability to come together to improve wellbeing for everybody

Asset Based Community Development

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is at the core of the Community Builder approach, with the aim to discover assets within communities that can be connected and mobilised – these are people, places, networks, institutions, associations and stories. It is a way of ensuring communities and neighbourhoods are primary units of their own wellbeing.

Through our learning partners - Nurture Development - an organisation led by Cormac Russell – a leading advocate of ABCD, 8 week ABCD training has been delivered to all Community Builders and a range of Council/VCSE staff in the City. There are now over 90 practitioners in the City trained and supported by 12 further trained ‘guide facilitators’. The network of practitioners come together quarterly to share good practice and continue learning from each other to embed strengths based approaches within policy and practice.

Appreciative Enquiry

The team also use Appreciative Enquiry as a tool to hold conversations with people they meet and build relationships with, on themes which can be fed back to system leaders responsible for strategic areas of work and policy. This approach effectively on themes such as climate awareness, family life and ageing well. For more informal discussions, the team have produced conversation/consultation postcards, which Plymouth City Council Commissioning Team have now expressed an interest in using as an example of good practice.



“Collaboration with the Community Builders has been and will continue to be a vital bridge connecting community priorities to actionable solutions.”

Safer Communities Lead

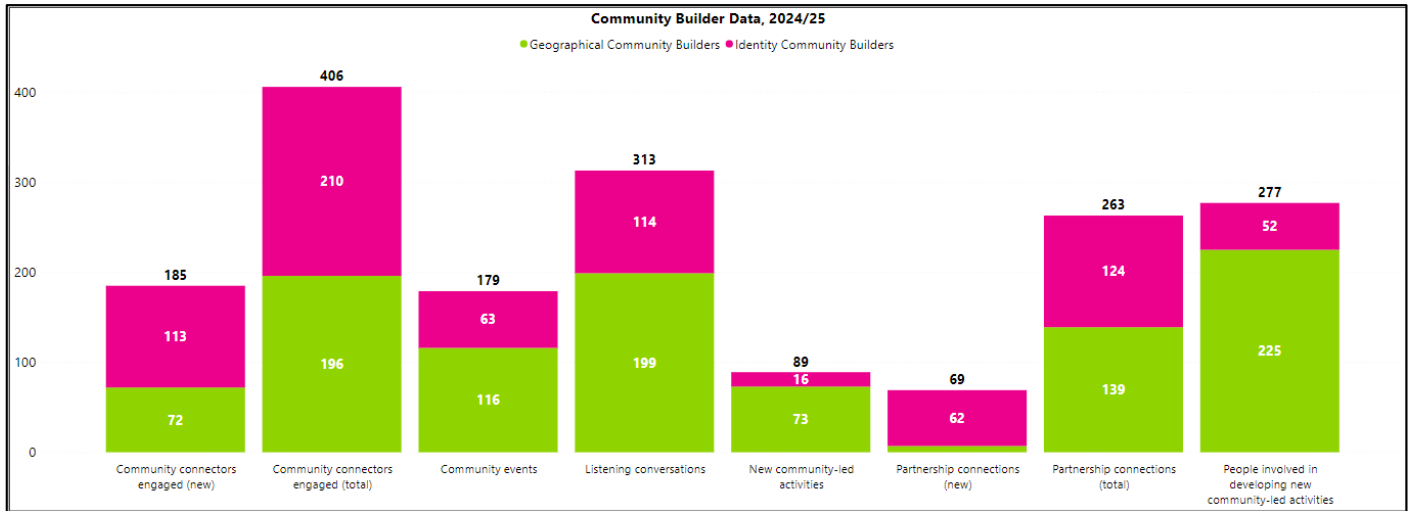
2 Indicators of change

The evaluation approach taken in the Community Builder Impact framework advocates the prioritisation of indicators of change over claims to causal impact.

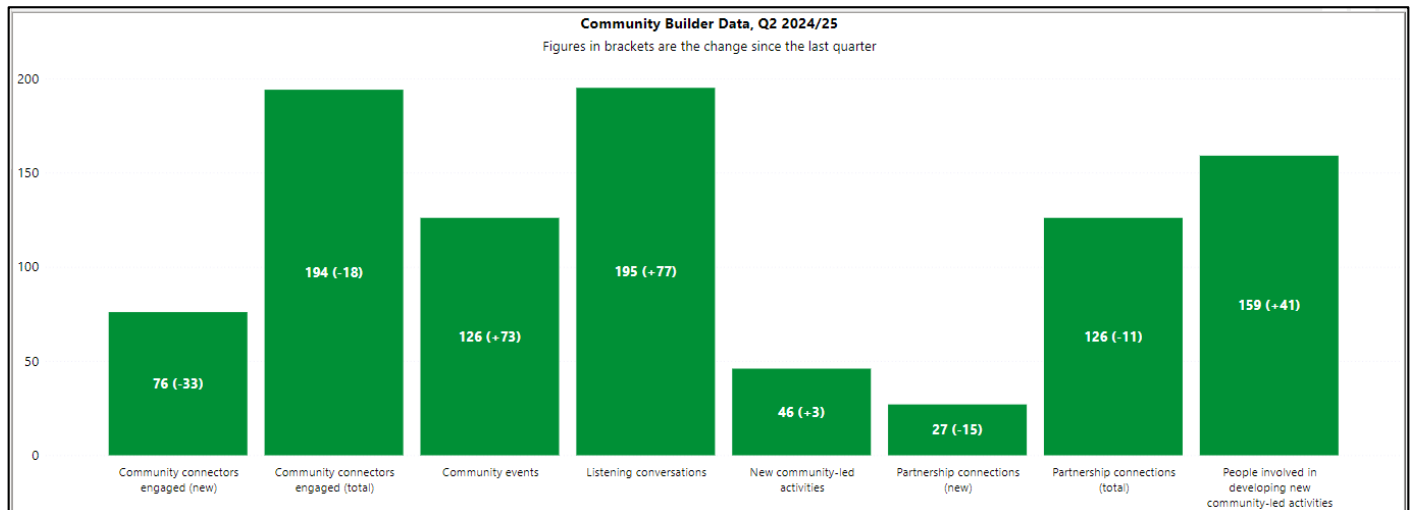
In line with the Community Spirit Level, which recognises that relationships and collective actions are key indicators of wellbeing, the Community Builders collect quantitative data on community led activity, people involved (connectors) and connections that the team have facilitated and supported. This is reported quarterly.

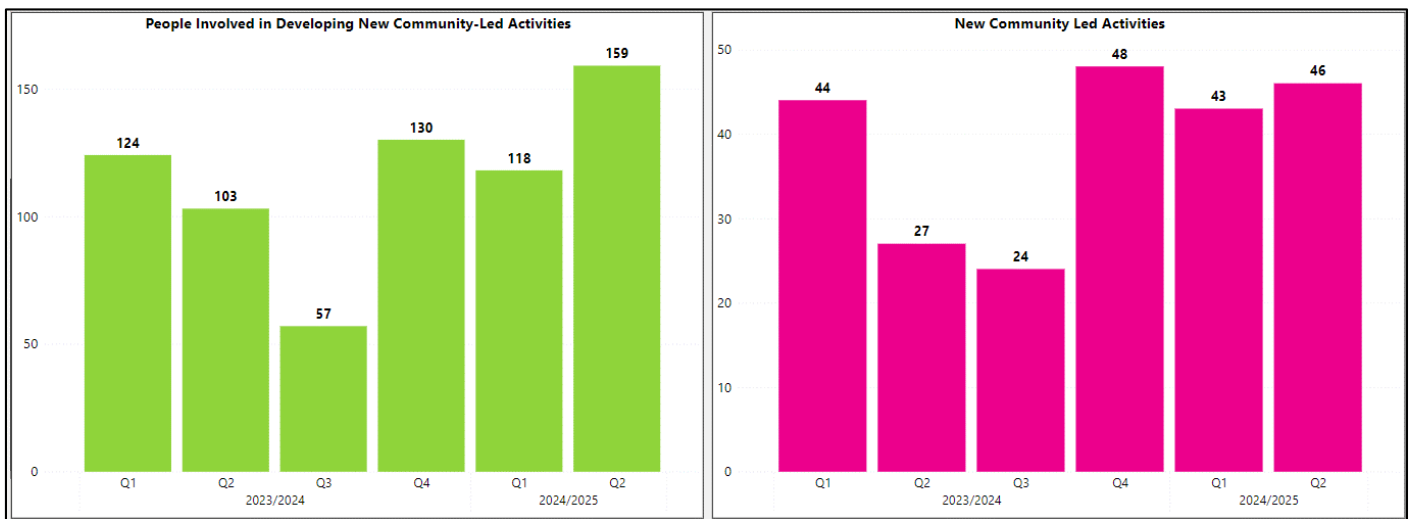
During 2024 Q1 and Q2 the following quantitative data has been collected

Overall summary:



Comparison data to last year/quarters:





This data tells us that the overall trend shows an increased number of community led activities, people involved (connectors) and conversations that the community builders are supporting and facilitating and this is broadly growing and sustaining since the programme began.



“Being involved had a really good impact on me, it’s something to get up for on a Wednesday. I get involved; it’s impacted my mental health absolutely fantastically. I got to know loads of people which I wouldn’t usually get to know. It’s the first time in two years that I have felt valued as a human being.”

Community Member - Connector

3 Community centred approaches and working strategically

Health and Wellbeing

The Community Builders programme is embedded within the Council's Public Health department and aims to deliver in line with the Thrive Wellbeing Strategy for the city. The team work closely with Wellbeing and Family Hubs across the city and in partnership with health partners, local services and the VCSE, are able to build trust with local communities to support health prevention initiatives and measures.

Some examples from the past 6 months include...

- Introducing local groups to the **Macmillan Cancer Support Team** as they roll out a new Cancer Champion programme. Supporting **Macmillan** to engage with people who may be interested in or know someone who is on the Cancer Journey and may wish to become a champion.
- Working closely with **Livewell SW** practitioners across communities, Social Prescribers and recently the new **Health and Wellbeing Connectors** in Stonehouse. Community Builders also link into GP Surgeries and work closely with **Public Health** to add insight and connections into initiatives. They have recently piloted a new approach to helping residents who they connect with, swap to vapes, as part of a 'No Strings Attached' programme of support, that they are able to offer within the community, to stop or cut down smoking.
- Supporting Dental Students from **Peninsula Dental Social Enterprise CIC** in getting out into communities. The students are able to pass on valuable Dental Health messages, information and tools to the Community Builders and the students learn about communities.

“Part of the project is to try to make Cancer a more accepted word in our everyday conversations over coffee and friendships. I recently accompanied a Devonport resident to one of these meetings. This was his first social occasion leaving his apartment for nearly three years, due to health and mobility. He enjoyed talking to others, talked to someone who likes to read the same books as him and had some help with moving Doctors Surgeries etc. It was a positive few hours for him and has asked to go again.”

Community Builder



➔ **‘Estover Live Longer Better’** project was established and has worked closely with the Community Builder as the community was identified as having a higher-than-average proportion of attendance and admissions to ED. A Band 6 Senior Nurse funded by **Marie Curie** and **NHS ICB**, was provided and worked alongside the Community Builder, the Wellbeing Hub and the GP Surgery so that partners could better understand the needs of the community, to start to create relationships with the relevant people and professionals involved in the area such as local residential homes and other health and social support systems, to then proactively identify and support potential EOL patients.

“I have been working with the local Doctors Elm surgery at Estover. I spend once a month at the surgery, talking and helping residents, building up connections and referring to local community activities. From this I was able to link the surgery manager up with the Wellbeing Hub to facilitate an NHS App help session where 75 patients signed up!”

Community Builder

“The Community Builder helps to build successful communications within the Plymouth Mental Health community so that it can be cohesive. People with long term health issues feel like they are fighting against the world and sees anyone in authority as the enemy, so when a Community Builder is there to provide assistance and steer this takes some getting used to.”

Local charitable organisation

“Residents we have worked with have had previous negative experiences of quitting/getting support for quitting but the Community Builders position in the community enables a relationship to be built and helps with trust, particularly as it’s ‘no strings’ so if they have any questions or concerns they can go back to them for support instead of seeking out health professionals.”

Community Builder

- ➔ Supporting **Nuffield Health** to bring low cost/free exercise into communities, as part of their charity outreach. Helping set up taster sessions for feedback so that the community could decide which works best. In Estover, it was Seated Exercising.
- ➔ The Community Builder working within the areas of interest of disability and mental health has been co-creating the **Plymouth Mental Health Collective** that brings grassroots organisations and groups together to have a platform to be heard and aims provide opportunities for collaboration and partnership, information and resource sharing, building capacity in the sector, and creating a stronger sense of community.

“I’ve noticed my mobility and aches and pains have got better, since I started the exercise classes. I really notice the difference if I miss a week.”

Community Member

“(Community Builder) welcomed me into the community centre. She made me feel like I had built relationships straight away. She introduced and invited me to different events which absolutely helped with my community engagement. It helped us reach a large majority of people. It also helped me build a relationship with the community, she helped to soften the blow of conversations around end of life. We have now expanded to Whitleigh, Southway and the City Centre. The Community Builder became a point of contact that I was able to refer people to. Even if they don’t make contact, it’s nice and reassuring that they know they are there to help. The Community Builder is reliable and was always there if I needed her. In the other areas I’m working in we haven’t had the same engagement.”

Marie Curie Nurse

“Public Health and One You Plymouth really value and share this new approach for Community Builders, who are connecting every day with people, to be trained and supported to offer swap to stop vapes, with potential for collaborating on wider engagement with One You Plymouth support.”

Public Health Specialist

“Best thing I did - after being supported to try vapes I have gone from 20 cigarettes a day to just a few puffs of 6mg 10 times a day and sometimes I forget to take my vape.”

70 year old Community Member

Climate and Net Zero

The Community Builders work closely with the team delivering the Net Zero Action Plan. Some examples from the past 6 months include...

- ➔ Many of the Community Builders are Carbon Literate trained and Climate Champions are in place in the team to: ***‘give us the confidence and information to be able to share plans to increase awareness and involvement within communities’***.
- ➔ The team recently carried out some Appreciative Enquiry around what climate change meant to individuals and have been encouraging communities to get involved in activities that promotes themes relating to climate.
- ➔ Community Builders work closely with the Green Communities Team to encourage people to be a part of growing edibles within the urban area, and forming a Green Corridor through Devonport, Morice Town, Keyham and Central Park. In Devonport, the Community Builder is heavily involved in Green Devonport Partnership – connecting local residents up to opportunities for foraging, tree planting, planter improvements, urban nature walks, composing, tree orchards and garden spaces including a roof top garden space.

“We really value the relationship we have formed with the Community Builders and appreciate their interest in Net Zero and commitment to sharing information and learning with the community. Community Builders are in a unique position to support neighbourhoods in Plymouth during the transition to lower carbon living and to increase their resilience to climate change, ensuring that residents are well informed and empowered. We have also benefited from the Appreciate Enquiry exercise focused on the climate. This gave us a valuable ear to the ground on attitudes and awareness about climate change and the actions communities are taking. This helps us to consider our wider messaging around net zero to increase resonance at a grass roots level.”

Community Builder

Net Zero Team

Safer Communities and Welcoming City

Community Builders work closely with Safer Communities partners as part of Safer Plymouth, the local Community Safety Partnership. Community Builders have champions in the team who sit on the partnership and are able to feed in any concerns from the team, and issues that are present within communities relating to community cohesion and community safety. They are also able to provide valuable support to initiatives and awareness events such as Hate Crime Awareness Week and ASB Week. Some examples are given below from the past 6 months...

- ➔ The Community Builder working within Ethnically Diverse Communities supports and leads many diversity events, most recently organising a Refugee week event that was attended by 60 individuals and 15 organisations and is also part of a VAWG task group to improve support for minoritised migrant survivors of domestic abuse.
- ➔ The Community Builder for LGBTQ+ recently introduced the Police to a community group who said they would not work with them, which went positively, and through the role, is able to challenge organisational assumptions around LGBTQ+ people, including use of inclusive language.
- ➔ The Community Builder working with Men in the City is leading on bringing Mens groups together into a network that is currently organising an International Mens Day event. This day will be held in November 2024 to offer Men, and their families a space to come together to share experiences and gather information about support in the city for Men’s mental health, and is being funded through a suicide prevention health grant.
- ➔ Community Builders are Compassionate champions and have helped set up compassionate cafes in communities that bring together compassionate friendships for people who wish to support each other through bereavement/loss and other life experiences and have delivered awareness and facilitation to roll this out to schools.

From representation at Safer Communities, the Community Builders are able to promote community safety in communities from agencies and charities such as Devon and Cornwall Police, Safer Plymouth, Crimestoppers, Victim Support, Stop Loan Sharks, Fire service and other organisations, through social media, printed resources and community engagement and are able to provide Third Party reporting support within communities.



Being able to have PCSO's working alongside the team to conduct appreciative inquiries are not only identifying the strengths within our community but also empowering residents to actively participate in shaping their own futures. Together, we are laying the foundation for a more engaged and resilient community."

Technical Lead for Safer Communities

"Improving Support for Minoritised/Migrant Survivors of VAWG has been helpful to some of the women who are victims of DV. The fact that we now have a pro-active steering group who champions this work have made it easier for some women to talk about their experiences in a safe environment without being judged."
BAME Community Builder

Community Builders are known well within communities and individuals are often 'referred' to the local Community Builder so that they can be linked into local community activities and this grows levels of vicarious trust.

"Being one of the Safer Communities champions have given me some new contacts across the city in various agencies. Most importantly it linked me into Devon and Cornwall Police, and the safeguarding adolescence working group where I have also been able to attend some of the MoRiLE (Management of Risk) training and information sessions – with specific interest in understanding growth of younger perpetrators of violence."
Youth Community Builder

"I am currently working with the Barbican Theatre to create a project to amplify the voices of older queer people and am working with DHSB with Intercom Trust on supporting the LGBTQ+ youth project in the school – this will help to create a format to roll out across other schools in the Plymouth area."
LGBTQ+ Community Builder

"Mrs X said she was happy that London Braids Salon put her in contact with us, because she was living in 'isolation' and does not know who to trust or talk to about her experience."

BAME Community Builder

Ageing Well

As part of the City's Ageing Well Plan, Public Health provided match funding for a Community Builder focusing on Older People who links with organisations and individuals across the city to offer knowledge of services, connections and activities to people. Some examples from past 6 months:



“People often want to have a chat. I feel like I may provide a small bridge between the council and other organisations to the community by spending time with both.”

Older Person's Community Builder

- The team used Appreciative Enquiry to host conversations with individuals about Ageing Well in Plymouth – insights, patterns and emerging themes are gathered and is being fed into the Ageing Well Plan.
- Currently the team are assisting partnerships in the city getting messages out to Older People around Pension Credit and Winter Fuel Payments.

“The Community Builder is motivated to gather information around groups, services and support locally that can be accessible.”

Frailty Social Prescribing link worker

Cost of Living

Building on the Child Poverty Action Plan the team have worked closely with Citizens Advice Plymouth in the roll out of the Community Empowerment Team's 'Resilience Project' – providing dedicated drop-ins, pop-ups and support within communities.

Other examples from the past 6 months include...

- The Community Builders have supported the promotions for uptake to Free School Meals, working closely with the Uniform Store and Scrap Store.
- They help to promote a large amount of food agencies, help to set up Food Co-ops across the city and are able to signpost families and individuals to Grow Share Cook provision that helps with access to fresh food, and cookery support through developing community based cookery courses with Food is Fun.
- The Community Builder for Ethnically Diverse Communities took 30 individuals from BAME communities for a fully funded summer family day out to visit Tamar Grow Local who provide Grow, Share, Cook projects in the City to visit the farm to learn more about how food is grown and to have a chance to get into the countryside. Many reported how wonderful it was to experience the variety of colours, smells and even tastes as they shared homemade soup and bread.



4 Connecting assets within communities

Community Builders are able to identify, connect and mobilise assets within communities through building long-term trusting relationships with individuals, groups, associations, organisations and networks and can help other services and organisations embed quickly through these trustful relationships. Community Builders know where residents are comfortable in their community coming together.

- The Community Builder connected up On Course SW with a local organisation running a community café who wanted to offer some homework support to members of the community (specifically parents, guardians and grand parents) and they now run English and Maths courses on the same day as the community cafe, with a regular 10-12 attending weekly.
- As part of the Early Help Strategy; Case for Change, the Family Hubs Community Builder is another separately funded addition to the team and has been central to the development of the Family Hub model across the City, in engaging parents/carers into the work, leading the Helping Hands network. The Family Hubs Community Builder is a key member of a Plymouth City Council led working group to support the reshaping of Early Help provision – being piloted in a neighbourhood in the City, alongside other Community Builders embedded within the community. This seeks to bring about new locality working teams to work alongside families in the area.

The Community Builders connect opportunities, seek out people and associations in communities and support them to become ‘connectors’ in any way they want to – alongside other friends, groups, networks and neighbours, establishing new connections and building on existing networks to bring people together in the community.



“Our community group has been able to expand its network of connections with significant support from the different Community Builders. In particular the organisation of a local fun day was well supported and turned out to be a great success due to the connections brokered by the Community Builders. With their support we were able to get the engagement of a number of different local organisations to who turned up at the event and ran activities and disseminated information. Alongside the practical supportive making connections to other organisations they have been very supportive as a personal point of contact for myself, checking in on me and supporting me at times when I have felt frustrated or exhausted with some of the pressures of building community engagement in my neighbourhood.”

Local Connector

Local Charity CEO:

“Thanks for all the Community Builders help and contacts, I couldn’t have done it without you and now things are really starting to happen and we are becoming more known around the area/city.”

“Family Hubs Helping Hands is designed as a network of parents/carers who want to have some form of engagement with Family Hubs, there are different levels of what these are which can change at any time determined by the parent/carer. They have recently put forward an idea which we are now going to facilitate with them of ‘Mystery Shopping’ Family Hubs in the city.”

Family Hubs Community Builder

“Sovereign Housing, recently came from Bristol, to discuss how they could link up and encourage their residents to become involved in local groups with the Community Builders. They have funding to help set up new groups or to support local events. A Sovereign, city wide, Youth Event is being planned now.”

Community Builder

“The Community Builder has added so much value to the work we are doing, he has connected us with 23 service providers and now we have regular sessions from many of these services, which benefit our community. People are now getting help with housing, benefits, energy, work the list goes on. Our best event this year was due to the Community Builder bringing so many organisations together that we were able to reach 750 in one day. On a weekly basis he is helping reach us 50 people.”

Local community organisation

“As someone starting a new social enterprise, I’ve found the Community Builders to be a valuable resource providing essential information, guidance, and the opportunity to connect with like-minded peers. This has given me more confidence and opportunity.”

Local Connector

“The Community Builder has been instrumental in the recent successful Strengthening Families and Communities event, which brought together more than 90 organisations and Plymouth City Council departments which are working to improve the lives of families across the city.”

Early Help team

5 Independent evaluation findings

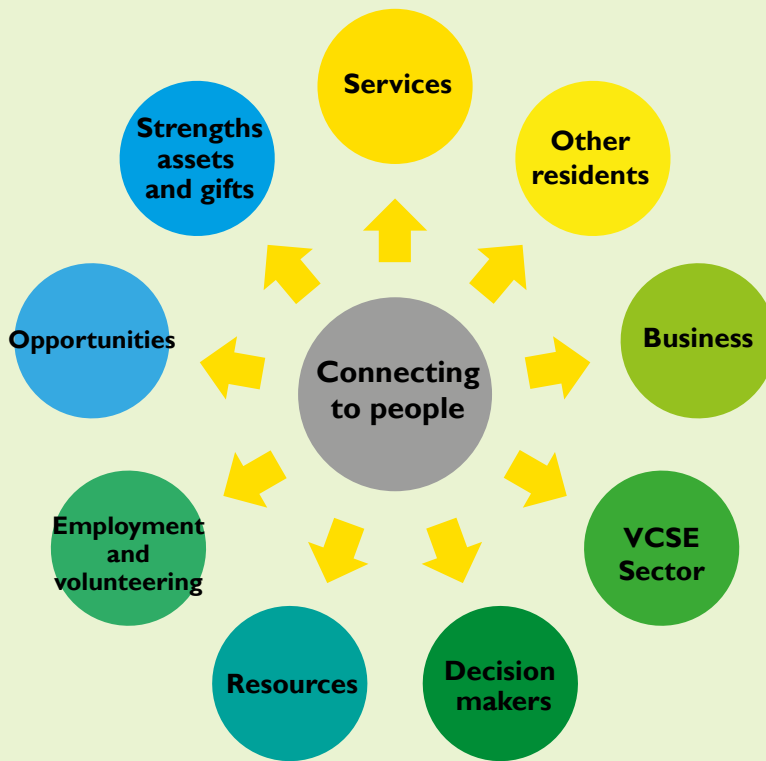
A full evaluation process led by University of Plymouth has recently published a separate report and executive summary that is now available. This provides robust realist evaluation evidence showing that the Community Builder programme is achieving the aims of reduced isolation, and increased friendships, sense of belonging and sense of control. The evaluation has provided evidence that this is done by changes that the Community Builders are empowering within communities:

through building trust, creating connections with individuals and organisations, partnership working and bringing about sustainable change.

Ripple Effect Mapping workshops evidenced that trust built by community builders enhances community resilience, inclusion, and social support, contributing to a sense of belonging and stronger connections within diverse communities.



Community Builder creating connections



It is evidenced that Community Builders have increased partnership working within communities to enhance community initiatives. By establishing relationships with various organisations, Community Builders can identify community assets, facilitating access to services and information.

The Community Builders are seen to bring about sustainable change in communities. In communities with a history of oppression, failed initiatives, disadvantage or inequity, communities can lose confidence in their own abilities to facilitate change. Community Builders, therefore, strive to relinquish power and offer tools for change.

Community Builder as a catalyst





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“The Community Builders serve as a bridge between the community and organisations, enabling residents to connect with resources effectively.”

Independent Evaluators

6 Structure of support and learning

Joint Council and VCSE delivery – a partnership approach

Plymouth City Council (PCC) have a partnership with Four Greens Community Trust (FGCT) where operational day to day employment and management of the Community Builders is led by FGCT and where PCC take a programme management role overseeing the alignment of supporting city-wide strategic priorities. This is not a traditional commissioning role, but a model of collaboration, involvement and partnership working which ensures that the team have the strength of both organisations and systems behind them. The team have been recruited on a permanent basis to reflect the commitment of the City to this programme.

Community Builders are seen as VCSE members through employment with FGCT as well as benefiting from strategic guidance and leadership and good working relationships with local Councillors through the partnership with PCC. This collaboration also ensure that their work and learning is fed into city wide partnerships to influence system change.

It is felt strongly in the partnership and the team that Community Builders are supported robustly with this supportive structure around them.

“Four Greens creating a ‘distance’ between the Council and the Community Builders helped side-step the impact of difficult existing relationships between the council and community members; the two organisations working together was helpful in creating a balance between community needs and council strategic priorities.”

Independent Evaluators

ABCD meets strategic priorities – a pragmatic approach

Utilising ABCD approaches and aligning this with strategic partnership working has meant that community led activities and priorities are met in the middle of ground up work and strategically driven local government and sometimes central government policy. The Community Builder role is unique as they bridge both communities and strategic priorities and are able to provide resource and commitment to relationships and communities.

Lived experience - a trauma informed approach

The team have a wealth of lived experience and their qualities suit and adapt to the local context. The Community Builders are able to offer a shame sensitive, individual, flexible and trauma informed way of working. This is important to be able to engage appropriately and break down existing barriers and mistrust of authority with individuals within communities, who are often suffering with levels of disadvantage and/or life trauma. These individuals are less likely to access health and social support which in turn creates increased negative impact upon health and wellbeing outcomes.

Locally based - a community led approach

With people and through their different areas of focus, the team work together across the city to offer support to individuals who are ‘just getting on with their day to day lives’. People who meet Community Builders may not be on the edge of crisis, but as a result, are empowered to know where to go to access support when needed, can share this with friends, family and neighbours and can enjoy connecting with others in their community that will ultimately enhance their sense of belonging, resilience and reduce risk of isolation.

Addressing the social determinants - an upstream approach

The Community Builder approach is about prevention and addressing the root causes of health inequalities. They do this by:

- ➡ Connecting people to sources of support or resources within their community
- ➡ Improving the links between local communities and health prevention services such as vaccination, smoking cessation, health checks and income maximisation
- ➡ Empowering communities supporting increased control, improved connections, increased self-esteem.
- ➡ Supporting co-production in new community-led initiatives such as food co-ops

7 Next phase

Communities and places are at the heart of the city's wellbeing strategy and the next 10 years of Thrive. Together with the Wellbeing and Family Hubs and wider partnerships with the VCSE and community groups and associations, Community Builders are becoming an important part of the eco-system of community-based provision for health and wellbeing.

Over the next year we aim to:

- Support the Community Builders to nurture associational life and stimulate community led collective action, continuing to map the change through collecting qualitative (stories) and quantitative data
- Continue to promote a strengths-based approach with communities and wider system partners, using asset mapping and appreciative enquiry as tools to build relationships and shine a light on the contributions that the community makes
- Continue to develop the citywide use of ABCD and build the community of practice
- Strengthen the links between the Community Builder programme and collaborative working between communities and Wellbeing and Family Hubs, GP surgeries and other health providers to identify and trial new community-based health and wellbeing provision
- Make the most of the links into networks and communities to develop insight and tailored approaches to support the delivery of specific strategic projects including Ageing Well; Family Hubs; Community Cohesion; Building Bridges to Opportunity.







For further information contact the Community Empowerment Team:
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Find out more about the Community Builders at:
<https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/community-builders>

Make contact with the team through:
<https://www.fourgreenscommunitytrust.co.uk/community-builders>

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